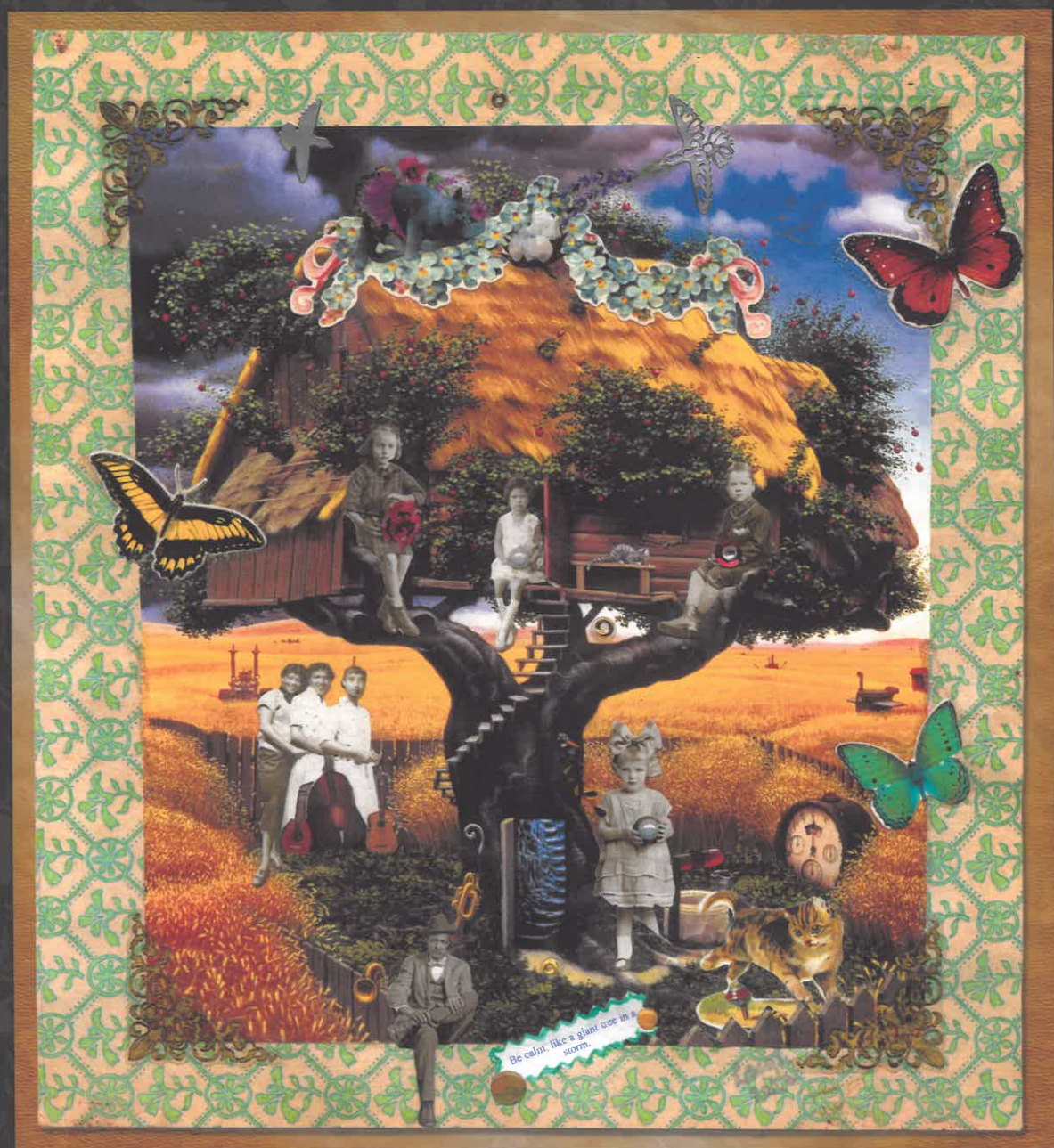


Exacting Clam



CONTENTS

2	Jake Goldsmith	Envyng Artists
22	Cevin Soling	Apocalypse How?
28	Kurt Luchs	Listening to the Grass and to Charles Simic
30	Kurt Luchs	Mr. Monotonous
31	Thomas Walton	Unsavory Thoughts
34	Kat Meads	Nelle Harper Lee, Character
39	Caroline Clark	Behind the Scenes with Gerald Murnane
41	Alice Lowe	In Portland, Maine
43	Sergii Pershyn	The Third Step
44	Gina DeMartino	Human Instinct: Easy Recipes to Craft Flesh to Perfection
46	Gary McDowell	Mr. Daniel Hobson
54	Ulrica Hume	Artemis
58	Israel Bonilla	Eulalio Salmantino, 1921–2000
62	Corina Bardoff	Chemical Night with Eiderdown
64	Julian Stannard	The Flogger
73	Sarah Daly	Apples Are for Love
74	Ian Boulton	Fully
80	Julian George	Frenemies
81	Marvin Cohen	A Dialogue About Four Things
83	Mike Fox	A Meeting in the Groves of Assisi
84	Jim Meirose	The Resort Hotel Lobby
88	David Wheldon	The Line of Works
94	David Wheldon	The Lamp Man
95	Selin Tamtekin	Two Flight Pieces
96	Ernest Hilbert	Out in that Gloomy Meadow
97	Steven Gray	Two Poems
100	James Sallis	Six Poems
103	Carl Landauer	Don't You Know There's a Parade Going On?
105	Kurt Luchs	Two Poems
107	Eric Weiskott	Seven Poems
111	Mike Silverton	Poems in Words
122	P.J. Blumenthal	Good News Rising from the Grave: Marvin Cohen's <i>Pete, the Photographer and Other Impressions</i>
124	Isabelle Whittall	Jared Joseph's <i>Soft Lighting</i>
126	Jesi Bender	Donya Todd's <i>The Witch's Egg</i> , Darcie Dennigan's <i>Little Neck</i> , & Erin Dorney's <i>Yes I Am Human I Know You Were Wondering</i>
128	Greg Bem	Sandra Moussempe's <i>Cassandra at point-blank range</i>
129	Charles Holdefer	V.N. Alexander's <i>The Girlie Playhouse</i>
131	David Winner	Magnus Mills' <i>The Encouragement of Others</i>
132	Ellen Harrold	Margo Berdeshevsky's <i>It Is Still Beautiful to Hear the Heart Beat</i>
133	Christopher Boucher	Wheres v. Graves
134	Matthew Wolfman	The Mirror Knew

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Seven Poems

LONG DAYS OF YOUR OWN WHEREWITHAL

after Prageeta Sharma¹

And who is to say the operation will succeed,
the day will brighten out of the southeast like a room,
what we tell Lili and Theo will be OK, will be OK?

