Anamesa
an interdisciplinary journal
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an-a-me-sa: Greek. adv. between, among, within
Anamesa is a conversation. From its inception in 2003, the journal has sought to provide an occasion for graduate students in disparate fields to converge upon and debate issues emblematic of the human condition. In doing so, Anamesa provokes scholarly, literary, and artistic innovation through interdisciplinary dialogue, serving New York University’s John W. Draper Program and the graduate community at large.
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COVER IMAGE  Untitled
Acrylic and oil on canvas
Camille Louise Maupas-Oudinot
Contributors

**Annabel Banks** (annabelbanks.com) is an English writer of poetry and prose. As an undergraduate she won both of Cambridge University’s top writing prizes and was subsequently awarded full funding for her Master’s degree in prose and her practice-based poetry PhD ‘Poetry and the Archive’, which is in its final stages. Annabel has taught across the English and Creative Writing degrees at Falmouth University, runs poetry workshops in ruined buildings and archives, and is published in a number of journals and anthologies.

**Cheryl Jiménez Frei** is a PhD candidate in Latin American History at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She earned her BA from Northern Michigan University. Her research interests include Argentine history, visual culture, public history, identity formation, and collective memory. She is currently writing her dissertation, which focuses on monuments and memorials in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from the early nineteenth century to the present. When avoiding writing her dissertation, she enjoys photography, running, hiking, and hanging out with her amazing supercat, Fräulein Kitzenbauer.

**Ian Ferguson Green** is a doctoral student at the City University of New York’s Graduate Center and teaches literature and composition at Baruch College. He also works full-time at New York University’s Law library. Ian earned his Masters from NYU in 2012. He is presently at work on his dissertation project, concerning early American and Atlantic literature. Originally from Philadelphia, he now lives in Brooklyn with his girlfriend and their dog. In his free time he runs too much, and writes short fiction.

**Charlotte Healy** is a doctoral candidate at the Institute of Fine Arts, NYU. She specializes in issues related to the materials and techniques of modern art. She holds a BA from Williams College, and received her MA from the Institute in 2013, writing her thesis on tactility in Paul Klee’s paintings. She has previously published on the early work of Robert Rauschenberg. Currently, she is writing her dissertation on the various ways that artists in Weimar Germany began to prioritize haptic perception in their two-dimensional artworks and in their theoretical writing and pedagogy.
**Damian Johansson** takes pictures, writes fiction, nonfiction, and still tries to write poetry, even though everyone tells him to stop. He is currently pursuing an MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Illinois, despite insisting that his degree will be in Astronaut Forestry, or Exobiological Wildlife Management. His work has been published in Quarter Mile from the Cherry and Spoon, the Ivory Tower, the McNeese Review, and the journal you hold in your hands.

**Whitney Kerutis** is an Arizona native, currently residing in Denver, Colorado. She is a MFA candidate at The University Of Colorado Boulder where she works on several projects including Timber Journal and as The Social Media Editor of Letter Machine Editions. She is interested in creating physical poetry, her themes including the body as a menace of conversation.

**Camille Louise Maupas-Oudinot** was born in 1988 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Raised in a multicultural environment (French father and Spanish descendant Argentinian mother), she spent most of her childhood traveling between Argentina and France, as well as expanding her voyages all over Europe and Asia. Since a very young age she had a passion for drawing and painting, as her father was an artist himself and she had a great admiration for him, she used to follow him everywhere and he taught her how to better her skills as well as some drawing techniques.

While finishing high school, she majored in art and photography and had the chance to show her work in a collective exhibition in her native city, where one of her pictures was acquired by a famous publisher and art collector Dudu Von Thielmann. After that, nine years would go by before Camille felt confident enough to exhibit her work again, by mounting an art show by herself in a small gallery in a Palermo neighborhood, where two paintings were acquired. She now continues to perfect her painting skills under the supervision of renowned chilean artist Juan Astica.

**Loie Merritt** is a mixed media artist based in Boulder. She is currently pursuing an MFA in Fiction at the University of Colorado, where she also teaches creative writing and serves as the Art Editor for *Timber Journal*. Loie often forces her fine art into conversation with her writing, seeking the borders between mediums, where forms depart of one another and where they may intersect. Recent work has appeared in *Lemon Hound*, *The Café Review*, *Dreginald*, and *The Thought Erotic*, among others.

**Milana Meytes** is a current John W. Draper student in Literary Cultures at NYU, embarking on her first year as a Masters student. She recieved her B.A at Wheaton College, MA where she majored in English and Russian Studies. Milana grew up in Washington Heights, NYC by way of the Soviet Union and has been merging her geographies through creative writing ever since.
Contributors

Tom Pazderka is an interdisciplinary artist, painter, sculptor and writer. He is currently a Regents Fellow and MFA graduate student at University of California Santa Barbara. Pazderka’s work encompasses a wide range of disciplines and interests from painting and sculpture to writing and performance. Reclaiming, burning, and assembling objects, dumpster diving and social consciousness are some of the ways that Tom engages through art with his audience. His most recent body of work that was part of a solo exhibition titled “Twenty Years of Progress” is a critical and sometimes ironic look at the two seemingly separate recent histories of America and the Czech Republic through the filter of the Event. Pazderka’s works have been exhibited at Parasol Projects in NYC, the Asheville Art Museum in NC, Cameron Art Museum in Wilmington, NC, MeetFactory Studios and Trafo Gallery in Prague, Czech Republic, Pink Dog Creative and the Push Gallery in Asheville, NC.

Stephanie Grace Petinos is a Ph.D. candidate in French, with a specialization in medieval literature, at The City University of New York, Graduate Center, where she is a Fellow in the Committee for the Study of Religion. She is currently writing her dissertation, “Seeking Holiness: The Contribution of Eleven Vernacular Narrative Texts from the 12th to the 14th Centuries,” which uncovers previously unidentified forms of lay spirituality within secular texts. She has presented at several conferences and has a forthcoming article, “The Ecology of Relics in Philippe de Remi’s Le Roman de la Manekine” (Amsterdam University Press 2017).

Alison R. Underwood is a Kentucky native, and a first year graduate student in Parsons History of Design and Curatorial Studies Program. She is a trained artist and currently serving on the visual team for Objective (Journal of the History of Design and Curatorial Studies). Although she does not subscribe to any fixed medium, themes of identity and questions of control or influence frequently surface. Acknowledging that all experience is subjective, she attempts to create a safe-space via visual platform, a receptive ‘other’ on which to project the self. It is her belief that through this engagement the viewer is able to refine and reevaluate the self from a position of power, thus mitigating any real or perceived danger. Alison recently relocated to NYC where she continues to explore such themes through digital work and prose.

Matthew Zundel is proud to have his first poetic publication appearing in Anamesa. A graduate of the Draper program himself, Matthew is now in his first year as a doctoral student in New York University’s Italian Studies department where he is working to bring contemporary queer thought into conversation with ongoing debates in the field of Italian Studies. Poetry and poetics remain for him a core preoccupation and he hopes to publish more substantial work in the future. He resides in Manhattan. He takes his coffee black.
Editor’s Note

Frost’s lonely narrator weighing two equally appealing paths; Kerouac’s Sal Paradise using the elusive Dean Moriarty as a springboard to his own exploration of self; Woolf calling forth female creativity through a description of physical and emotional space—these are all classic examples of points of departure that every reader will recognize. This issue of Anamesa is an exploration of this classic literary focus. By questioning the meaning and relevance of departure, and by investigating this question through interdisciplinary scholarship, the writers presented in this issue facilitate a conversation. In these pages we see departure depicted in various ways: as artists abandoning the conventional through a movement that merged two artistic mediums, as the self moving outside of the body in a moment of crisis, and as a literal inscription of the present on relics of the past.

It is precisely the idea of conversation not dictated by guidelines or definitions that is important in Anamesa. As always we invite you to participate in the conversation we begin within these pages. It is through interdisciplinary scholarship that we are able to question our own systems of understanding. Just as we ourselves are departing from classic understandings of points of departure and academic scholarship, we ask you to come along with us. And so we depart…

—T. Parker
Editor in Chief
Anamesa
When the war began between Miss Rona and Mrs. Winter, it began, as all wars do, in the wavering silence between two strangers. Like all wars too, its ending was written in its beginning. One of them, in the end, would have to help the other to die.

Miss Rona came from the agency when Mrs. Winter’s husband became too much for her to handle on her own. It was neither of their decision. The Winters had two children and it was they who concluded that someone needed to care for Henry, after he very nearly died falling down the stairs, and shattered his leg in three places. They’d decided that his incipient dementia, his accidents, and his need for constant care were too much of a burden for their mother. Sylvia Winter was a small woman, all hips and elbows sticking out sharply through the fabric of her clothes—a striking contrast against Miss Rona’s low, firm foundation. She was also a woman of particularities and humors. Like a character from a nineteenth-century novel, she was given to what she called dizzy spells—moments during which she would have to sit down or be held up, moments during which she would require touch, care, and concern. Miss Rona was, like Mrs. Winter, not a young woman. She had four children and two of them had given her grandchildren. All lived in Trinidad and all depended upon her to one degree or another, even though she’d never even met the youngest among them. She wasn’t a savior or a saint or a friend. She was just a woman doing her job.
On that first day, Mrs. Winter’s son introduced Miss Rona with bland, condescending familiarity, then stood back, tense and dumb. The two women considered one another across the island in the kitchen, like two predators of different species might consider one another. Neither moved or spoke for a long time, each impressed, in her own way, with the other’s practiced impenetrability. Finally, Mrs. Winter said to her son, “I’m glad we can afford the help that your father needs. That’s the important thing.”

“I won’t lie to you, Mrs. Winter,” said Miss Rona, “there are cheaper agencies. But your children wanted the best for your husband and that costs money.”

“She cost money,” said Mrs. Winter to her son.

“Yes,” said Miss Rona, “That’s right.”

Mrs. Winter straightened then and said, “I don’t feel well. Somebody help me sit down please.”

Henry loved Miss Rona—but then again, Henry loved everyone. He had always been a kind, dynamic man. He still was, in his way. He was even still attractive. He had worked as a producer on the local news for thirty years and there he’d met Sylvia DiPietro, who worked as a copy editor at the time. In her youth, Mrs. Winter had been proud to define herself by her accomplishments, rather than by her relationships. She was a woman of profound abilities, with an incredible depth and breadth of interests. During their years together, the Winters had been a thrilling couple to know. They were very popular and much admired. They were also very much bound together, though Henry, loved to perform love, while Sylvia disdained public displays. Body and spirit, Sylvia Winter lived by a rigid code of eloquent, but controlled, precision.

Miss Rona could appreciate that. She told Henry one day, gesturing toward the pictures in the enormous walnut curio cabinet in the living room, “You and your wife look so glamorous.” Instead of answering, Henry just laughed. Mrs. Winter watched him as he did this, and kept watching as his mind took his eyes away from the pictures to concentrate instead upon whatever new object glimmered in the dull abyss that constituted his new life. A week later, Mrs. Winter said she’d have the frames changed but, instead, dropped them on the floor in the closet. She did it because she couldn’t stand to look at them through the glass that reflected the brittle crags of her own face. She did it thinking of the work it had taken to exchange the rags she wore in childhood for the sumptuous ensembles of her life with Henry. She did it because Miss Rona had called the pictures glamorous and because Henry had laughed.

Now and then, Mrs. Winter would try to do the things for which Miss Rona was paid, and sometimes she even undid or redid Miss Rona’s work. She’d remove the dressings on Henry’s leg wound and rewrap it, saying Miss Rona had tied it too tightly, or rub ointment into his skin, saying Miss Rona
was stingy with it. When the time came for it, she’d take out the diapers and order Henry about until he was more or less inside of them. Miss Rona would watch this with mild amusement and tell Mrs. Winter that she had to change the wet-pack like so, or stretch out Henry’s leg in just such a way. Sometimes she would take phone calls and say, in a voice that Mrs. Winter could hear in the other room, “I’m only on call today. They don’t need me right now.”

One day, Mr. and Mrs. Winter were in the sunroom and Miss Rona entered to give Henry his lunch. While Henry chewed his food, Miss Rona wiped his face, and cut his meal into smaller pieces and said, “Mr. Winter, I told you not to scratch that. Hold on.” All the while, Mrs. Winter watched the wind moving slowly left to right across the lawn. Light came into the room in throbbing swells of lemon and peach, while the day disclosed itself in subtle changes—shifts in the configuration of leaves in the tree on the lawn, clouds rolling over their duplicate shadows on the grass. She stared at all of this and thought of the handsome body she’d married, not wanting to turn around. When Miss Rona came back, she heard Mr. Winter say, “That feels nice, Sylvia. Thank you.”

“It’s Miss Rona here, Mr. Winter,” said Miss Rona. “Mrs. Winter’s there next to you.”

“Oh,” said Mr. Winter vaguely. “Thank you, Sylvia.”

Mrs. Winter got up and left them both behind.

That night she drifted into sleep imagining Miss Rona’s big hands upon her flesh. She imagined the feel of Miss Rona’s muscles kneading her own and the sweet smell of her moist skin. She imagined the weight of Miss Rona’s breasts beneath her cheek and their firmness, and woke startled to discover that she was nearly crying. Mrs. Winter did not cry. To stop herself, she got up and went into her husband’s room and stood over his bed. She called his name. “Henry,” she said. “Henry please.” But Henry did not answer. His sleep was profound, all-encompassing, and tranquil. She found herself thinking of something Miss Rona had said about him once while washing the dishes: “His mind is like rainwater, Mrs. Winter. It’s clear but it just washes away.”

Mrs. Winter remembered her dream the next day when she was rubbing the circulation back into Henry’s leg. As she did, she realized that her fingers had dug deep brown furrows into the rotten part of his skin. When she understood what she’d done, she let out a cry. Miss Rona came running and Mrs. Winter said, “My God, Miss Rona, what have you been doing to my husband? Look at these bruises.”

“Mrs. Winter,” Miss Rona protested.

“I ought to report you to the agency,” said Mrs. Winter.

“Mrs. Winter I—” Miss Rona’s face did something then it hadn’t done before: it moved. In so doing, it belied the vaguest tremor of self-doubt and she didn’t speak more.
“Well,” said Mrs. Winter, “I guess you’ll just have to be more careful. What’s for lunch?”

“Yes, Mrs. Winter,” said Miss Rona. “I’ll fix something up.”

After that, Mrs. Winter felt a little more herself.

Miss Rona felt that she knew Mrs. Winter, even if, rightly speaking, she did not. She had worked for many women just like her—some of them were gracious and some of them superior, but all were alike in their unwillingness to admit their need. She wondered sometimes if she’d become one of them—she wasn’t far off in age—but decided that, no, when her time came, she would return home and let her children care for her as she knew they would and as she knew she deserved. Moreover, she felt her class and her race to be a kind of shield against the sort of pompous self-regard that women like Mrs. Winter mistook for refinement. From the shards of reliable history that littered Henry’s heaped recollections, she knew that Mrs. Winter had been born low, but also knew Mrs. Winter had used her husband as the ladder to climb up and out, and had spent the rest of her years practicing the sort of manners that would fool everyone she met. In the end, she would fool herself too.

That practiced arrogance hung like a fog in the house, a fog that would suddenly condense in moments of crisis. Miss Rona was passing the curio cabinet one afternoon when she noticed that the pictures still hadn’t been returned to their places. She opened the cabinet door to examine the glass shelf where the pictures should have been, and even used her finger to touch the spot where they had left ghostly absences in the accumulated dust. Her arm still extended, she turned and called out, “Mrs. Winter, didn’t you pick up those pictures from the framing?” Just then the door to the cabinet swung closed and shattered around her arm. She fell backward and gasped as the whole cabinet bobbed, ducked, and finally slumped to its side, belching an explosive cloud of glass and wood splinters. When Miss Rona could finally open her eyes, she sat very still, surrounded as she was by a halo of sparkling glass shards. She saw a thick rope of blood curling down her arm from the hand she’d used to shield her face. She also saw Mrs. Winter standing there, her lips tight as a wire.

Mrs. Winter turned to Miss Rona and extended a hand. Slowly, the two old women balanced one another until they were both standing, dismayed at all the ruin at their feet. Finally, Mrs. Winter turned to Miss Rona and said, “For God’s sakes did you have to be so careless?” Then she walked off, glass crackling beneath her feet. Miss Rona was still clutching her bleeding arm close to her chest.

Miss Rona tested the limits of the other woman’s will only once. One morning, while Mrs. Winter sat reading by the window, Miss Rona tugged Mr. Winter’s leg to straighten it. It was a common enough element of his daily maintenance as not to elicit note as he groaned at the stubbornness of his
own rigid tendons. But then he began to utter a kind of guttural distress and Miss Rona knew she had pushed too hard, too fast. She pushed faster. Mr. Winter began to gasp while Miss Rona kept pushing. All the while she watched Mrs. Winter. She was reading very calmly in the serene morning light that came through the window. “Oh God,” cried Mr. Winter, but Mrs. Winter did not look up. “Please,” Mr. Winter wheezed, “you’re hurting me.” Ultimately, Miss Rona stopped. Mrs. Winter hadn’t moved. She knew then—they both knew—that Miss Rona hadn’t even begun to approach Mrs. Winter’s perimeter. Finally, Mrs. Winter looked up and said, “What shall we have for breakfast?”

For a while, the two women held a tense détente. Miss Rona did her job dutifully, and Mrs. Winter pretended she was not there. But it was not to last. One evening, while taking his dinner, Mr. Winter was suddenly overcome by something and slumped out of his chair. When he fell, his body rolled over and revealed a tight rictus smile that told them all clearly of a stroke. He was in the hospital for five days and never regained consciousness. Miss Rona and Mrs. Winter stayed in his room the whole time not speaking or moving. The children came in and stood around the bed and then huddled in tense anticipation in the waiting room. They directed their questions to the doctors and would consult with Miss Rona to gauge her trust of what the doctors had said. Miss Rona sat by Mrs. Winter’s side and said things that were a comfort even if they did not sound like one. “Not long now, Mrs. Winter,” she said, “He’s already halfway through.”

When the time did come, Mrs. Winter was asleep and it was Miss Rona who woke her. She took the old woman’s elbow in her firm fleshy hand and waited for her eyes to lift. When they did, Miss Rona told her, “We’re finished now, Mrs. Winter.”

Miss Rona helped Mrs. Winter to her feet and stood with her back to the wall while the others brought their mother into the circle they’d formed around the body. A nurse had already cleaned him up—must have done so while Mrs. Winter slept in the very room—and now his corpse lay there like a wax figure. He looked peaceful, though both Miss Rona and Mrs. Winter knew there was nothing peaceful in what had happened to him—or in what he’d done. Even after spending all this time so close to it, neither woman knew quite how to assign agency for the passing of life into nonlife. After the children said a few words, they turned to Mrs. Winter to see if she wanted to speak. She said, “Miss Rona, I’ll go home now please.”

Miss Rona stayed the night and then left in the morning. Mrs. Winter didn’t get out of bed to see her off but heard her son thanking her for her work and dismissing her in the kitchen downstairs. Mrs. Winter just lay there while it happened, imagining that big hulking form dissolving into the indefinite distance as she walked down the street. But there was none of the satisfaction
she'd expected in such a dream—only a profound, almost corporeal feeling of loss.

After that, Mrs. Winter spent long days discovering the changed sound and feel of the house. Gone was the knock and shuffle of her husband in his office. Gone was the gravelling wheeze of his waking breath down the hall in the morning. All that Mrs. Winter heard now, or held or breathed, felt like a hollow reverberation, her own echo returning to her. It all smelled of her. It all tasted of her taste. Alone in the house, she had the same dream for many nights in a row—of Miss Rona's hands on her body, of her own head resting upon Miss Rona's heaving chest—and, every time, she woke holding in the tears that hadn't come in decades.

And so it was that Mrs. Winter came one night to appear at Miss Rona's door. It was a neat square home on an urban street, identical, Mrs. Winter noted, to all the others she saw, and located in a neighborhood that elicited a confused reticence in the cabdriver. Mrs. Winter knocked and waited and was surprised when a man came to the door. “Yes?” he said.

She studied the man's face and felt very different from it, as though it belonged not only to a different person, but to a different model of what a man could be. She felt vaguely frightened of him and responded by saying, “I'll speak to Miss Rona please.”

The man too seemed not to understand the creature by which he'd been confronted. He watched her a while, assessing her. Mrs. Winter stood a little straighter so that she wouldn't feel so very small. “Rona,” he finally called back into the house. “There's a lady for you.” Then he turned and let the door close behind him.

Mrs. Winter stood alone. It was cold there on the porch and she wished she'd worn a warmer coat. The wind was still and she shifted her feet to stand beneath the buzzing electric porch light in order to take whatever heat it might lend. She looked up into it and saw the threadbare drapery of an old spider's web. It reminded her of the laundry line outside of her mother's house when she was young and of all the cold wet days of her youth that had seemed very far away during her years with Henry. They did not seem very far away anymore.

Eventually the door opened again and Miss Rona stood there waiting for an explanation. Her face was as calmly illegible as ever, a mute riddle of smooth, shapeless tissue. Mrs. Winter wanted to look at it for a long time, wanted to solve what could not be solved in it but, instead, she said, “Miss Rona, I'd like to offer you your job back.”

Miss Rona did not speak.

“I hate to think of the state you're in without the income and I'm sure I can find something for you to do in the house.”

Miss Rona allowed Mrs. Winter's words to reveal their own failure. Even-
tually she said, “Mrs. Winter, if you are sick you should call the agency.”

“Oh no,” said Mrs. Winter. “I’m in good health, all things considered.”

“Then you don’t need a nurse.”

“Miss Rona, I thought you might be more appreciative of my gesture.”

“I’m not a maid, Mrs. Winter. I’m not a nanny.”

“A nanny? You’re being very rude.”

“No,” said Miss Rona, “It is not rude to explain to you—”

“Explain to me?”

“It is not rude to explain to you that I am a registered nurse. I am not
a nanny. I cared for four children already and I am not interested in caring
for any more. If you are having trouble in the house by yourself, perhaps you
should move. Or you could call your children. Goodnight, Mrs. Winter, I’m
glad to know that you are in good health, all things considered.” She shut the
door then and left Mrs. Winter alone on the cold porch with only the tatters
of the spider’s web moving above her head.

It became very hard then for Mrs. Winter. More and more, her move-
ments were confined to one or two rooms in the house. Eventually the other
rooms—the rooms she did not enter—became frightening, unknown places.
They were there though, and she could not forget that—they were there and
empty. They were full of their emptiness and it made her afraid. She spent
much of her time in the sunroom or in bed. She’d spend a few minutes every
day in the kitchen fixing lunch, though she hardly ate anything at all. Once in
a while, she would realize how long it had been since she’d used her voice and
she’d speak and say foolish things. She would say, “Hello?” But there was no
one there and it would make her feel embarrassed to have spoken.

Then one day she found herself in the sunroom, holding a glass of water
and sipping it very slowly, when she realized that she might feel a little dizzy.
She stood up and watched the water in the glass began to dimple and shake. It
felt good and real. Then she let herself go light-headed and drop the glass. As
it shattered, she permitted, a soft, “ooh,” to escape with her breath and closed
her eyes. A half hour later she dialed for the paramedics and told them she’d
fainted.

Miss Rona arrived the next day and the quiet, the deep, terrible quiet of
the place was clear to her, but she said nothing. She found Mrs. Winter draped
in a lined robe in bed and approached with her bag in hand. “Hello, Mrs. Win-
ter,” she said. “How are you feeling?”

“Oh these dizzy spells,” said Mrs. Winter. “I feel so embarrassed. I’m re-
ally a model of health, you know. But they’ve just plagued me since I was a
little girl.”

“Yes,” said Miss Rona. “Well, let’s see.”

She took Mrs. Winter’s blood pressure and her temperature and checked
her pulse and then told her she would go downstairs to make her a sandwich.
As she left the room, Mrs. Winter called out, “I am sorry to be a bother. I shouldn’t like to think you feel like you’re nannying me.”

Miss Rona paused in the doorway. “No, Mrs. Winter,” she said. “I think you’ll be fine. I don’t think I’ll have to come back.” Then she left.

Miss Rona took her time downstairs, cradling the telephone between her ear and her shoulder, while she peered in the refrigerator. She heard the noise go off like a cannon. It was a muffled thud that seemed to roll through the house top to bottom, accompanied by a sound not unlike twigs snapping under foot. She knew what it was before she went to look. Calmly, she hung up the telephone, and closed the refrigerator door, and made her way down the hallway to the stairwell. There she saw Mrs. Winter in a pile of loose parts reconfigured. Her robe had opened to expose her nakedness and that made it easy to see where her bones had torn through her thin flesh. She was moaning softly and with a kind of surprise in her voice more than anything, as if she hadn’t expected things to go this way.

Miss Rona stepped over Mrs. Winter’s body and sat on one of the low stairs, looking down. Mrs. Winter tried to look up at her but couldn’t move her head so she just rolled her eye around until it fixed vaguely upon the spot where Miss Rona was sitting.

“Mrs. Winter, what has happened to you?” said Miss Rona very calmly.

“I just wanted—” Mrs. Winter stopped herself. Even then she could not honestly explain what she’d done.

“I understand,” said Miss Rona.

Mrs. Winter’s voice was wetter when she spoke again and there was blood filling in the spaces between her teeth. “Won’t you call the ambulance?” she said.

Miss Rona looked down at the sack of broken bones and torn skin at her feet and shook her head. She reached down and took Mrs. Winter’s hand in her own and held it tightly. Her grasp was gently warm around Mrs. Winter’s fingers. “No,” she said. “I think we’ll just wait here together.”

Mrs. Winter looked into Miss Rona’s face and felt a very faint smile beginning in her lips even as her eyes became hot and wet. She felt warm then, and calm, and she was very glad that Miss Rona was there.
Palimpsest

Whitney Kerutis

Your columns quiet
must sing
as they split

like a toss
of smoking twigs
set to spitting out
their own ash.

I think
your feline
back-brushing slumber
is lipped algae
startling
green river muck,

lifting your foot:
“I’m the short
of that cigarette’s neck.”

Coming barometer
to meet me,
your buttons intact
and my mother’s voice:
Don’t nobody go down there—
Renunciation as Point of Departure in Marie de France’s *Eliduc*

Stephanie Petinos

Marie de France is the author of a well-known twelfth-century collection of *lais*—short tales that were most likely sung. In the final tale, *Eliduc*, a noble knight, is exiled by his king. While abroad, Eliduc falls in love with Guilliadun, the daughter of another king. The lovers exchange tokens and words of love, but they never consummate their union. While Eliduc remains innocent of adultery, he fails to disclose to Guilliadun that he is already married to Guildeluëc. When Eliduc is summoned back to his original court and pardoned, he sneaks his lover out of her father’s kingdom to return home with him. During the journey, a sailor reveals the truth of Eliduc’s marriage, causing Guilliadun to faint; all believe her to be dead. Overcome with grief, Eliduc throws the sailor overboard and steers the boat to safety. He places Guilliadun in a hermit’s chapel, where his wife, Guildeluëc, discovers the girl. When she witnesses a weasel resuscitating its fatally wounded mate with a flower, Guildeluëc employs the same flower remedy to revive the unconscious girl. Upon discovering the identity of the girl she has saved, Guildeluëc announces her decision to renounce her marriage and take the veil, allowing the lovers to legitimately marry. This is the climax of the story; the fate of the three protagonists is uncertain. The anx-
iety created for the audience in this situation lies in the question of Guilde-
luëc's reaction. It is Guilde luëc who resolves the anxiety through her decision
to renounce. Eliduc, grateful for his wife's selfless act, gives her a portion of
his own land for the foundation of a convent, as she had requested. She enters
the convent as its abbess, along with 30 nuns, and establishes her own Rule.
Eventually, Eliduc and Guilliadun also turn to God: Eliduc enters a monastery
that he founds, while Guilliadun enters Guilde luëc's convent, where they live
as sisters. The three live their remaining years in perfect harmony, writing let-
ters to and praying for each other, living primarily for God.

The selfless decision to renounce her marriage marks a significant point
of departure for Guilde luëc. This essay explores how this point of departure,
the moment in which she announces her withdrawal from the secular world,
actually becomes the moment of liberation, autonomy, advantage, individu-
ality and transcendence for the heroine. Rather than erasing her from the
narrative --as renunciation is the withdrawal from the world in order to live
a solitary life of piety and contemplation-- it highlights her presence in it and
allows her to overcome the limitations imposed on women at this time. Re-
nouncing her marriage and founding a religious convent allows the heroine to
overcome the limits imposed on women in this epoch by reversing numerous
social and political hierarchies. De France turns Guilde luëc into a model of
holiness, since renunciation is the key to salvation promoted by the Church
during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as a signal of total rejection of the
secular, i.e. material, world, and a vehicle of redemption. Renunciation, then,
is presented as an alternate route for medieval women that allowed for real
opportunities, influence and autonomy.

Guildeluëc's route to individuality and autonomy through renunciation
is unique in the context of the many societal constraints imposed upon me-
dieval women. It is noteworthy that Marie de France presents this as a viable
option at a time when voluntary renunciation was almost exclusively reserved
for men. Women could attain a certain level of asceticism, but a noble woman
still within her fertile reproductive years would rarely be permitted to re-
nounce her marriage and the secular world, entirely of her own volition. Yet,
this is exactly what Guildeluëc does. Jean A. Truax notes that by the twelfth
century the image of the ideal woman in England had shifted to include An-
glo-Norman concerns. No longer was the Anglo-Saxon virginal recluse the
model of spiritual perfection, but rather the married lay woman whose reli-
gious responsibilities were confined to the domestic sphere. The ideal woman
remained active in the world by advising her husband on spiritual matters and
teaching her children the Christian way of life. There are historical exceptions:
most notably, the noble women who sought refuge in Robert of Arbrissel's
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early twelfth-century female monastic house in his famed Abbey of Fontevraud. The records show that there were certain high ranking women that did successfully renounce unwanted marriages in order to enter the religious life, however, these examples are rare, and Robert of Arbrissel himself had to defend the right for these ladies to remain in his foundation.¹

Even though Guildeluëc risks chastisement for an action discouraged for her sex and opposed to the current ideal of womanhood, she does not wait for Eliduc to make a decision that could adversely affect her. Instead, she takes control of the situation, forgives the innocent lover, and makes a decision that ensures the continued social standing of everyone involved, including herself. In a society where a woman's worth is linked to that of her husband, her children and her lineage, Guildeluëc is consciously breaking this determination for the benefit of her husband and his lover.

Guildeluëc's renunciation does more than simply allow a legitimate marriage for Eliduc and Guilliadun; its real power lies in its redemptive force. Through her voluntary act, Guildeluëc becomes the vehicle of redemption and salvation for herself, Guilliadun and Eliduc. Eliduc is forgiven for the murder of the sailor as well as the intent to commit adultery, or worse, bigamy through Guildeluëc's selflessness. Guilliadun is forgiven for the lust implicit in her having initiated the gift exchange with Eliduc, i.e. the traditional initiation of romantic involvement with respect to courtly love. Guildeluëc's redemptive force makes her the proxy of forgiveness and ultimate salvation for her husband and his lover. This position bestows a large measure of power to Guildeluëc, and her portrayal renders her a model of Christian behavior in the secular world. Guildeluëc ends the story as a saintly figure for all who hear her story, male or female, to imitate and venerate. In the end, all three protagonists achieve spiritual redemption as a result of Guildeluëc's charity.