Day succeeds night, which succeeds
in convincing you of your own wherewithal
to lift your tremulous voice in song.

The day succeeds only in ending in colors for a healthy cheek.
And who is to say the voice, when it rises this time,
will not be a whispered vow?

UNTITLED #56

blocked by ulterior poem the one
lodged in gullet and lost

in the aftermath of hurricane
artworks are only as precious

as loss / delicate storm in
late Netherlandish

we have painted the horizon blues
and yellows, scent of vanilla

just before rain- and landfall
where do you go if

before explanation the sea
rears up to devour

why does the lost poem always
a change in attitude or pressure

common to our celebrated
figuration / always late

a style or method of measurement
common to crisis

and moments of lyric, painted
landfall

¹ Prageeta Sharma, *Grief Sequence* (Seattle: Wave, 2019), 67

LIKE PAPER UNDER INK

after Edgar Garcia²

an obsolete phrase, my
love for you sagging under its own weight

it is incomparable and absolute
to be awakening now

in the dream, we think,
"to have loved and lost"

in the renewed mourning of this-day-of-today
the bare suggestion of flesh

on bedside table, one barrette
and purple comb

each room a discarded phrase
and our awakening to solidity

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LULLABY

after Solmaz Sharif³

To locate the reference partway down a lefthand page
To notice afterwards the pencil writes brown not leaden so brown blooms on the page in the warm
yellow light of the desktop lamp
To purchase a hundred-foot roll of archival three-mil mylar sheeting
To use a hobby knife to trim mylar sheeting to fashion protective folded covers for a quarto
leatherbound volume printed in London in 1637, and an octavo leatherbound volume
printed in Edinburgh in 1770

To sigh and flip the pillow over
To learn how to do this on youtube
To retire when the clock strikes
To repeat yourself
To grow up in a village on the North Fork of Long Island
To undertake some other kind of mission
To notice afterwards the way the town divides itself through its third street
To sigh and flip Suffolk County red
To undertake a study of the minds of dead people

To locate the reference to the early work of Lisa Jarnot, in which the poet traces syntactical
possibilities latent in certain lesser-known lyrics of Bob Dylan
To use a hobby knife to trace the East River detaching Long Island from New York
To repeat yourself
To learn how to do this on youtube
To retire to the antechamber in 1637 or in 1770 certain of the rightness of this, of the rightness of the
world, and in expectation of great things such as my love she speaks like silence such as
ancient Scottish poems such as a grandfather clock striking such as a pencil sharpened for
use such as a leatherbound volume expressing the county such as retirement such as
archival three-mil mylar sheeting such as ornate pillows
To grow up and to notice

² Edgar Garcia, *Boundary Loot* (Scarborough, ME: Punch, 2012), [1].

³ Bob Dylan, "Love Minus Zero / No Limit," *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965); Lisa Jarnot, *Some Other Kind of Mission* (Providence: Burning Deck, 1996); Solmaz Sharif, *Customs* (Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2022), 59–60.

SISYPHUS THE COMPLETIST

to write a book called *Sisyphus the Completist*. It would
include all my recent poems and my college poems.

Each stanza rolls a stone up one side of the same idea:
it would include a poem called "Sisyphus the Completist,"
full of black and violet words.

It would include mourning and epiphany, concluding
will trigger self-awareness in conclusion
international relations and settling accounts. *Sisyphus the Completist*
so you know how weird you are but it no longer matters.

Nabokov felt he had already composed
his future novels. The trick is to
Listen, every box must be checked. Every apology
to one's wife in the evenings, for example, ends the same.
Every morning, you wake up with a stone
in your stomach. The trick is to know when you've reached
Heartbreak Hill, a Beacon Street of the mind.
Newspaper feature reports on research: women marathoners
This seems metaphysically appropriate
stay young but men age an extra ten years.
and biologically dubious.

Sisyphus still has so many academic conference lanyards
to collect, it's crazy. The book would express anxiety
about submitting new work to judgment. It would
include a comment in the form of a question.
Each stanza rolls a stone up one side of the same campus.
Full of vengeful words, I remember
The student union supports
lost souls I knew at [redacted].
Un-Koch My Hippocampus. The trick is to age
Ten years, it takes self-awareness, Ben.

Unfortunately for the lanyard set,
you have to play the minor key
to earn the right to play the major key.
That's what the blues taught me.
Does it seem that your article passes too quickly from one genre to another?
Nabokov's third novel contains a passage
when it doesn't imitate art.
predicting the *Lolita* film adaptation. We only notice life
on niches—you had to be there.
Newspaper reports on research
Sisyphus still has so many references to check,
it's crazy. Each stanza rolls a stone: I want⁴

⁴ Vladimir Nabokov, *The Luzhin Defense*, trans. Michael Scammell (New York: Putnam, 1964; repr. New York: Vintage, 1990), 244–48; Priscilla Meyer, "Black and Violet Words: *Despair* and *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* as Doubles," *Nabokov Studies* 4 (1997): 37–60; Michael Staines, "Running Marathons Can Age Men by Ten Years," *NewsTalk* 7 June 2022 <newstalk.com/new-running-marathons-can-age-men-by-ten-years-1352285>.

On a Ruin

translated from Old English

There are wet ruins and dry ruins.
A poet knows the difference:
gray lichen and dust,
vermillion roof and asbestos.
Thirty generations ago,
this wall held a number of ideas
about English weather.
It abides. Warriors in bright
byrnies encircled
the ruins at bathtime.
You know the place:
where hot springs
surged up from the jewelled heart
of memory. Now all idle,
a picture of siltation.
The river floods and tempers
the baths' water, the wall molders,
even the name is buried.

THE REVELATOR

Time's the revelator
—Gillian Welch⁵

The solo, as if overdubbed
from some other song,
crackles against the chord change
subsides into its rhythm.
At the turnaround
time reveals the missed notes
as intentionally withheld.
Mandolins belong
to their county,
an Angeleno's twang
on air. In this song
your lover has vanished
into the banjo's arc,
the guitars are trying
not to weep,
and the president is dead.
In the other song
time reveals only mist.

⁵ Gillian Welch, "Revelator," *Time (The Revelator)* (2001).