Renunciation transfers Guildeluëc from a system of monarchical hierarchy to one of papal and spiritual hierarchy, allowing her to climb a different sort of social ladder, one that inverts the feudal model of supremacy. Within the secular realm, Guildeluëc is bound by a two-fold system of obligation: first, by the patriarchal system as subject to her husband, and second, by the feudal system that binds her to a king. In both instances of subjugation, the men in charge are weak. Throughout the story, Eliduc continues to make poor choices that worsen his initial conflict. He violates his trust with the second king by kidnapping his daughter; he lies to his wife; he commits murder; he almost commits bigamy. Eliduc is spared from being too harshly judged because he is betrayed by the king, whose weakness is affirmed when he listens to jealous slanderers instead of trusting his most valiant knight. The King employs poor judgment when he exiles Eliduc; exile being the only reason Eliduc seeks out a new King, which leads to meeting and falling in love with Guilliadun. In a way, then, the first King is partially responsible for Eliduc's poor
decisions. Despite the weakness and poor decisions of these men, Guildeluëc, as a woman, is still subject to them. For her, moving from the feudal realm into the spiritual is not only a matter of escaping bonds with a weak ruler, but also a flight from subjugation due to her sex. By entering the religious life, Guildeluëc enters the only realm where she could escape the adverse effects of the decisions of Eliduc and the King. In her own convent, Guildeluëc does not have to worry whether Eliduc will renounce her, abuse her or send her to a nunnery of his choosing in order to be with Guilliadun. Although she must rely on Eliduc a final time to donate the land upon which her convent is built, she creates a situation through her renunciation in which Eliduc is indebted to her. Renouncing the marriage herself thus gives her the power to control the direction of her life.

The fact that Eliduc grants Guildeluëc the lands upon which she builds her monastic foundation signifies a transfer of power from husband to wife. Historian Bruce L. Venarde states that once lands were donated for the purpose of founding a religious house, the occupants of that house had control of the economic rights to that property. This leaves Guildeluëc and the nuns in her convent in an advantageous position during a time when women’s monastic houses were flourishing. These economic rights offer considerable monetary gain for the convent: it reaps profit from mills, agricultural gains, or donations by nobles, pilgrims or the family of the nuns. In turn, this ensures the continuation of the monastic community by attracting women from prestigious families with powerful secular connections. Thus, Guildeluëc regains and surpasses the wealth that she voluntarily gives up in the secular world. The financial possibilities that she is granted as founder and abbess of her convent greatly surpass any wealth she may have tangentially amassed through her marriage to Eliduc and any son she may have raised. It also marks one way that Marie de France allows her female protagonist(s) to escape the limitations of her gender within feudal society and participate in traditionally male-dominated activities. Renunciation has made Guildeluëc a landowner and potential businesswoman in addition to spiritual leader, positions she never would have been granted as Eliduc’s wife.

While Guildeluëc’s renunciation negates any possibility of furthering her maternal lineage through the bearing of children, especially male children, it also erases any danger involved in childbirth. At this time, childbirth was a dangerous prospect -- a great risk to both mother and child with no guarantee that that child would survive long enough to bring any temporal glory to the family. Guildeluëc’s renunciation allows her to escape this realistic hazard. She gives up her ability to bear biological children, but she figuratively takes back her reproductive function through the nuns in her convent. By establishing a strong maternal ancestry during an age that witnessed the rise in importance of establishing powerful family trees, Guildeluëc recalls the
Tree of Jesse: Christ's mortal genealogy through his mother, which serves as the model for legitimizing maternal ancestry. The nuns become her spiritual daughters, and as a ‘mother,’ i.e. abbess, Guildeluèc is responsible for their education, their discipline and their well-being. In this way, she fits Truax’s description of the feminine ideal of spiritual perfection as the mother of thirty spiritual children. In the end, she has more children than she ever could have hoped for with Eliduc, without the risk of death. Her lineage lives on through the daughters of her convent.

The role of “mother” is intensified by the fact that Guildeluèc herself writes the Rule—the laws and regulations by which all members must abide—for the order. All subsequent generations of nuns will be her direct descendants as the daughters of the order that she has brought into existence, which she has ‘birthed.’ In this way, Marie de France nullifies the established order of the feudal system: she erases the hierarchy of patriarchal society by removing the role of men in the reproductive process; through spiritual reproduction it is Guildeluèc alone who ensures the survival of her own, entirely female, family line. Marie removes the masculine contribution in this spiritual community, which shifts the feudal idealization of the ‘mother’ from a tangential, behind-the-scenes influence to a direct and independent force. In Guildeluèc’s order, it is the maternal line that matters; there is no room for paternal lineage. This undermines the growing importance of paternal lineage during the twelfth century—for the purposes of land ownership and inheritance.

In addition to recuperating her reproductive faculties as spiritual mother, Guildeluèc’s position as founder of her order grants her a considerable amount of spiritual authority. Guildeluèc is able to establish her own Rule for her religious house. In the lai, there is not much attention called to this action, making it easy to miss its significance or even its existence: “La dame i fet sun chief veler,/ Trente nuneins ensemble od li;/ Sa vie e sun ordre establi” (1142-1144).² This power is proof of Guildeluèc’s spiritual and intellectual capacity. It also constitutes a fitting reward for her selflessness. Since Guildeluèc is the most spiritually transcendent individual in the story, she is the most qualified to write a monastic Rule. Marie again destabilizes patriarchal society, eliminating the need for male interference in spiritual matters. Just as she erases their need in biological reproduction by replacing it with spiritual reproduction, she eliminates the need for male domination in both practical and spiritual matters within her Order. Guildeluèc owns the land on which her Order is established, she controls the economic rights, and now, as author of her own Rule, she manages how the nuns in the house will live their daily lives. Marie eliminates female dependence on men, subverting the entire basis for patriarchal power, in both the secular and spiritual realms.

Guildeluèc, even when granted full economic rights to her monastery, still relies on male religious leaders for religious offices: confession/absolution
and the administering of the Eucharist. Guildeluëc’s scope of power in the Church is limited by society’s limitations imposed on her gender; although she has garnered the maximum amount of power that a woman possibly could in her circumstances. Marie challenges the limitations of power imposed upon women by both the Church and the patriarchy in the episode in the chapel, where Guildeluëc discovers Guilliadun unconscious and subsequently revives her using the flower remedy. It is a scene that scholar Anne Wilson determines is entirely Marie de France’s own creation. By distinguishing the original legend from the overlay by the author, thus the entire exchange between the women in this scene is Marie’s invention. The significance of this scene lies in its reversal of social and religious norms. Both feudal and Church hierarchy are undermined. When Guilliadun awakens, she recounts all that has happened regarding the deceit of Eliduc. Without knowing who Guildeluëc is, she admits that her lover has brought her to this land without revealing he already had a wife. Guildeluëc believes the girl is sincere, and, believing the love between her husband and his lover to be true and pure, she forgives them both, and steps aside to allow them to experience their love while she enters a monastery. At no point does Eliduc seek out a priest to confess his sins. Instead, Guilliadun takes it upon herself to confess his entire web of deceit, proving her own innocence in the affair. In doing so, Guilliadun takes away Eliduc’s voice. Eliduc is no longer credible, so Guilliadun must stand in as the trustworthy source; she usurps his voice and makes the necessary confession on his behalf. On the other side, it is not a priest, but rather Guildeluëc, who is the recipient of the confession in this scene; it is she who forgives the lovers and takes up the penance to absolve her husband’s sins. By taking on this priest-like role, Guildeluëc contests the Church’s power structure, in which men alone can hear confession and grant absolution. This entire scene is a symbolic feminine rendering of confession/absolution: the validity of the confession and forgiveness enacted by these women is confirmed by the fact that Eliduc is allowed to marry Guilliadun. Their marriage is a legal union, no longer the source of potential adulterous sin. The validity is, moreover, reinforced by the fact that the scene takes place within the holy hermit’s chapel, a spiritually privileged space. The fact that this aspect of the scene is Marie’s invention underscores its goal to undermine masculine authority. Marie erases, yet again, the need for men altogether: a priest is not necessary for forgiveness or absolution, and even the masculine sinner is rendered obsolete through his lover’s admission on his behalf. In this scene, Marie has managed to destabilize imposed hierarchical models, freeing women of their dependence on men to achieve redemption. Because the official formula of confession is never uttered, it remains symbolic and avoids potential heretical accusations against the author.

It is in the spiritual realm that Guildeluëc achieves a privileged position,
a position she could not have occupied in the feudal realm. The author has opened up a world in which birth is second to merit in the social hierarchy. Renunciation allows Guildeluëc to free herself from the bonds and chains of feudal society; she escapes the world of limited social mobility and avoids the traditionally established path that a noble woman was expected to follow, to attain a level power, prestige and autonomy unavailable to her in the temporal world. Her influence extends beyond the walled convent, elevating her image to a model of Christian behavior. It is this perfect expression of Christianity that inspires Eliduc and Guilliadun to enter the religious life themselves. Gil-lliadun enters into Guildeluëc’s convent as an extremely prestigious member. The author describes the relationship of the women in the convent:

Ensemble od sa femme premere  
Mist sa femme que tant ot chere.  
Ele la receut cume sa serur  
E mt li porta grant honur.  
De Deu servir l’amonesta  
E sun ordre li enseigna. (1165-1170)

The term “sister” clearly implies that Guildeluëc treats Guilliadun with honor and affection. However, there is a clever double meaning in this term: on the one hand, it signals a familial relationship, in which these women are equal; on the other hand, as a religious sister, it signals an unequal abbess/nun, teacher/student relationship. In this way, Guildeluëc receives Guilliadun into her convent as she would any other entering novice who would submit to the abbess’ absolute authority. The latter meaning of “sister” is solidified by the fact that Guildeluëc is instructing Guilliadun in her Order. Guildeluëc’s role as teacher to Guilliadun asserts her dominance. As abbess and author of the Rule, Guildeluëc’s instruction is incontestable. The conclusion of the story in the convent, then, is a reversal of the feudal order of supremacy that stratifies society based on both gender and class. In the feudal world, Eliduc, as a man and husband, would occupy the highest position of power, followed by Guilliadun, the daughter of a king, and finally Guildeluëc, a noble, but not royal, woman. At the end of Marie de France’s story, the spiritual hierarchy has inverted the feudal one. On top is now Guildeluëc as perfect Christian model and teacher/abbess. Next, is Guilliadun, who has remained innocent throughout the story, but who is not as spiritually elevated as Guildeluëc. Finally Eliduc, though forgiven and redeemed, is the one most in need of Guildeluëc’s sacrifice and charity and, thus, occupies the lowest level of the hierarchy among the three characters.

Guildeluëc’s role as intercessor and willing ‘sacrifice’ is solidified in her charitable acts that recall the selflessness and sacrifices of Christ. First, in a scene analogous to that of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, Guildeluëc
brings Guilliadun ‘back to life’ by awakening her from the death-like state with the natural flower remedy. Second, parallel to Jesus’ sacrifice of his own life to redeem the entirety of mankind, Guildeluëc literally and figuratively gives up her life to redeem her husband and his lover by taking the veil. She is giving up the life that she has experienced up to this point: foregoing any wealth, power and reputation she may have acquired, as well as giving up any future glory through her lineage by severing her reproductive duty. On the metaphorical level, she is giving up her life because renunciation is an act that signifies death to and removal from the secular world, whereby all familial ties are severed. Entering a religious house signals a vow to reject the material world in favor of the spiritual; the monastery becomes an intermediary space, a suspended reality between life and death--it is a foot in the door to heaven while one is still in the mortal world.

Marie’s portrayal of Guildeluëc as selfless, intelligent and spiritually transcendent turns her into a model of holiness. Her spiritual significance does not begin until she renounces her marriage; it is her position as autonomous abbess that is lauded as the ideal of Christian womanhood in this text. Marie challenges the contemporary idealization of womanhood through marriage and reproduction by depicting an independent woman who, through her process of individuality and self-discovery, solidifies her place within the systems of the story. Guildeluëc challenges the belief that women require male support and dependence by depicting a female character who single-handedly eliminates the need for a masculine presence. Marie glorifies the solitary woman, the independent woman who makes a conscious choice to create agency through her act of abnegation. By reinstating Guildeluëc’s reproductive role in a spiritual mode, Marie ensures that she does not lose her womanhood. She blends the two ideals, the ideal of the lay mother and the ideal of the religious abbess, to create a new ideal of womanhood: one where a woman can be at once mother, daughter, sister, leader, teacher, and a self-sufficient individual.

No longer is Guildeluëc the nebulous wife-figure, betrayed, dismissed, deceived by her husband, cast aside for a younger, nobler woman; rather, she is Christ-like, redeemer, perfection, powerful abbess, a Christian ideal. Her choice to act drives the action at the end of the story, allowing the lovers to wed without committing adultery, and then serving as their inspiration to follow her footsteps into the religious life. In the end, it is this act that she voluntarily performs that becomes the lai’s central message and morality. It pulls the focus of the narrative away from its title character, Eliduc, and makes Guildeluëc the real heroine.

Guildeluëc’s position as central heroine reverses the traditional gender roles, with Eliduc becoming the marginalized, weak figure, while the women are the morally strong, independent and active central characters. In this final lai, Marie de France presents a solution that is determined by the women,
confirmed by her remarks about the female protagonists’ names at the beginning of the tale:

D’eles deus ad li lais a nun
Guildeluëc ha Gualadun.
Elidus fu primes nomez,
Mes ore est li nuns remuez,
Kar des dames est avenue. (21-25)

Marie attests that the lai should be named after the women, and not Eliduc, since the women have shifted the focus from Eliduc to themselves. Guildeluëc especially pulls herself out of the margins of the story to become a relevant, autonomous individual, deserving of a real role and place at the center of the story. Her action gives her a voice that is entirely separate from her husband. Most importantly, her renunciation confers upon her an acknowledged identity in both the secular and spiritual realms. What Marie illuminates, then, is that the search for holiness for women in the central Middle Ages is at the same time a search for individuality. Ferrante and Hanning posit that love is the vehicle through which the characters in the Lais explore notions of the self (5); this notion is more nuanced in Eliduc, where it is specifically through spiritual love, via renunciation, that Guildeluëc discovers her true identity. The emphasis on spiritual love is significant in that it reveals the triumph of religious modes over feudal ones in the search for the individual. When Guildeluëc’s marriage and feudal bonds are renounced, her gender no is longer a hindrance to her transcendence; instead, it becomes the vehicle for religious fulfillment, spiritual elevation, and discovery of her true identity where she can occupy a position of power, prestige and autonomy.

In a collection of courtly lais whose religious references, when mentioned at all, often subvert the intended dogmatic meaning, it is surprising that the final message would uphold such traditional religious morality. Additionally, it is surprising that the resolution to the ubiquitous love triangle, so secular in nature, is accomplished through spirituality. It is not until the protagonists enter into the religious life that they are able to love each other without exclusion or guilt, because their love is directed first and foremost toward God. This is the only lai that ends with all three members of the love triangle happy and in continual contact. It is appropriate, then, that at the very end of the final lai Marie introduces spiritual love for the first time, for it is this form of love that finally resolves the pervasive issue of the love triangle that is present in each lai. Although it removes Guildeluëc from the triangle, spiritual love, ironically, brings the three characters closer together in the end (Ferrante and Hanning 18-19); they live separately but are indefinitely connected through spiritual love.

Marie de France resolves the issue of the secular love triangle and, in do-
ing so, creates a new triangle, a spiritual triangle, where Guildeluëc occupies the top position as well as the connecting point between Eliduc and Guil- liadun. Marie de France cleverly uses a well-known religious practice usually reserved for men to grant her female protagonist the agency that was mostly denied to women at the time. It would, however, be remiss not to mention these advantages that do, in fact, result from her renunciation, whether as a consequence of selfish motives, as a happy accident, or as fitting reward for her magnanimity. This act, which makes Guildeluëc ‘dead’ to the world, actually keeps her alive and relevant in the text; indeed, her removal from the profane world leaves her memory even more firmly planted in it.

In the end, Marie de France presents the audience with an alternative way of life: she presents renunciation as the point of departure toward, simultaneously, spiritual transcendence and female agency. Though this option was not available for all women of all social classes and of all ages, it served as a real option for some and as a realistic fantasy for others. Marie de France's story confirms that the search for individual holiness was just as desired by women as it was by men—a notion that becomes even more prevalent with the emergence of the Beguines and the Third Order of Franciscans in the following century. Marie de France presents a world where the satisfaction of this search for holiness is achieved the same way for both sexes: through renunciation. Thus, she erases gender barriers and elucidates the benefits of renouncing the feudal order in favor of the religious life. She subverts patriarchal hierarchy and destabilizes the idealization of wifehood and motherhood. Through her deceptively simple love story, Marie offers an alternative solution to marriage and bearing children for women in twelfth-century medieval society. This solution could allow for real opportunities for women as it offers a possibility of achieving influence and agency.

NOTES

1 For more on Robert d'Arbrissel and his foundation(s), see both references by Delarun. Fontevraud consisted of four separate houses, including one for men, one for lepers, and two houses for women. According to the documentation, Robert insisted that a woman should be the leader of the Order after his death.

2 Clare of Assisi is considered the first woman to write a Rule for her Order, which is modeled after Francis of Assisi’s Rule, born from the guidelines provided by Pope Gregory IX. Clare’s Rule was approved in 1253, more than half a century after Eliduc. Marie de France is, therefore, not drawing upon a past or contemporary model by positioning the heroine as the founder of the Order.

3 Penny Schine Gold, among others, points out that religious women were dependent on men for their spiritual, and often material, needs.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Poetry

What is left
Annabel Banks

Commingling of saliva, genital juices, blood and gametes. Once, we’d made a girl. A living construct of the forces that brought us together when the music was too loud and tinny to dance to well but we did it anyway, his hand on the back of my neck, creeping round to my throat once we had moved outside, down to my breasts, a pinch of the nipple and I was gone. The blood is metallic on my tongue. Tinny as music.

Continuation of frustration. Once, there was a reason. Then came the banging on the door. He told them to go away but I let them in. You have to keep him from me, I said, so they took me with them. Asked my name. Used it often. The taller one gave me antibacterial wipes for my lips, my chin. I hadn’t realised how much blood I had on my face until I wiped it away. 'It’s not violence,' I told them. Well, it was—but only like biting one of my own nails, to spit out on the floor and think about filing later, when the tv is on and he sits beside me, hand on my thigh.

Consumption of the self. Once she’d gone, what was left? I want to say I swallowed and then showed him my tongue. I wanted to say I spat the blob onto the floor, psycho-style, and cursed him. But I didn’t. Just brought my fingertips to my lips, removed the piece of flesh and placed it on my saucer. How he was hopping, roaring. He wasn’t calling the police. So I did. From the landline in the hall.

Consummation of the relationship. Once, we would listen to each other. We were talking about whether we should buy some more limes to chop and freeze, preparing for the set of drinks that gets us through the day together – sweet, bitter, sour, hazy—when the next moment I had his earlobe between my teeth and was biting down, clicking my teeth together in a satisfying snip, and separating a glob of flesh from the heavy hanging lobes.
Anamesa
Elegies to Failed Revolutions, Holidays in Oklahoma
Charcoal on burned book paper

Tom Pazderka
Falling Twilight
Charcoal on burned book paper

Tom Pazderka
Anamesa

Untitled
Acrylic and oil on canvas

Camille Louise Maupas-Oudinot
Intricacies
Acrylic ink silkscreened on paper

Alison R. Underwood
No Sabí Que Ponerme
Colonia del Sacramento, Uruguay
Digital photograph

Cheryl Jiménez Frei
Moby Depth
Magazine and acrylic on linen paper

Loie Merritt
Anamesa
Tony stood on the dock, as big as he'd ever been, his face impassive as a long-haul trucker’s as he looked out over the fog on Lake Vermillion. That morning, as we'd passed through Askov-Finlayson on the way to Ely, I'd turned the Swedish paper my father'd brought me over in my hands, reading and re-reading the headline: “Självmördare brukar inte stänga fönstret efter sig.” This means “Suicides usually don't shut windows after themselves.” Självmördare translates roughly to ‘those who commit suicide,’ but the literal translation is ‘self-murderers,’ another example of the unabashed progressiveness the Swedes exhibit: they'd rather explain something frankly, regardless of personal embarrassment. Death is not an issue of dignity; Bengt Ekerot, in his svart käpa, comes for us all. In Sweden you never have that annoying commonality you find in American obituaries which tell you everything about a person's life except the reason they've left their body.

People commit suicide. From the latest statistics we can derive that at least every fifteen minutes in the United States, a person leaps from an unconcerned girder, aloof from a lake, or a wide river in turmoil, or calm. All it really takes is to stop standing, to give up, to concede, atop something as grand as a steel finger full of offices or as humble as a street corner beside traffic. If I broaden this thought-question to include the world, even by the lowest estimates, ninety-one abandon their lives every hour. The English word ‘sui-
cide,’ intentionally or unintentionally, connotes a distance between the representational word, or ord, and the act, but there are no doilies to obscure the meaning in Swedish; it doesn’t hide the violence that robs the living – parents, siblings, children – of the person they cherish, unique in this case because the thief and the object being thieved are the same. Here, through translation the meaning becomes clearer. My mind’s going sideways. I apologize.

Tony wasn’t committing suicide, taking off his fall jacket and jeans at the end of the dock pointing into Lake Vermillion; I don’t know why I keep thinking about suicide when I remember him. His denuding probably would have looked dangerous to any sober bystander, if not outright stupid, something only a jättefårskalle would do. It was dark and that magic that either always existed in Ely, or that arose from the rock outcroppings, thousands of pine trees, bears, or björnar, in and near Ely whenever we’d visit, had come up around us along with the dark, the dock, and the fog of night. In Swedish, time modifiers like always, alltid, or never, aldrig, can only come at the end of the sentence, unless, as my Swedish teacher says, “You’re a native speaker, and native speakers can do anything in their own language.” When she said this, at least once a week during our final semester of Swedish, the class would laugh. I would sit and percolate, secretly wondering: can I become a native speaker without changing the geography of my birth?

Everyone else was back at the party, 800 feet higher, up by the cabins where the forest began. There were no sober bystanders nearby, just us. I had no idea what he was doing. In Swedish class, as in most language classes, it is important to memorize several phrases that mean the same thing, such as, “I have no idea.” That way you can answer any question put to you grammatically and correctly without comprehending what was said. My favorite Swedish variant of this – totally acceptable game – is “jag vet inte.”

These thought-directions have nothing to do with Tony. Aspirations and apparitions in all denominations walk into and through my head any time of the day. More often my brain is like a buffet overrun by starving pirates, if one can make a believable comparison between marauding thoughts and unkempt eye-patched scallywags who swab decks and sing songs about how crusty their sea lives are. Dr. Kemp says this is caused by my Tvångssyndrom, which can manifest in what’s called “unwanted persistent thoughts” that come in unannounced, guest or gatecrasher, to the party of my consciousness. I’m getting too far afield again. I talk a lot, and in my head everything is connected. This might not be true. I apologize.

As I was saying, Tony had taken off his jacket, his pants, and now his shirt. I could see his bröstvärta, already at twenty-one nestled into and covered by his thick brösthår, not his kiskahår. The English word could be used for both meanings, but don’t let this fool you into thinking that English is more utilitarian or utterly representative than other languages. Most nipples are
beautiful, but some are neutral, and Tony’s were neutral but beautiful I guess, small and beautiful, in the way that most things pertaining to life are viscerally beautiful while they are alive, but later not so much. Self-examination isn’t necessarily negative. Sometimes it reveals important trends or lessons that underlie the white noise that we wade through. One factor I’d like to reveal is my track record for finding smaller things more beautiful or appealing than taller or bigger things – at least in matters of matter; the physical world. Often people say “real world” when what they mean is the corporeal, physical, or elemental constituents that build up into mountains, canoes, cherry pies, humans, the full body of material that we see and consider real. Is my preference for physically smaller things only specific to my own likes/dislikes or can I broaden it out to humans as a whole, or most humans, possibly, because of the effect that babies or miniature dioramas of single family houses and railroad stations, have on people? More study is needed.

Tony paused his disrobing and looked up at the crystal sky of stars, a veritable marquee of history beyond time or conception, and then at me. “When you ripped that burp in Scottsdale and realized right after that you should have shut it up were you as embarrassed as when you threw up in that nunnery in Italy?”

He shot me a smile, followed by a Tonyface, a nonverbal communication method we had developed over the twenty-seven years we’d known each other. This Tonyface was a common suffix to a bold and humorous statement, his lips thrust out in a provocative pucker, his right eyebrow raised in a question. Sort of a “Sexy/Kiss Me/Illogical-Mr. Spock-face.”

“It wasn’t at all like that. In Scottsdale I was embarrassed. In Rome I was terrified.”

Tony did a slow dance, turning a lazy circle while spinning his shirt above his head. Tony often moved with real grace, which is rare in people his size. After rotating 360-degrees he chucked the shirt at me. It snagged on my neck and shoulder, and I let it lie there.

“Why were you terrified?”

The German language has a slang term for vomiting: ubergeben. The literal meaning is “to over-give.” I took German in high school, retaining whispers of the language that would interfere with my Swedish years later. I know of no slang word for vomit in Swedish, but that doesn’t mean one doesn’t exist; most languages have slang words for vomiting.

“I should have been embarrassed, but I was stuck in the Swedenborgian hell of obsessive worry and compulsive action to fix it; it was three in the morning. I was in a nunnery. I was sticking my finger down my throat. You had to speak Italian, German, or both to stay there, and explaining myself would have been hard to do in those languages.”

“Especially while vomiting,” Tony smiled sourly at me; he was pleased
with his joke.

“Especially at three in the morning.” I returned the smile, but he couldn’t see it. The moon was behind me. I reached down to the six pack, took out another Corona, opened it with my lighter. At that age acceptable beer only came in two flavors: Guinness and Corona. There was no cooler, but the radio said the air temperature was 39-degrees. “I was terrified because I thought I was dying.”

Tony scrunched his eyebrows together into one catuspisus\textsuperscript{16} cringing above his iconic nose, a nose that reminded me of the statue of Abraham Lincoln at Mount Rushmore, which I first saw in Alfred Hitchcock’s 1959 smash hit \textit{North by Northwest,}\textsuperscript{17} then again with my dad on a road trip when I was ten. Huge, friendly, granite.

“I remember this. At the time, your thing was about needles or glass.”

Tony’d always been gentle with me about my fears. Most people couldn’t talk about it, and when they tried it came out quickly, caustic, and accusatory. As with most things Tony talked about, it was backed with a bit of honey; it made one feel confident and sweet. He looked around for his drink, a Pineapple-Malibu, on the wooden banister of the weather-scarred National Park Services dock. Tony drank beer when there was nothing else but preferred “girly drinks.” In Sweden, hard alcohol, \textit{sprit}, is only sold at a \textit{systembolaget}, a government-run liquor store. You can buy low-alcohol beer, \textit{öl}, in a grocery store, wine, \textit{vin}, and high-alcohol beer at a \textit{systembolaget}. \textit{Öl}, \textit{vin}, and \textit{sprit}, like the \textit{vatten i Vermillionsjön},\textsuperscript{18} is uncountable, unquantifiable, an important consideration when formulating plural versions of words in a foreign language. Either way, it’s going to cost about two to three times the price that you’d pay in the United States.

“It wasn’t until after my flight to Norway for my dad’s wedding that my fears morphed from a fear that there was no afterlife into a fear that there \textit{was} an afterlife, then into a fear that I was going to swallow a needle, or glass, or something sharp that would cut my throat and insides, and send me to that afterlife – er, no afterlife, perhaps. That’s what I’d felt in Rome. As I awoke I had the distinct sensation of inhaling a needle, then tried not to breathe as I silently moved to the bathroom in the hall, and forced myself to throw up, hoping to bring up the needle from the depths of my throat.

‘Afraid I would cut my gizzard,’ my uncles would say. They’d call it a ‘sliced-gizzard-o-phobia, if I’d ever told them. Once, they were on the back deck at Larry’s house—“

“Your uncle that lives in Lindström?”\textsuperscript{19}

“Yeah.” I have seven uncles. “It was this game they’d started on Larry’s land up north in Pine City, where he’d parked the trailers.”

Between fishing and smoking weed, a bunch of my uncles and cousins had tried to open bottles of beer with obtuse objects. They’d found that it
was hard, but still possible, to open a beer with the round end of a ball-peen hammer.

“Eric was trying to impress our uncles, show them that he could open beer with antique tools.”

I’d believed that in Sweden, people were too interested in equality and simple, progressive pursuits to be caught trying to impress, and that perhaps I was one of the very few of my family who had retained this trait or at least tried to value this trait, if not always adhering to it exactly, which was no doubt passed down to me through my Swedish grandfather’s, my morfars, blood, or blod. I was wrong.

“When my family gets together my uncles impress each other by showing how few teeth they have left.” Tony smiled, showing that he wasn’t a player in this game.

“I remember you telling me not to miss the ‘toothless table’ when I was meeting people at Nikki’s graduation.”

Morfar doesn’t simply mean ‘grandfather,’ it means ‘mother’s father.’ This is how progressive Swedes are: they commonly refer to family members in ways that allow you to trace the lineage naturally, grammatically. This might seem like I’m going off track but when it happens in conversation it’s okay, Dr. Kemp says. I should try to cut it down if it happens in my mind though, especially if it leads to anxiety, depression, or something on the edge of självmord, like Tony’s Pineapple-Malibu on the edge of the banister. Or if it brushed up against depression, which looks like an English word, and is, but it’s also a Swedish word that means, according to the Swedish Practical Dictionary that I own,20 “a condition of general emotional dejection and withdrawal; sadness greater and more prolonged than that warranted by any objective reason,” which is the same as the English definition, I guess. I like it that it means the same thing in Swedish and English. That does not depress me. It does the opposite.21

“Eric’s the blonde cousin, right? The wrestler? The one that looks like that surfer from Fast Times at Ridgemont High?”

“Sean Penn with a dye job, yeah. He’s sitting on the back patio, a Huber Bock in one hand, a ball-peen hammer in the other. He’s trying to take the cap off the beer with the round end, but just smashes the whole bottleneck into the beer, hardly any brown shards of glass on the floor. Now the bottle is shaped like a miniature brown penguin with no head, a ragged, ominous mountain top where its neck should be. He gets up, goes inside the house, and comes back with a metal strainer and a pint glass, pours the beer into the pint glass through the metal strainer, sits back, and drinks it.”

“You ran away into the garage, got the basketball, started hooping-it-up, and listening to the Bee-Gees, right?”

“That was the year before. I felt a flutter of fear and then just admiration,
wonder. Didn’t everyone share my fear? Wasn’t it normal to be afraid of swallowing glass? My uncle Tom—"

“I forgot you had an Uncle Tom. Is that funny only to English majors?”

“That’s not funny to anyone. My Uncle Tom goes – Think y’should drink that? Maybe y’should get another. Wouldn’t want ya to cut yer gizzard. Eric says – Naw, I’ll be fine. Wouldn’t want to waste a beer.”

“You’ll have to wait to tell me the rest of this – I’ve got to jump in.”

Tony bent in preparation to leap into the dark water, but his face turned puzzled. He looked down. He still had his underwear on. I kept forgetting we’d drunk a lot and everything was slower, the distances greater. Emotional stress can cause people to disassociate from their lives and even everyday situations, becoming part of the “walking asleep,” distancing them from even mundane things. Alcoholic Stress, or stress caused consuming vast amounts of alcohol can be enjoyable but decreases your intellectual acuity, causing you to overlook things like the fact you’re still wearing underwear.

Tony took off his underkläder – in German, it’d be his unterwescher – and did a little dance where he shook his thing at me, and dove sideways and backwards into Lake Vermillion. I rushed to the edge of the dock, the brygga, worried that he would injure himself, never come up, commit unintentional självmörd, and I’d be left in this life with only two people who understood me. This wouldn’t happen until almost fifteen years later and not via anything as dramatiskt as självmörd.

Sometimes Swedish sounds eerily close to English, and it’s not always because English is an amalgam of Romance languages and Germanic languages. Swedish is a Germanic language, which would make you think it’s harsh, but the opposite is true. Swedish often sounds like furtive whispers coming from another room on the rim of auditory perception. Tony was forced out of this world on a crest of blood. I guess you could say it was a form of självmörd in the sense that he didn’t do anything to stop it. He could have altered his diet, quit smoking or not smoked very much, but as the coroner’s report read, “no external factors exacerbated or contributed to the cause of death.” But we all knew that was hästskit; smoking is bad for your health. Technically speaking, Tony died of en skedhjärta.

My mind moves on, imagining that Tony lived in an archaic or ancient society that believed the seat of the soul was in the heart instead of the brain. My mind sees shamans under a cacophony of stars or robed wise men gathered in fire-lit caves looking out over the Mediterranean discussing how Tony left us, deciding that his soul was double-faceted and had lived on this earth as a teacher for too long. He evinced a combination of such holy attributes as utter calm, confidence, ability to understand and describe spiritual presences, purposes, and worldly know-how like fixing lawnmowers just by looking at them. These attributes were rarely found together in the same person. Internal
pressures had finally overcome this holy merger of two souls within Tony and the beatitude they exuded, causing them to detach. Perhaps Tony was what New Age practitioners call a “walk-in,” one soul native, the other extraterrestrial, a visitor who works to heal. Maybe these two souls needed to explore the world separately for awhile, having been so closely attached for thirty four years. More, if you count the time he was in-utero.

All of this wandering in my mind about Tony’s death sounds poetic but the reality, at least for those around him, was absolute hästskit. I spent hours trying to fix that lawnmower, which had no earthly reason to quit on me, but when I took it to Tony, he touched it for twenty seconds. He took the gas cap off, turned it over in his hand, looked at the underside, and screwed it back on. One pull of the ripcord and it was fixed. I guess Tony and that lawnmower had something in common. If only we’d had a substitute Tony on that day in July who could take off the real Tony’s gas cap, turn it over in his hand (the substitute Tony), look at its underside, and pull a ripcord that would bring Tony back to life.

It was easier to tell people afterwards that Tony had died of en hjärtattack, what the dictionary defines as “damage to an area of heart muscle that is deprived of oxygen, usually due to blockage of a diseased coronary artery,” but this was not accurate. Scientifically speaking, or medically, I guess, he died of en skedhjärta. But I’m “talking my way down an extra road,” as my grandmother used to complain. My grandmother is not connected to the story. She was from Czechoslovakia, which doesn’t exist anymore. She, like Tony and her native country, also doesn’t exist anymore, at least not in the way that I knew her.

At times, depending on yet to be determined variables, my Tvångssyndrom, like the moon, waxes and wanes. This increase and decrease of my symptoms can express itself in myriad ways, leading me to drown in self-reflection or self-observation of my inner thoughts, emotions, and natural body processes. Is there a better way to say “self-observation,” in one word, perhaps? In Swedish? These types of examinations might have become worse since Tony’s death, but I have not discovered other contributing factors that increase or decrease my symptoms so this is only hypothesis; proof is yet to be determined. The moon waxes and wanes for completely different reasons: the light from the sun becomes obscured in different constructions as the Earth moves in front of it. We can see the moon because it accepts reflected light both from the sun and the Earth even though the Earth produces less than 100 millionth of the light the sun does.

Back in the past, and forever in my mind whether I want it to be or not, Tony jumps into Lake Vermillion. Thirty-nine degrees air temperature, and we couldn’t tell how cold the water was, but it was black.

“Ha det bra, Tony,” I yelled at his naked back as it dipped and rose out of
the water. “*Ha det bra!*” I set my beer on the railing of the timeworn dock, or viewing platform, the *brygga*, and cupped my hands around my mouth.

“*Ha det bra,*” or “have it good,” is a common way to say goodbye in Swedish, akin to “take it easy” or “see you later.” You can say “*Hej då,*” or “Hey there” for both greeting and leaving in some provinces like *Norrland*. Another way to say goodbye in Sweden, although it is used only for loved ones who are near death, is “*Vi ses i Nangijala,*” or “*We’ll see each other in Nangijala,*” which comes from a famous book for children by the author of *Pippi Långstrump*, called *Bröderna Lejonhjärta*. In the book, two brothers die one day apart, the first from jumping out of a window during a fire, the second from consumption, or *tuberkulos*. As the first brother dies, the second brother says to him, “*Vi ses i Nangijala.*” *Nangijala* is the second life, not heaven, but the second in a series of afterlives. The brothers do meet in *Nangijala* and team up to ride horses, *hästar*, fight dragons *drakar*, and eventually *dör igen,* only to move on to another life, still not heaven but full of adventure. This caused a problem in Sweden with *barnsjälvsmördare* because children wanted to take part in the adventure in *Nangijala*. This sudden interest in child-suicide in turn caused many frank conversations between parents and children about not killing yourself. Frank is also a name. “Frank” comes from the name “Francis,” often considered a “girly name,” and it has fallen from favor since it was popular in the 1950s. Now it is below the top 500 commonly used names for boys. The name Francis is an Anglicization of an Italian name “Francesco.” One name that was popular for boys in the 1950s and is on the rise again is Swedish in origin: Frederick. Frederick is an Anglicization of Frederik, which, when separated into its parts, Fred-er-ik, means “peaceful reign.” If you’ve ever called out to a friend across a field full of Frisbee players who is working on an upside down bike, “Hey, Fred,” what you’ve really just yelled is “Hey, Peace!” I suppose Freud & Jung would have a lot to laugh at if they used all of their comedic knowledge to make a map of the directions of my mind.

Often you’ll find “*Vi ses i Nangijala*” alongside the Swedish words for “survived by” written in Swedish obituaries. Tony didn’t hear me. I yelled “*Ha det bra*” again and accidentally knocked my beer off the railing into the lake. It wasn’t the first beer, empty or full, to go into the lake that night. Earlier we’d been trying to remember poetry, or *dikt*, by Jack Kerouac and had sort of accidentally thrown our beers into the lake when we couldn’t come up with the verses. Tony was still swimming. I cupped my mouth again, began to say, “*Ha det bra,*” changed it to “*Hej då,*” sighed and slumped my shoulders inside my stolen mechanic’s jacket, gave up and said, “*Vi ses i Nangijala.*” More than fifteen years later I’d still be trying to say goodbye to Tony, although for a different reason.

*Alla de här möblerna i mitt huvud* about Tony still exists. I stumble over it every day. When I wake up my house is arranged the way it was the day be-
fore he died. Every day when I wake up, remembrance of his death settles on me like a brass bell made into a helmet and I rearrange my furniture to reflect the way things are now. Dr. Kemp says this is only natural but that I should avoid replacing memories with mnemonic devices or placeholders like words in other languages. He says that even though I have OCD, it doesn’t mean that my trajectories of thought are always based in mental illness. I say persistent unwanted thoughts are only natural in people with OCD. He says that sometimes, if I’m careful, I might discern whether the patterns of my mind are merely OCD-trampolining from thought to thought or if I’m actually projecting. I say that just because the furniture doesn’t exist corporally doesn’t make it any less real; in fact, it’s more real.

NOTES
1 svart kåpa – black cowl. Bengt Ekerot’s most famous role was a cowled Death in Det Sjunde Inseglet, famously called “a horror story for children,” in 1958.
2 Although “surrender” is a synonym of both “abandon” and “concede,” there is no similarity of these words to suicide. From the outside, suicide may seem peaceful, poetic, or a “noble death,” but it’s exactly contrapositive, not only to each sweet marrow of life – stuffed animals, an incandescent cup of oatmeal on a bright white winter morning, the clasp of your beloved’s hand before orgasm crushes you and makes you egoless, the axiomatic good book and tea in bed – it is antithetic to everything the suicider, the självmordare, seeks. If it wasn’t so appalling this exact opposite effect of what is sought and what is realized would be wildly funny. Examples of irony this exact are rare. Sought: noble exit that ends problems. Reality: grisly act of cowardice that stands forever in the minds of loved ones, bystander witnesses, and the casual fisherman who finds your body and vomits into his catch-bucket, who won’t be able to get on his boat for four months until he can stop associating it with that young mother who stopped standing atop the Arcola High Bridge in Stillwater the same day he caught six trout, before it turned from a good day, a good day really, into some dime-store novel scene or cheesy crime drama. As a person afraid of death, it’s strange that I think about suicide. Dr. Kemp says that whether you’re afraid or not, it’s natural to think about our endings, either planned or spontaneous. The word “spontaneous” makes me think of a flame bursting from the palm of a magician’s hand, or deciding to go out for lunch instead of eating pasta you’d brought from home. The mind is a very strange thing. My mind is a very strange thing.
3 jättefärskalle - a compound curse meaning “great idiot,” “dipshit,” “cabbage,” or “goof.” Any Swedish words can be combined to create compounds. This creates strange possibilities: järnlåderlappshus [iron-bat(as in the mammal)-house], godiskuddesrymdskepp [candy-pillow-spaceship]; anything you can imagine.
4 jag vet inte – I know not.
5 Wait, I just made that comparison. Believable? Maybe.
6 Tvångssyndrom - Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).
7 DSM IV, pg.237-238
8 I’m not actually sorry about this, but Dr. Kemp thinks I should apologize more because some people find my examination of things difficult, or laborious, to characterize it more negatively. “Are ‘normal’ people’s lives boring without ‘unwanted persistent thoughts’?” I ask him. “Everyone has unwanted persistent thoughts, to some degree,” he responds. “The difference is whether they interfere with or corrupt your daily life in ways that make it unlivable.” I guess mine, in addition to making my life interesting, interfere with my life in ways that make it difficult. This is one element of how my Tvångssyndrom makes my experiences, and my internal dialogue, non-traditional. Non-traditional does not mean...
difficult, or not difficult, for that matter. Non-traditional is a neutral term.

9 bröstvärta - literally: breast-warts, but mean “nipples” in translation.

10 brösthår - chest hair.

11 kiskahår – treasure chest of hair. This is a compound word. I just created it.

12 Once during a social event I corrected someone on his use of the term “real world.” “Don’t be a shitfuck, D, (a common shortening of my given name used by close friends, and people who consider themselves to be, or are trying to be, close friends. It can become very awkward when a someone who is not a “bosom friend,” as Anne of Green Gables termed it, tries to use this familiarism, or sobriquet). I hate it when you get all “grammery,” he said. I told him that 1. I was not getting “grammery,” because that’s not a word, and if it was, it would be about punctuation and actuation of English in a sentence; this was about perceived meaning versus true meaning, and 2. That by his lazy confluence of “real” and “physical” he was demeaning the interior world that I mostly reside in. His careless mistake or feeble vocabulary introduced a value judgment where one was unnecessary. Who’s to say that the arcs of violet left by ideas in my mind are any less substantive, valid, vital, or “real” than the apex of a mountain or the curb-like curve of a twinkie?

I once created a rating system for starfield brilliance, stjärnfältsljus, which took into account the brightness of the nearby cities or towns, the immediate cover of trees or light obstructions around the viewing area, the temperature of the air (coldness is a factor in clarity of the atmosphere). I modified this with other equations, which may not really be equations because they are homespun and not proven, such as: distance to viewing area, specific quotient of blankets available during viewing, ambience created by music, company, ease of conversation, and relative closeness of after-viewing restaurants, with a particular emphasis/bonus points awarded for Thai restaurants (the best star viewing is usually in the colder months, Thai food is pleasantly warming, therefore, more desirable in this model). This particular dock on Lake Vermillion scored second out of sixty-eight areas surveyed, losing only to one of the many Lake Georges in another part of the state. I admit that my data isn’t exact but I find it comforting, and it allows me to combine my need to fondly remember with my need to quantify.

14 Emanuel Swedenborg - 18th century Swedish philosopher whose spiritual eyes were opened, revealing that hell was a place where people put themselves, obsessively trapped in their own thoughts. All that it took to be released was to escape the circular, self-hating thoughts. Then you would ascend to heaven.

15 One requirement to stay in the nunnery, as a vacationing lodger, was that you must speak either German or Italian. This was a tactic to reduce the volume of guests, and in my opinion, curtail the volume of Americans staying there. The nunnery was less than two blocks from the Roman coliseum; it should have been in high demand. My command of German was mostly limited to utilitarian phrases like curse words, bathroom requests, and menu navigation. This was before I learned the rudiments of the Swedish language.

16 catuspilosus – Latin: the wormlike larva stage of a moth or butterfly.

17 Sometimes called “NXNW” by people who talk too much about movies.

18 vatten i Vermillionsjön – water of Lake Vermillion

19 A town in east central Minnesota, north of the Twin Cities, known for a high population of Swedish immigrants during the flood of Swedish migration to the United States, from about 1880-1923. Also the sister city to Tingsryd, Sweden, the original home of my morfar.

20 Why is the word “depression” in a book with only 120 pages designed to hold simple words necessary for basic communication titled The Swedish Practical Dictionary? Because depression is much more common than anyone knows or wants to admit.

21 What is the opposite of depression? I saw a movie once, titled The Opposite of Sex. It was a good movie, but never answered the question in the title. The opposite of depression isn’t happiness, because “sadness” is an inaccurate word for depression, not encompassing the malaise that occurs over a length of time, making time longer, relatively, than time during happiness. Part of the definition must include this effect on time. Depression = sorrow + time. Or Depression = sorrow over a length of time, or is it the opposite of this? If I’ve invented the equation for depression, I’d like to name it the Grindstone Equation.
I just invented this term to fit my needs. This is often how I think of the afterlife. If it exists, it's just barely beyond comprehension; it's forever around the next corner from my senses and what I do every day.

hästskit – compound word, “horse shit.”

New Age – negatively, a new religion that is a combination of pseudoscience and “old religion,” whatever that means, often with no historical roots. The term is used positively to describe a freeing form that allows for spiritual involvement without traditional dogma. I'm open to the idea of magic in the world, other explanations for my existence, experiences, and weird birth (I probably shouldn't be here, or maybe the New Agers would say, “Maybe you should be here,” in that cryptic way they say things without attaching them to meaning) but as the magic leaves my life it's harder and harder to see it in the world.

in-utero – the burlap sack in which we wait before birth that the stork carries to our parents.

Pippi Långstrump – “Pippi Longstocking.”

Bröderna Lejonhjärta – The Brothers Lionheart.

dörr igen – become dead again.

barnsjälsmördare – child suicide.

Freud & Jung – early 20th century vaudevillian performers known for comic, disagreeing banter, often billed with those famous Russian gentleman, the Marx Brothers. See “Who's on First: A Critical Essay of the Psychology of Humor in Baseball” This isn't true, but it's nice to imagine a world where Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung are Edwardian comedians instead of learned men of science obsessed with fittor och kukor. Cutting-edge physicists theorize that our universe could actually be a “multiverse” in which an infinite number of universes, and therefore Earths, exist. This theory, if true, insists that if we can imagine a scenario, then it must exist in some corner of the multiverse; e.g. there is a world where Freud & Jung went into comedy instead of psychology and maybe in this same world Tony is still alive.

Alla den här möblerna i mitt huvud – all of this furniture in my mind.

Projection, in this case, is a psychological term meaning “replacement of difficult emotions with other subjects as a mechanism of self-defense,” and can occur in anyone, not just sufferers of OCD. Dr. Kemp says that I must say it: Say it, Damian. I say it: Tony died of a skedhjärta. En skedhjärta. This makes Dr. Kemp very angry; his forehead and his ears get red. He yells, fingers twitching, “Say it in your native language!” I finally say it, but only twice, “A divided heart! His heart divided because he loved the world too much!” Dr. Kemp says he doesn't mind it when his patients cry. He keeps at least three boxes of tissues visible and within easy reach of his fainting couch. This is a strategy, like avoidance. Unlike avoidance, strategies are conscious entities, living loudly in people's minds. Avoidance is mostly subconscious, existing as an invisible scabbard that protects me (I mean, “you,” of course, as in the generalized “you” that's representative of everyone) from the difficulties of reality. People often say “Kleenex” when they mean “tissues.” This is inexact because “Kleenex” is a brand of tissues rather than the tissues themselves.
Poetry

Slip

Matthew Zundel

Look at it there,
brackish wetness burnishes that rough russet tone

“We’re alone
now, suddenly I’m hit”

I could slip.
I have slipped—breaking legs to F***ots in Manhattan.
& I slid
into the bowl of your clavicle, saved only by apprehension
on my part—
tactfully avoiding an estimation of absorption
on yours.

But attach I did
to your crafted waist
tight from your ardent pace
to your unyielding thighs
attentive yet animated
to your reassuring face
which instilled in me a confidence I had yet to know.

You call me brave—my bright shirt impersonating courage.

I’m not convinced.

It betrays
my nervousness
you say—
    highlights my insecurity,

but
    despite your attempts to conceal your
anxiety, your self-doubt, with cloth tones
darker than your skin—wet breaks through.
Look at it there,
  the somatic process you find awful,
  and awkward—deliquesced distress
  transfigured
  into
  allure
  affection
  foundation
I see it so I see through your calculated concealment.

  Sweat supplies your beauty—your vulnerability's in my eyes.
His father was a landscaper and a well driller. He shaped the land and drew water from the places where there was no water. To a young boy this was a kind of sorcery and his father reinforced these superstitions by amusing local kids with petty magic and sleight of hand. If he noticed the curious gaze of his clients’ children, he would stop his work, amble over and produce little paper birds from behind their ears. When the boy was older, he would ask his father how he did it and his father showed him. “The real trick,” he said, “is in the making all those birds.”

They had a little blue pickup with the family name stenciled on the side but, for work, his father used a red truck with a tall cable tool-rig hitched to the back. It towered into the sky like a prehistoric animal torn from the dreamlike past into the hard chilly reality of western Pennsylvania fog light. A thick red nylon tent gave the rig an arched and sagging back. If it was an animal, its spine was broken by its labor. In the bed, the used drill heads and bits tumbled like crustacean fossils, the worn tri-cones like discarded mysterious bones. His father laid the borehole first, the earth whining and resisting horribly. He slugged the hole to keep it cool and fluid. Then he slipped the bit into the subdued ground and the drill began to spud, twisting a quarter-turn as it rose and fell. After a while the few men who worked with him had to bail the borehole and empty the drill cuttings.

The boy watched all of this work, waiting for the moment when his father would raise his arm suddenly, halt the drill and extract it from deep within the
earth. Then his father would move back, arms crossed at a distance to watch as water began to choke and bubble from the wide-throated guide-pipe. The boy watched him concentrate, as if his will could make the water announce itself. At home, he would wash the caked mud from his fingers up to his wrists. He wrung his fat knuckles and massaged his palms. The sink basin splashed brown and red as his scabs fell away.

It was midnight in late August when the boy’s father had the accident that shattered his leg. The boy heard the mower start up outside and listened as it passed his window in circular rhythm—near then far then near again—like the hum of an insect, and yet soothing and familiar. The boy knew that his father suffered from troubled sleep. He would often wake in the night to do daytime chores, and to drink warm bottles of Spaten on the porch, only to appear groggy in the kitchen the next morning. The mower kept orbiting the grass outside his window until, close to the house, something happened. The motor kept whirring but the boy knew it wasn’t moving. He listened a long while and then got up and looked out the window. Below, haloed in the warped yellow light of the late summer moon, was the mower, upside down with its deadly guts spinning fast, and his father wriggling with one foot caught underneath. He looked small and frightened, like a worm after a rain storm.

The boy’s sister came home from college to see how they were. He was doing his homework on the couch when she arrived, and the first thing she said to him was, “Knock knock.”

“Who’s there?”
“To.”
“To Who?”
“Whom, dumbass. Get back to work.”

She was kinder to him than she had been before she left, funnier, but different too. Her body moved with a quick, sure poise, as if her near-adult knowledge also granted her physical toughness. She drank with their father. She waved her hands dismissively as she spoke about her friends and their interests and adventures. Although, sometimes he thought he could see her hands trembling.

He heard them fighting at night. Their father shouted and she laughed a thin cruel laugh that made the boy shrink. He heard them mention Mother and he turned over in his sheets. A long while later, his sister came into his room and climbed into the bed, holding him like she used to do when he was very little. While he pretended to sleep, she pulled him close and buried her face in his shoulder. She sighed heavily and spoke. “Get out of here,” she said, “Get out as fast as you can.” In the morning she was gone.

When his father was on his feet again, the boy made sure to wake early enough to see him off. Every day he would look at his father and remember the sound of his sister’s cruel laugh. On the days when there was no school,
the boy would rise as the low haze of the sun began to light over the long skeletal ridges of trees. He watched as big black forms honked their way through the sky from Canada toward Mexico in the fall and back again in the spring. He heard the soft lapping of wings overhead and traced their fat bodies until they became little organized specks over the eastern hills.

Once, he accompanied his father out to survey a site in New Alexandria. They rode in silence and the boy watched the low branches move past his window in a swift brown blur. Power lines traced a sagging thread beside the road, and he felt as if he were racing ahead of the troughs and waves. Beside the road, the low hills descended and he imagined slowly gliding like the geese above the stationary brown figures he knew to be grazing horses below. An airplane hung suspended in the clear air.

While his father worked, he made his way through a dense little thicket of trees to the other side. Before him the hills were divided into grids by tombstones, an army of granite headboards that stretched as far as he could see in every direction. He looked and shut his mouth to hold his breath. At the bottom of the valley was a shabby brown funeral parlor, in danger of being washed over like a dingy by the waves and waves of gravestones. There was a light on in one of the windows and a lone car in the small parking lot. The sky was hazy and clouds hung low like ghosts, spirits heavier than the air, and he couldn’t see where the parlor’s driveway let out onto a main road. Years ago, his sister had told him that, if he breathed as he passed a graveyard, he might breathe in some wayward ghost that would forever whisper to him in the night. The boy did not move.

He squinted out the light and scanned the horizons. Little gray slabs everywhere, dividing the land into neat dotted-line grids. How many? He could not count and therefore did not try. Some were clearly older than others, ancient and cracked stones and, even from a distance, he could tell that the names had worn away into the elements. Some were huge monoliths but they too seemed minute in comparison to the sheer number of stones. He imagined millions, stretching out endlessly into the unknown continent beyond. The hills gave the land a sense of swelling and the little stone peaks seemed to burst from the earth’s face by the force of some pressure building underneath.

There was no movement, not even wind, in the valley of stones and he held his breath for a long time turning his head left to right and back again in search of an end point, a property line, but the stones occupied his entire field of vision. He wondered, if people keep dying as they do, won’t we just need more graveyards? And if that went on forever, wouldn’t all the land someday become a graveyard? Then what? The living would be stuck like the buoyed funeral parlor, one blinking light, rolling along on the sea of the dead. When his lungs started to burn, he turned and made his way back through the thicket to find his father.
His father looked frustrated, and the boy knew he hadn’t been able to find water. They took a different route home and the boy did not recognize the land. He kept watching the guttering power lines and looking out over the sloping earth, but didn’t imagine himself among the geese.

A boy named Danny Harkin was his best friend. The Harkins belonged to the church his family used to attend. When he slept over on weekends they took him along to see the new priest do mass. Father Hutchinson was a young man, thin, vital, and breezy, full of jokes and references to the week’s big news. After mass, he shook hands with everyone and used both hands to do it. Hutchinson was of a mind for charity too and organized events that he would advertise offhandedly at the end of the service. The Harkins actually took the boy to one of these, to a home for the retired and sick. There he met a woman who showed him her heart beating through the skin of her chest. She laughed a wet crumbling laugh when his eyes widened in shock. There was a younger woman who wandered the halls in a stupor. Father Hutchinson took the boy aside so that he wouldn’t stare, and explained that she had some kind of early onset dementia. Late in the day, an old lady cried as Father Hutchinson washed her feet.

The boy liked the Harkins and he liked Father Hutchinson. He liked the way the young priest could pivot away from a chuckle to suddenly speak with a fierce kind of certainty that the boy didn’t hear anywhere else. When Father Hutchinson said things about holding one another because we are the arms with which God embraces, the boy wondered if he belonged to the people around him and if they belonged to him.

The boy’s father spent most Sunday mornings sleeping off Saturday night. After mass, he would thank the Harkins for watching the boy and then, over grilled cheese sandwiches and apple juice, he would ask, “What did you feel about that?” The boy would shrug and stare at the way the sun broke in his juice glass. Amidst the silence, his father would gear up then and go to work. Even on weekends there was work to be done, he said. When he didn’t have fields to clear, he mowed and trimmed for people out in places where the houses were a little bigger but nobody was much better off. There weren’t many wells to dig anymore.

Most of the parents of the boy’s friends went to work in sooty holes behind convenience stores or in little offices tucked behind the adult video store billboards along the highway or, if they were fortunate, in big cereal box edifices an hour away in the city. Windows gazed out upon endless parking lots. Children played make-believe for only a few years and then turned to sports and gossip. At school, everyone’s parents knew one another. Many had themselves been schoolmates. Sometimes on weekends people drove into town to bowl or go to the movies. The best theater was a long drive away past Altoona. Lots of families belonged to a local produce co-op and the boy knew the man...
who delivered fresh tomatoes every other Saturday as Mr. Milewski, a rickety and nearly bald man whose big loping ears always startled him. In October, Mr. Milewski brought pumpkins. The vegetables were always small and steely because the land was sick with something. The boy looked out at the brown and yellow hills and wondered if it were possible for the land to be dying.

Sometimes he would wander out to the road to watch as older boys and girls barreled crazily down steep roads, passing cans of hot beer back and forth on their way to fuck and get fucked in some carpeted basement somewhere. He watched them disappear in a pale cloud of dust and kicked a rock in their direction. The road petered off into a dark curve and he stood staring a long time absorbed by its impenetrable darkness, addressing it as if it might respond.

In the night the boy lay awake in the dark, watching the trees wobbling in the night, the clouds gliding like whales—blacker forms against the darkness of the world. He heard the scratching of animals and the call of night birds hungry for the cold and the mouse bones of November. He heard the hard ache of nature, the sound of the skeleton beneath nature’s soft, deceptive surface. Something ancient and strange waited for him out there every night. It waited like old friends wait.

At eleven, he learned his first magic trick: a simple illusion by which he could make a pebble seem to disappear from one hand and reappear in the other. Even as the other children said they knew how he’d pulled it off, he was overcome by the discovery of his own knowledge. He imagined that the pebble, of its own volition, wished to travel from one small palm to another. He imagined that he merely allowed it to do so. “Watch my hand,” he said. “Keep your eye on the stone.” He’d move his hands quickly and then slowly open them to reveal nothing but pink flesh. “It’s gone,” he’d say, “but now watch.” Another quick flutter and then a slow revealing, “There it is!” Some shouted, pawed at his fists for the trick rock but others sat quietly back and considered. He watched them and felt something tremendous inside of himself. He felt the air grow warm around his body, vibrating with life in the dead air. That night, he slept soundly.

On his fourteenth birthday he watched the sun dying beyond the brown western slopes. He heard the hum of his house behind him, wheezing and creaking with old but sturdy life, and heard the buzz of autumn crickets late for warm shelter under rocks or fungal stumps. He watched two other boys disappear over the nearest hill, thrilled and wheezing mist into the air, fast and clumsy like unbroken horses. They shouted, glowing red in the cold, their youth just beneath their skin. He watched for a long immobile moment as the sky deepened into red, then deep brown like dried blood. He dug his feet. The soil was loose and dry. Dust tumbled around his sneakers. He felt his pulse, could feel the quick puckered hiccups in his chest. He watched the sky de-
scend, unable to turn away, unable to move, and the brown gave way to a new light. White broke through the oily clouds and a weird brilliant pillar traced a line perpendicular to the earth. A strange reverberating flap filled his ears, made him dizzy, like the beating of wings as the geese flew overhead but close up and off-balance somehow. He shut his eyes and saw nothing. Darkness churned in his eyelids. The beating noise flooded in his ears and, when he opened his eyes again, the edges of the world still seemed blurred. His heart and his breath grew too fast until he was afraid and he heard footfalls behind him, heavy and charging, followed by joyful shouts and thick breathing and he ran.

The children behind saw his form tumble over the hill like a leaf blown off course and disappear. In laughter and splayed limbs the children scattered down the valley and the wood beyond, sifting away amongst the trees. The hoof-footed sound of child play echoed and faded away in the valley basin as the sky deepened into a black and starless chasm. They did not find him for hours.

By then he'd stopped shivering and the spittle and foam had dried into white ash at the corners of his lips. His flesh seemed to glow with cold. Danny Harkin's older sister, Maryanne, who'd spent some time earlier trying to flirt with the boy, found him first, and stopped where she was, too taken with the heavy certainty of death even to call out. She stared and shivered, feeling for the first time the cold in her flesh and in her bones. Danny joined her and shouted, “I found him! Over here!” He reached out and shook the body. He thought of the way that chicken felt as it defrosted in his hands under the steaming faucet—the way the edges turned flaky and white and the muscle softened between his fingers, but when he tried to separate the slabs, the frozen parts resisted with a sick and sucking sound of frost.

The boy's father arrived, humping over a dead log with his twisted leg and nearly knocking the two children over in the process. “Oh Christ,” he said and collapsed over the boy's form. The wood was silent for a long time, punctuated by the wet mutterings of the man. Finally he too grew silent and turned his ear to the boy's purple lips. New forms arrived, black and gray in the night and all held the air in their chests, afraid to break the fragile silence, as if any untoward sound might plunge the entire basin into fire and chaos. It was oddly peaceful. Suddenly his father looked up, a thread of wet between his lips. “He's breathing,” he said. “He's breathing. Move.” He scooped up the boy and the leaves with him into his broad arms and rushed blindly toward the hill, a pale and desolate form trailed by the small crowd.

They kept vigil through the night at the hospital. His father buried his face in his hands and ground his chin into his fist. In the morning the nurses asked if he didn't need to go to work and he twisted his lips into something like a smile and said no. There wasn't any work waiting on him.
When the boy woke, he saw his father had placed a paper bird in his hands. He smiled, blinked, and fell back asleep. The doctors said he must’ve had a seizure but otherwise he seemed fine. It was hard to say at the moment. They’d have to watch him. Run some tests. Later, when he was up and speaking again, they asked him what had happened but all he remembered was the smell of oranges. They nodded at this and let him watch television.

On the way home, he made an odd request. He wanted to stop at Father Hutchinson’s house before it got dark. The rectory was a half hour out of the way but his father was in a delicate mood and willing to entertain whatever the boy wanted. This too, despite the fact that Hutchinson had said the mass at Mother’s funeral. At the door the priest and the boy’s father exchanged uncertainties and he led them into the living room.

“I want to talk to you,” said the boy. He said it with warmth, but it was an odd, flat thing to say.

“What’s on your mind?”

The boy glanced furtively at his father.

The younger man maintained an even and counseling tone. “I don’t think there’s anything you can say to me you couldn’t say to your dad.”

“No, it’s alright,” said the boy’s father, “I’ll just be outside.”

“No,” the priest protested.

“Really. It’s fine. You need anything, Kid, give a shout.”

The boy’s father left and made his way to the porch. He settled into the old weathered rocker and pulled a crushed pack of reds from his shirt pocket. He cupped his hands against the wind and pulled hard to light and breathed heavily and evenly. He exhaled, relieved and comforted. The sky was white and low. If it were a different time it might threaten rain but not now. He wondered when it had last rained. Maybe August. Down the road he saw the Donut Stop. A blue minivan in the drive-thru idled beneath a sign with a lewd and grinning clown. A baby pushed a pink plastic chair like a walker, trailing an old man in a pageboy who shuffled with the same infant gait. Across the street the gas station was empty, its pumps and hoses hung flaccid. The place was a burial ground. An excavation. He squinted. Behind the veil of white, he could see the refracted and hazy sun, yellow behind the white. A far away clatter of leather called his attention to a flock of geese rising in a brown V over the bare trees. He wondered where they were headed. South. Down from Canada and on to Mexico. Funny how you never saw them still—never floating in ponds like ducks—always flying one place to another—north to south and north again. Pilgrims in search of a destination. A journey of ever expanding horizons and reversals of poles. The screen door clattered metallic.

“Bill.” He never called Hutchinson “Father.” He was older by a decade anyhow.

The priest looked out on the driveway.
“Everything okay?” the boy’s father asked.
“Can I have one of those?”
“If I let you do that you’ll have to go to confession.”
“I’ll go when you do.”
“Need a light?”
“I’ve got one.”
They passed a long moment, their smoke disappearing into the white sky.
“Seizure’s a scary thing. Tough for a kid.”
“For anybody,” the boy’s father looked meaningfully at the priest.
“You’re holding up?”
“All things considered.”
“It’s a scary thing. Hard for a kid to wrap his head around maybe.”
They paused. The boy’s father asked, “Did he say something to you?”
The priest was silent. He pinched his features around his cigarette.
“My boy’s business is his own but if you need to tell me something I’d like you to tell it.”
“He said the oddest thing.”
“How’s that?”
The priest fumbled, “I guess he thinks he saw God.”
“God?”
“That’s what he says.”
“God, huh?”
“That’s what he says.”
“Hm.”
“The one and only.”
The boy’s father took another drag and pinched off the ash and flicked the crushed butt onto the lawn. “Father,” he nodded and went back inside for the boy.
A minute later their truck left bouncing through the dust toward home.
The boy watched the guttering telephone wires. He searched the sky for geese and his father eyed him warily, fumbling for words in the humming silence.
“What did you say to him?” he finally asked. “He seemed to think you saw something.”
The boy looked at his father. He was calm and sturdy and considered. He wasn’t rattled or searching like his father was, just very still.
“Nothing,” he said, “I saw nothing.”
Ash

Milana Meytes

1. Ode

The cigarette ash on the rust of my fire escape,
looks as if flies were crumbling.
While my inhale churns exhale, burnt sienna.
Knees crouched into chin, taut, goosebumped skin
smelling of smoke and leather like papa.
Cubic Marlboro packs in the back of his pocket.

The tick-tack of my palm slapping that packet, ass on bare asphalt,
teeth on dry paper, with tongue slithering filter.
Words slinkier than a noose
of tar winding, begging for an excuse, waiting for the next pull.
Sometimes this makes me insecure.
But when ash contacts with filaments in my blood, I feel my jaw bones
rise to salvation.
2. **Palinode**

My brother, a relic of Babylon.

Whose black clothes leaked grey, as Twin Kingdoms hugged hoards of screeching silhouettes
breathing blank sheets of Kinko paper, memos left.

Tumbling Woman, Tumbling Man, Thuds of Sand.

My brother, please stop rewinding those fingers clutching collars of white shirts, whipping them through the windows to slap God in the face.

And please stop watching CNN, that ribbon on the bottom seems infinitely long.

And I know, I know Manhattan was crying under your toes, tolls on the journey home.
And Manhattan, she told you to walk, you made it 200 some blocks.

Your slate body reeking of gasoline incinerating bone.
*I just want to shower*, you said. Wash away the ash on my tongue.
As the 1950s came to a close, two women working on opposite sides of the country began making artworks that were not easily defined as simply painting or simply sculpture, but incorporated both painterly and sculptural concerns. In San Francisco in 1958, painter Jay DeFeo commenced her monumental and legendary oil-paint relief, *The Rose* (fig. 1), which would take her eight years to complete. The following year in New York, sculptor Lee Bontecou began the series of wall-mounted steel-wire-and-canvas constructions for which she is best known today. She continued making increasingly complex works of this type through 1966, the same year that DeFeo finally completed *The Rose*.

The introduction of these works to the art world — the New York art world in particular — coincided almost exactly with the earliest transmission of Clement Greenberg’s “Modernist Painting” in 1960. This essay was the clearest summation of the critic’s modernist doctrine asserting the necessity of medium specificity, the idea that each artistic discipline or medium should adhere to its own characteristic properties and conventions.

The convergence of the public debut of Greenberg’s text with that of DeFeo’s and Bontecou’s hybrid artworks highlights how extremely incompatible they were with the critic’s narrow-minded, highly prescriptive account.
of modernism. This essay argues that, even if DeFeo and Bontecou seem to challenge the specificity of painting espoused by Greenberg by creating works that can be simultaneously categorized as painting and sculpture, neither artist was deliberately responding to Greenberg. Instead, these two women found particular problems in the distinct media of painting and sculpture that could only be resolved by creating a composite medium, one that married painterly illusionism with sculptural volume. Despite the remarkable coincidences in DeFeo’s and Bontecou’s careers and artistic objectives, no previous scholar has discussed at length the similarities between their artworks.  

After the height of their commercial and critical success from the late 1950s to mid-1960s, these two groundbreaking artists were largely written out of art history in the following decades, perhaps due as much to their marginalization in Greenberg’s narrow-minded account of modernism as to their relative independence and consequent inability to be categorized into broad artistic movements. Only in the past twelve years — with the help of recent major retrospectives and accompanying monographic catalogues on each artist — have DeFeo’s and Bontecou’s complete and diverse bodies of work been fully restored to the art historical canon.  

This essay is an attempt to illuminate the alternative modernist tradition represented by the cross-disciplinary artworks of these two artists.  

In the spring of 1960, the Voice of America (the U.S. government radio agency in charge of producing American foreign policy propaganda) broadcast Greenberg’s “Modernist Painting” over their international shortwave airways as part of a series on “the sciences and the arts in mid-century America.” Later that year, the Voice of America published the essay as part of their Forum Lectures series. Although the Voice of America was reaching between thirty and fifty million listeners each day across the world, this broadcast and publication of Greenberg’s essay seem to have had only a limited audience in the United States. The identical text found a wider American distribution the following year in Arts Yearbook. “Modernist Painting” was in fact widely read at the time and understood by contemporary readers as the encapsulation of Greenberg’s account of how modernism functioned.  

A few months prior to the inaugural release of “Modernist Painting,” DeFeo was included in Dorothy Miller’s landmark Sixteen Americans at the Museum of Modern Art (the fifth in a series of six Americans shows she organized between 1942 and 1963), which ran from December 1959 to February 1960. Of DeFeo’s five works included in the show, the two paintings — Origin of 1956 (fig. 2) and The Verónica of 1957 — are characteristic of her late 1950s experimental buildup and manipulation of oil paint that find their apotheosis in The Rose (fig. 1). Earlier in 1959, while on a West Coast talent-scouting trip for the exhibition, Miller saw that work (at the time known as Deathrose)
Anamesa / Nonfiction

in DeFeo’s San Francisco studio and was extremely impressed by the thickly impastoed, almost sculpted painting. Despite Miller’s entreaty that she send the work to New York for the show, DeFeo did not want to exhibit her magnum opus in an unfinished state. They settled on the compromise of illustrating Deathrose in the catalogue, stating that it was a work in progress.5 This image and others that were included in equally prominent publications in the following years captured the imagination of the art world and spread knowledge of the work far beyond the San Francisco coterie of artists that frequented her studio.6

One such publication was the eighth “New Talent” issue of Art in America, released at the beginning of 1961. Similar to Miller’s Americans exhibitions, the magazine sought in these annual issues to “present to the public a sampling of the many talented young or relatively unpublicized artists working in various parts of the country.”7 Presumably because Miller was a member of the selection committee for artists working in painting and sculpture that year, DeFeo was included among the painters. A reproduction of a later incarnation of Deathrose filled a full page of her two-page spread, juxtaposed with the nearly as thick Incision of 1958-60.8

Coincidentally, Lee Bontecou was also selected by the committee and included among the sculptors in the 1961 “New Talent” issue.9 Even before the first public showing of her canvas-and-wire wall reliefs in June 1960, they seem to have been known in the New York art world. In the March 1960 issue of Art in America, a brief overview of the art market nominated the “constructions in canvas-and-leather of Lee Bontecou at Leo Castelli Gallery” for “find of the year.”10 In the May 1960 issue of The Burlington Magazine, art historian George Heard Hamilton’s report on “Painting in Contemporary America” discussed “her new metal and canvas ‘paintings’” — which he admitted had not yet been publicly exhibited, but for which there was already a demand “from college and private collector alike.”11

Not until June 1960 was one of her canvas wall-mounted constructions included in the group show New Forms—New Media at Martha Jackson Gallery — the earliest public exhibition of these works.12 Their next public presentation came soon after at her second solo show in New York, open from November to December 1960 at Leo Castelli Gallery. Her experimental reliefs provoked considerable interest among collectors, critics, and museum curators like Miller, who included the young sculptor in her final Americans exhibition in 1963. Critic and future minimalist artist Donald Judd was also impressed by this early show, writing his first of many positive reviews of Bontecou’s constructions in Arts magazine in December 1960.13

The concurrent emergence of Greenberg’s text, DeFeo’s painted reliefs, and Bontecou’s wall-mounted sculptures draws attention to the utter incom-
compatibility of both women's artworks with the critic's mandate of medium specificity that stressed the two-dimensionality of painting: “Because flatness was the only condition painting shared with no other art, Modernist painting oriented itself to flatness as it did to nothing else.” In the mid-1950s, two of the most notorious artists included in Sixteen Americans — Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns — had already departed from Greenberg's requirement of flatness by incorporating three-dimensional found objects and sculptural elements into their paintings. At around the same time, artists associated with the European neo-avant-garde emphasized the objecthood of painting (while shattering the idea of a painting as a window) by literally breaking through the picture surface. These various violations of the two-dimensional painted surface probably in part motivated Greenberg to write “Modernist Painting” in 1960 in order to recapitulate his argument for the necessity of painting's self-critical differentiation from other artistic media, particularly sculpture, “in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence.”

As art historian and philosopher Thierry de Duve has painstakingly recounted, Greenberg's paradoxically negative aesthetic judgment of Frank Stella's black paintings of 1958-60 (also exhibited in Miller's Sixteen Americans) — which seem to explicitly observe the limiting conditions described in “Modernist Painting” — marked a crisis in modernist art and formalist criticism. Other critics like Judd pointed out the object-like quality of Stella's black and subsequent paintings, which were consistently notable for their unusually thick tacking edges. According to de Duve, Stella's paintings breached the ultimate limits of modernist painting where, in Greenberg's terms, “a picture stops being a picture and turns into an arbitrary object.” Future minimalists like Judd, Dan Flavin, and Sol LeWitt were tremendously influenced by Stella's black paintings and Greenberg's modernist criticism. Proceeding from Stella's exceptionally thick, utterly flat, monochromatic, and seemingly machine-made paintings, they deliberately rejected Greenberg's doctrine by adding three-dimensional elements to their otherwise flat monochromes in the early 1960s.

In contrast to the minimalists, neither DeFeo nor Bontecou was actively retaliating against Greenberg's modernist dictum. Unlike other artists who were dispensing with the requirement of medium specificity at this time, DeFeo and Bontecou did so in an attempt to merge the techniques and concerns of two different artistic disciplines. The close correspondence between their work of the late 1950s to mid-1960s suggests their shared awareness of the recent innovations in American and European vanguard painting. That awareness manifested itself in a mutually felt urgency to fuse the considerations of painters (the depiction of depth and volume on a two-dimensional surface)
and sculptors (the creation of actual depth and volume in real, three-dimen-
sional space). Both artists achieved this objective through the illusionistic
intensification of real volume (via the application of color) and the sculptural
manipulation of painterly materials.

Although the hybrid works of DeFeo and Bontecou are generic (in that
they are neither just painting nor just sculpture but art in general), they retain
elements of the specific crafts and traditions of both painting and sculpture.
Yet these interdisciplinary or interspecific works, like all relief or bas-relief,
are excluded from Greenberg’s modernism because they disobey its essence
(i.e., medium specificity). DeFeo and Bontecou seem to propose an alternate
modernism — marginalized by Greenberg and his followers — in which
painting and sculpture support each other in order to gain a new level of
“competence” for each medium.

There existed other viable alternatives to Greenberg’s modernism,
like the process-based modernism of Harold Rosenberg’s “American Ac-
tion Painters” (1952) or the anti-specific, art-in-general modernism of Al-
lan Kaprow’s “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock” (1958).21 Two exhibitions in
which Bontecou’s work was included, New Forms—New Media at Martha
Jackson Gallery in 1960 and The Art of Assemblage organized by William
Seitz at MoMA in 1961, both dealt with the incorporation of found objects
into painting (as well as sculpture).22 These exhibitions testify to the virtu-
ally mainstream acceptance of painting that pushed into the third dimension
through the inclusion of non-art materials — an utterly anti-Greenbergian
conception of “modernist” painting.

European postwar painting presented another model of modernism dis-
tinct from Greenberg’s edict of medium specificity.23 In fact, DeFeo’s thick ac-
cumulation of paint in The Rose and related paintings recalls Jean Dubuffet’s
“hautes pâtes” (begun in the 1940s) and European “Matter Painting” more
generally. Bontecou’s three-dimensional manipulation of canvas and other
textiles calls to mind Alberto Burri’s and Manolo Millares’ sutured, hole-
ridden scraps of fabric, while her gaping voids also find parallels with Lucio
Fontana’s slashed and punctured canvases.24 By 1960, the work of these Eu-
ropean neo-avant-garde artists was increasingly accessible to the American
art world, particularly at the Pierre Matisse and Martha Jackson Galleries
in New York.25 Both DeFeo and Bontecou might have also encountered this
work during their respective extended trips to Europe in the 1950s.26

Although there is no indication that either DeFeo or Bontecou was aware
of the other’s work, the striking formal and technical parallels between their
independent attempts to integrate the distinct artistic disciplines of painting
and sculpture are likely the result of a mutual familiarity with these various
precursors. Both DeFeo and Bontecou used color to optically enhance, or
sometimes to counteract, the sculptural volume. Both relied on a grisaille
palette — historically employed by painters for the trompe-l’oeil depiction of sculpted figures — to heighten the added illusion of depth and modeling. Both were intensely interested in the contrast, play, and intersection of real depth, volume, and accumulation in three dimensions with the illusion of depth, volume, and accumulation in two-dimensional form.

Each artist also took advantage of the inherent properties of her materials — notably those traditionally and almost exclusively associated with painting since the sixteenth century — in order to achieve sculptural effects. For DeFeo, this was the impasto buildup of oil paint; for Bontecou, it was the pliability yet structural durability of woven fabrics like canvas. At the same time, both artists were applying sculptural techniques. DeFeo built up and scraped away a malleable material, as a sculptor would traditionally shape wax or clay. Bontecou employed the twentieth-century sculptor’s technique of welding to shape a metal armature, to which she then affixed canvas pieces with wire. Each artist worked within the traditional pictorial bounds of a rectangular frame and was highly concerned with vision (the domain of painting). Yet DeFeo and Bontecou were also highly cognizant of the sculptural considerations of tactility, the perception of space, and the effects of light.

In her notes for an unpublished “Statement of Visual Concerns” written in 1984, DeFeo confirmed that over the course of her career she had “quite consistently been concerned with ‘volume’ and ‘illusion’ of depth — although some of the work combines areas of ‘flat’ treatment to enhance that concern.” She mentioned other sculptural considerations as well, such as an “emphasis on textural, tactile concerns” and “spatial concerns.” She addressed these concerns in a series of monumental oil paintings that date from 1956 to 1966 and include Origin (fig. 2), Incision, The Jewel, and The Rose (fig. 1).

DeFeo often stressed the relationship between texture and color in her work. In a statement published in 1982, she wrote, “I am as interested in texture as in color, and texture is often closely connected to my choice of color.” In fact, color and texture have an inverse relationship in her work — the more texturally variegated the painting was, the less vibrant its palette needed to be. Accordingly, in Origin of 1956 (fig. 2), which prioritizes texture, she worked with what she called “very low key color” — primarily blacks, whites, and grays — in order to capture the greatest variety of textural effects. This milestone work, which she claimed was the first painting that took her over a month to produce, marks a turning point in her painting practice in its enlarged scale, muted palette, and experimental sculptural employment of a palette knife that tested the limits of oil paint. Along the top register, rounded forms raised along their upper boundary drop down to vertical overlapping streams of thick wrinkled oil paint, which sometimes drop off to exposed
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canvas at the bottom. Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, conservator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, has described the techniques employed by DeFeo to produce these novel effects: “By controlling and exploiting the rate at which oil paint dries, DeFeo mastered an ‘orange peel’ effect that results from the outermost layer drying faster than the underlying ones. Invariably attuned to the way paint sets up, she also crafts sharp and soft edges in impasto by skillfully manipulating the handle of her brush.” Testing the limits of the medium of oil paint allowed DeFeo to bring out its textural and pliable possibilities, giving credence to her assertion that, “When I returned to painting in the mid-fifties, I brought to it the sensibility of a sculptor.” Yet, as Mancusi-Ungaro observes, DeFeo’s sculptural concerns never fully replaced her consideration of painterly issues.

In 1958, DeFeo began working on Deathrose. Like her approach to Origin, she let her experimentation with the medium guide her process. In a highly sculptural manner, DeFeo used a palette knife or even a mason’s trowel both to apply thick layers of oil paint and to chisel or carve away at the built-up surface. In her statement published next to the image of Deathrose in the 1961 “New Talent” issue, DeFeo emphasized her attempts to fuse the goals and techniques of painting and sculpture in this work:

Although a painter by definition, my work as it has emerged in the past two years could more accurately be described as a combination of painting and sculpture. I consider the aspects of each inseparable and interdependent, the process being one of building and carving, but always in reference to the properties of paint as a medium; for example, the actual three-dimensional aspects of sculpture and a consideration of lighting as it affects the form are completely integrated with those qualities of color, texture, and the illusory nature of space and dimension that one deals with as a painter.

As in Origin, she restricted herself to a muted, grisaille palette. In its final state (fig. 1), this painterly use of color works to accentuate the sculptural volume she created through massing — the brightness of the radiating white center pushes further into our space, highlighting this area as one of the thickest points of the relief, while the thinnest parts at the top are the darkest areas of the painting. Accordingly, variation in color optically enhances physical depth. This use of color works against the suggestion of a central vanishing point that would otherwise counteract the literal outward push of the relief, thus simultaneously mapping vision and denying its role. In its combination of prismatic structure and insistent materiality, The Rose presents a struggle between tactile matter and visible, intangible image.

After painting two related sculptural works — the geometric and crystalline counterpart to Deathrose, called The Jewel (1959), and the nearly monochromatic, highly organic and craggy Incision (1958-60) — DeFeo focused
exclusively on her masterpiece for the next five years. She began adding a drying agent to the oil paint so that she could carve into it more easily, repeatedly scraping it back to the bare canvas and starting anew. DeFeo described the four definitive stages the work went through to become *The Rose* as “a metamorphosis almost like art history from very primitive to very classical, to geometric and then finally very baroque, and then I pulled it back to really quite classical.”³⁵ The finished sculptural relief in oil paint is up to eleven inches thick in some areas. Weighing almost a ton without the support structure added later by conservators, *The Rose* is thought to be the heaviest oil painting for its size ever created.³⁶

In contrast to the material density and palpable heft of DeFeo’s painted relief, Bontecou’s early wall-mounted canvas constructions appear much lighter, given their hollowness made apparent by their cavernous openings and gravity-defying reach into our space — MoMA’s *Untitled* of 1961 extends almost three feet from the wall.³⁷ Curvilinear protrusions jut outwards, sometimes extending beyond the rectangular frame. To make these large machine-like contraptions, Bontecou would begin by welding together a complex steel skeleton armature, to which she would sew on, with metal wire, tonally varied pieces of canvas that she found discarded by the laundromat below her Manhattan apartment. With the wire often left aggressively sticking up, the reliefs are highly tactile, texturally diverse objects with a distinctly handmade quality.

Rather than evolving strictly from Bontecou’s earlier sculptural practice, these works came out of a series of drawings she began in 1958 soon after returning to New York from her extended stay in Europe. A breakthrough occurred when she found that the blowtorch she used for welding her sculptures produced black soot that could be sprayed directly onto paper when the oxygen was turned off. She began using this technique to make a number of large-scale drawings. She particularly appreciated the rich, velvety blacks she was able to achieve by drawing the blowtorch swiftly across a substrate like paper or canvas.

This innovation had two consequences for the development of her sculpture. First, she began attaching soot drawings done on muslin to welded steel frames and boxes, forming the basis of the varying tones of her wall reliefs and recalling the soot and grime of New York. Second, from constructions of this type she began to incorporate openings that would reveal a dark interior, the now iconic “black holes” that became a constant feature of her classic wall constructions. Mona Hadler has pointed out the resemblance between these early box-like constructions from 1959 — some wall-mounted, some placed directly on the floor, and some on stilts — and round televisions of the era, which further promotes the viewer’s need to see inside these black craters.³⁸ Bontecou was not interested in breaking the illusion of the picture plane
like Fontana and others who were also making object-like paintings at the
time. Rather, she was attempting to renew the idea of painting — or in her
case painting-like sculptural relief — as a window that can extend indefin-

die-1y into imagined space, achieved through the use of matte velveteen inside
her black voids. Her works incorporate the third dimension not to refute
the myth of the picture plane but to heighten the illusion of deep space found
in representational painting, thus bringing painterly illusion to the realm of
three-dimensional sculpture. However, because the undefined fields of their
gaping voids lack a vanishing point that maps space, these three-dimension-
al, television-like viewing machines reject visibility. Denied vision inwards,
the viewer is forced to examine the multi-faceted exterior. On the outside of
her reliefs, Bontecou varied the tonality of the surface, ranging from light,
relatively clean canvas to much darker soot-covered areas. This variation ei-
ther enhances or counteracts the movement of the physical pieces in three-
dimensional space, similar to DeFeo’s application of muted colors in her oil-
paint reliefs. Bontecou likewise employed chiaroscuro to create illusionistic
voids in her drawings and prints of the 1960s.

Judd became one of the strongest and earliest supporters of Bontecou’s
classic canvas wall reliefs, publishing three positive reviews in 1960, 1963,
and 1965, largely repeating word for word the same descriptions and justi-
fications for her work in all three. A similar repetition is found in his de-
scription of her artworks in his two most significant essays of the period
that solidified his anti-Greenbergian attitude — “Local History” of 1964 and
“Specific Objects” of 1965. These two seminal writings essentially outlined
his criteria for a good artwork: a single, unified object that cannot be easily
separated into parts. The work of Stella and Bontecou served as key examples.
In all five essays that address Bontecou’s constructions, Judd praised their
powerful simplicity, object-like quality, and literal, non-allusive character,
writing in the 1965 essay on Bontecou that “the black hole does not allude to
a black hole; it is one.” That essay begins with a statement that foreshadows
the primary thesis of “Specific Objects”: “Lee Bontecou was one of the first to
use a three-dimensional form that was neither painting nor sculpture.”

Yet, unlike the other artists praised by Judd for their creation of works
that are “neither painting nor sculpture,” but instead fall into the new catego-
ry of “specific objects,” Bontecou — like DeFeo — was actually highly con-
cerned with the techniques and considerations of both painting and sculp-
ture. Rather than aiming to reject the two practices, she and DeFeo strove to
fuse them together. It is fitting, then, that the end of Bontecou’s production
of wall-mounted reliefs and DeFeo’s completion of The Rose in 1966 nearly
coincide with Judd’s publication of “Specific Objects” (and his misreading
of Bontecou’s works therein). His essay in fact marked the beginning of the
public and critical turn away from the original fascination with DeFeo’s and
Bontecou’s once legendary and celebrated artworks.

In the early years of its creation, *Deathrose* had attracted considerable attention, evidenced by Dorothy Miller’s and Walter Hopps’ interest in acquiring the work for their respective museums as well as collector J. Patrick Lannan’s offer of $10,000 to buy it in its unfinished state. However, by the time of its first public exhibition in its completed form in 1969, *The Rose* was seen as an anachronistic relic and attracted no interested buyers. Due to its unstable condition, DeFeo’s masterpiece was doomed to languish in a conference room at the San Francisco Art Institute for twenty-six years before it was restored and bought by the Whitney. Likewise, although Bontecou received widespread commercial success and critical praise (especially from Judd) early in the 1960s, by 1972, when her work went in a new direction, she stopped receiving positive reviews. Most likely in reaction to this critical failure, she left New York and ceased exhibiting publicly, fading almost entirely from the art world.

The relatively recent recovery of DeFeo and Bontecou to the canonical narrative of postwar American art was the catalyst for my own awareness of the alternative, seemingly marginalized modernist tradition proposed in this essay. Because their work deviated from both the separation of painting and sculpture prescribed by Greenberg in “Modernist Painting” and the rejection of painting and sculpture endorsed by Judd in “Specific Objects,” DeFeo and Bontecou’s mutual efforts to synthesize painting and sculpture were previously overlooked. To make things worse, the histories of the California and New York art scenes have, for the most part, been told separately, further obscuring the striking similarity between these two artists’ nearly simultaneous attempts to create a hybrid medium. Such a coincidental development, likely the result of the artists’ common cultural episteme rather than the direct influence of either artist on the other, can be seen as a demonstration of multiple discovery — the idea that important scientific innovations are often developed at the same time by independent inventors or scientists — in the realm of artistic production.\(^5\)
FIGURE 1

Jay DeFeo, The Rose, 1958-66. Oil with wood and mica on canvas. 128 ⅞ x 92 ¼ x 11 in. (327.34 x 234.32 x 27.94 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of The Jay DeFeo Trust and purchase with funds from the Contemporary Painting and Sculpture Committee and the Judith Rothschild Foundation 95.170

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Figure 2

Jay DeFeo, Origin, 1956. Oil on canvas. 92 x 79 3/4 in. (233.7 x 202.6 cm). University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive; gift of Mr. and Mrs. John S. Hilson 1980.24

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NOTES


2 Both DeFeo and Bontecou were included in a group show of seven women artists at the Michael Rosenfeld Gallery in 2000, but the author of the catalogue essay, Arlene Raven, simply considers the work of each artist in turn rather than attempting to draw out any comparisons between them. Arlene Raven, *True Grit: Lee Bontecou, Louise Bourgeois, Jay DeFeo, Claire Falkenstein, Nancy Grossman, Louise Nevelson, Nancy Spero* (New York: Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, 2000). In a 2003 essay that connects DeFeo to her female contemporaries, Lucy Lippard briefly points out the correspondence between Bontecou's wall-mounted constructions and some of DeFeo's later work: "There are a number of DeFeo's biomechanical drawings from the late 1970s that recall Bontecou's classic work from the 1960s." She also observes that the work of DeFeo, Bontecou, and Lee Lozano "would make a great show." Lucy R. Lippard, "Transplanting *The Rose*," in *Jay DeFeo and The Rose*, ed. Jane Green and Leah Levy (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press; New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2003), 58.

3 Between November 2012 and June 2013, *Jay DeFeo: A Retrospective* was presented at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Dana Miller, ed., *Jay DeFeo: A Retrospective* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2012). Between October 2003 and September 2004, *Lee Bontecou: A Retrospective* was presented at the UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Smith, *Lee Bontecou*. This recent recovery of DeFeo's and Bontecou's heterogenous oeuvres to the history of postwar American art reflects the larger feminist project. Since it emerged in the 1970s, feminist art history's central tenets have included a reevaluation of the canon and a critique of canonical interpretations and theories that suppressed or excluded certain artists and artworks. Yet, according to Lucy Lippard, "like DeFeo, Bontecou was adopted by the women's movement as prototypically feminist without her participation." Lippard, "Transplanting *The Rose*," 58.


6 For instance, in December 1962, the now iconic image of DeFeo standing on a ladder as she works on *The Rose* was published in a well-illustrated puff piece on "The Arts in America" in the general interest magazine *Look*. John F. Kennedy, "The Arts in America," *Look* 26 (December 18, 1962): 120.


8 Ibid., 30-31.

9 Ibid., 36-37.


12 Bontecou's *Untitled* was included in the first part of this two-part exhibition. The work is not visible in any of the eight installation shots included in the catalogue. Martha Jackson, Lawrence Alloway, and Allan Kaprow, *New Forms—New Media 1* (New York: Martha Jackson Gallery, 1960).


17 Kenji Kajiya, "Color-Field Painting in the Cultural Context of America" (PhD diss., Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 2014), 64-68.
18 Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," 90.
19 See De Duve, "The Monochrome," 204-205.
20 In addition, both artists often worked through similar ideas and dealt with similar subject matter across media. Throughout her career, Bontecou's drawings and prints echoed the thematic and spatial considerations of her sculptures and wall-mounted constructions beginning in the late 1950s. Beginning in the 1970s, DeFeo's photographs, drawings, paintings, and collages were often sites of cross-fertilization, in spite of her highly traditional training at the University of California, Berkeley in the late 1940s to early 1950s that had emphasized a strict segregation of media.
22 These exhibitions located the trend's historical origins in Picasso, Tatlin, Duchamp, and Schwitters, and its contemporary manifestation in the "junk" aesthetic, a term that was used by Lawrence Alloway to describe the 1950s and early 1960s work of Rauschenberg, John Chamberlain, Claes Oldenburg, Bruce Connor (a West Coast artist and friend of DeFeo's), Bontecou, and others. Lawrence Alloway, "Junk Culture as a Tradition," in New Forms—New Media 1 (New York: Martha Jackson Gallery, 1960), n.p.
23 DeFeo and Bontecou's reliefs are much more closely related to the contemporary paintings of Jean Dubuffet, Jean Fautrier, Yves Klein, Anton Tàpies, Manolo Millares, Alberto Burri, and Lucio Fontana, for instance, than the work of the American artists championed by Greenberg around this time — by the late 1950s and early 1960s, these were primarily the color field painters Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, Helen Frankenthaler, and Jules Olitski. See Kajiya, "Color-Field Painting."
24 For a more in-depth discussion of the similarities between Bontecou's work and that of Burri and Fontana, as well as her possible contact with their work, see Robert Storr, "Seek and Hide," in Lee Bontecou: A Retrospective, ed. Elizabeth A. T. Smith (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2003), 187-89. For a consideration of the relationship between Bontecou's work and many of these European contemporaries, particularly Fontana, see Jo Applin, "‘This Threatening and Possibly Functioning Object’: Lee Bontecou and the Sculptural Void," Art History 29, no. 3 (June 2006): 486-88.
26 After completing the studio art graduate program at Berkeley in June 1951 and being named the Sigmund Martin Heller Traveling Fellow in Art, DeFeo visited France, Italy, London, and North Africa via New York, returning to California in February 1953. It is worth noting that even though there were several exhibitions of Dubuffet's work in Paris and New York over the course of DeFeo's travels, none of them took place while she was in either city. Early on in her career, she might have seen his work in person in an exhibition at the Frank Perls Gallery in Beverly Hills in 1956, although there is no record that she visited Los Angeles before 1966. Bontecou, in turn, won a Fulbright scholarship to study in Rome from fall 1956 to spring 1957, and was able to extend her trip through 1958.
Ibid.
30 DeFeo, “Statement of Visual Concerns.” In 1982, DeFeo wrote, “I personally consider my palette to be one of limited color range.” DeFeo statement in Hopkins, 50 West Coast Artists, 36.
32 DeFeo statement in Hopkins, 50 West Coast Artists, 36.
37 For a reproduction of this work, see Smith, Lee Bontecou, 43.
39 The use of velveteen is not entirely successful — shadows across its dull surface are visible even in photographs.
43 Emphasis added. Ibid.
45 It has been argued that the theory of multiple discovery, which challenges the more traditional heroic view of scientific progress as individually motivated, can apply not only to scientific inventions and discoveries but also to artistic creation. David Lamb and Susan M. Easton, “Originality in art and science,” in Multiple Discovery: The Pattern of Scientific Progress (Trowbridge, Wiltshire: Avebury Publishing Company, 1984), 131-42.

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The text of *Anamesa* is set in Minion, an Adobe Original typeface designed in 1990 by Robert Slimbach. Inspired by classical serif fonts of the late Renaissance, Slimbach's design is highly adaptable to digital media. The “typographer’s bible,” Robert Bringhurst’s *Elements of Typographic Style* is set in Minion, and the typeface is beloved for its combination of practicality and elegance.

*Anamesa*’s titles use Adobe Caslon, the same typeface as the body text of *The New Yorker*. Designed in 1990 by Carol Twombly, Adobe Caslon is based on a mid-18th century specimen page of the Dutch Baroque typeface designed by William Caslon I but adapted for modern and digital use. Caslon was a favorite in 18th century British and American printing, and was even used to print the American Declaration of Independence. As the old typographer’s saying goes, “When in doubt, use Caslon.”

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