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### The pillows of our palms

Ella Baum

*Vassar College*

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# **The Pillows of Our Palms**

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Term A, Fall 2019

## Hunts Point Manifesto

Sweet sticky air  
Drips  
Dry, hot mangos  
And frozen tamarind

A shirtless man with  
Tan tan skin  
And a thick silver chain  
Straddles the rust-red fire hydrant  
Water avalanches into the street

He maneuvers the fountaining stream with a crevice-cleaner-vacuum-head  
Through the nozzle sprays a directed stream of water  
Showering the cars stopped at the red light  
Running off the low riding navy blue Corolla  
Streaming down the windows onto the sweating black pavement, and down,  
In small rivers to the sewer drain

The spigot, angrily spitting into the street,  
Wets the rubber soles of shoes passing by

The light is different in the Bronx

It is  
Whitest  
Brightest  
Here.

Merciless,  
It finds you  
In the wide avenues

Plastic chairs and wife beaters

Across the street men sit outside the corner deli  
They sit there looking so goddamn photogenic

People in Hunts Point  
Hang out on the street  
On decks  
In doorways  
And on the sidewalk

Groups on stoops  
People on porches  
Watching  
Surveying  
With sharp eyes and quick tongues

I feel watched  
Or maybe I'm projecting my own spotlight.

I am not important  
But I am different

We circle the block

The kids shake hands with the owners of the mechanic shop  
We photograph,  
The dog on the chain in the corner, and  
The ceiling panelled with car mirrors  
Everything reflects dully, at irregular angles  
Off that plastic, knotted ceiling.  
Lined against the top of the wall  
Are hundreds of green car windows sheathed in paper  
Algei stands in the corner  
Petting Papi  
He howls and barks when they walk away

Men sitting in cars  
Stare out listlessly

Shoe strings drip off telephone wires

These kids are sophisticated  
They understood the machinations of the cameras in under an hour  
Relating the aperture to the iris of an eye  
It took me years to understand

'He is not what he looks like'  
Abigail says about Roman and his light skin  
His melanin does not reflect his mixed ethnology, his *real* identity

Can it be a handicap to be so light  
Caught between worlds  
Torn from the one you identify with, grew up in  
And displaced to another  
Where the people don't really understand  
That Roman had to mature because he has a single mother and white skin

Two mangos for a dollar  
5 bananas for two  
Mango ice for one,  
Wilted dollar bill  
In exchange for the cold white waxed paper cup  
With blue flowers circling the rim

The ice is not soft  
Not hard  
It moves with your tongue  
Ice granules so fine  
Like sandpaper

The hydrant keeps running  
A never ending stream of clean Catskill water  
Chlorinating the pavement

*Mise en Scène*

1.

He's just so inanimate  
He's like a wet washcloth  
Or a bucket of water

2.

The hiss of heating elements  
The slam of a door  
The jangle of keys  
The high pitched, pulsating murmur of a water boiler  
Cars passing in the distance  
Distant footsteps on stairs and rugs  
The chapel is loud  
The chapel is empty

3.

I ate my first winter orange today  
It was tart  
The rind outside is sharp  
But I like the citrus scent underneath my fingernails

4.

I swallowed a grapefruit seed  
And now my life has gone to pieces

5.

I went to italy  
And came back  
With a heavy heart  
And mosquito bitten ankles

6.

Vallmo for miles  
 Red fields,  
 Abutt golden Rapeseed  
 for acres

A patchwork quilt I have loved and known

Home is where the windmills are

7.

Beach mother  
 Vagga mej till sömns  
 Av kroppen  
 Som mammas  
 Runda mjuka sanden  
 Under handduken  
 Vattnet som porlar

So much time for the ocean  
 So little water for the wildfires

8.

I am so tired  
 Of parents  
 That are tired  
 Of tantrums  
 That are childish

9.

Why is the skin of a plum so bitter?  
 And the flesh so sweet?  
 Dissociative personality disorder?  
 A natural castle wall and moat?

Florentine Shutters

The emerald city isn't in Oz  
It's in Italy

My photo teacher,  
He knows how to see

And he says,  
Ochre is the color of this city

But, my friend  
She says,

The city is green.

It is true  
The shutters on my windows,  
And yours

Are evergreen

Like foliage,  
They adorn this treeless city

An attempt at the sublime  
In this man made  
Cement and stone

Metropolis

This city would like to imagine  
That it could  
Imitate the natural

At street level the city is blue asphalt  
And yellow dust

But above the wrought-iron Ferri,  
Tethering ghosts,  
Florence is a long avenue of blue  
Lined by green shutters

This city gets its chlorophyll from the wooden slats perched on our windowsills

## Mary

“I need to tell you something I’ve never told you before, okay?”

I almost died at birth, seems like an oxymoron doesn’t it.

I found out today  
That I might have a guardian angel in Mary  
*The divine feminine spirit*

I was born and another man’s blood was injected into my bloodstream.  
A machine breathed for me  
Too eager to inhale the sweet, sweet air  
I wound up with lungs full of blood.

When my Nana received the call  
She was with “the tired contractor”, Bill  
He dropped his tools and said, “don’t worry, I have a direct link with Mary”  
And he went and prayed for me for two days.

He wasn’t alone,  
Her friend Susan was, at that time, close with a priest  
And his whole congregation prayed,  
Calling upon Mary  
To save me.

Papa says “I don’t know if it helped, but it didn’t hurt;  
*Prayer has energy*”

Nana wanted me to know that I have this energy,  
These spirits, watching over me.

When my Nana received the call,  
She made a promise to Mary,  
To whom she had never spoken,  
That she would do something good for someone everyday.  
She has kept this promise. In her practice  
She recites mantras for the happiness, health and the well being of man  
She prays for the world and the greater good.

Does that center my life in her practice?

This promise to Mary, she made for my fragile lungs, that she has kept all these years -  
That is a form of magic

I haven't looked much outside of myself

Have built myself a tactile, tangible faith system.

It reinforces my heart, my homes, my dreams, my wishes;

An arkenstone,

That has, and hasn't, heard me

As I attempt to manifest safety

health

happiness

love

success

strength

In my life, and for those whom I love.

This is a Hail Mary -

Repeated by millions around the world.

It is a part of the rosary, the wreath or garland of roses.

According to tradition,

Whenever it is recited,

Mary's head is crowned with a wreath of flowers in heaven.

"Hail Mary, full of grace

Blessed art thou among women,

And blessed is the fruit

Holy Mary, Mother,

Pray for us, now

and at the hour of our death.

Hail, holy Queen,

Mother of mercy,

Our life,

Our sweetness

Our hope.

To thee we cry, poor children of Eve.

To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.

Most gracious advocate show unto us the blessed fruit

O, O, O Mary! Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises.”  
A-women.

*Madrid*

Pigeons and parrots  
In Retiro Park.

Monk parakeets fly overhead,  
Their clefted tails silhouetted against the blue crystalline sky.

My dry roasted nuts from Kastrup are quickly disappearing.

A woman has lain down on the grass  
In a parallel avenue of sun  
With her whimpering dog.

It is Christmas in Spain today  
Everything is closed  
And everyone is taking a paseo in the park

The holidays are endless this year  
Natale in Italy, Jul in Sweden, Three Kings in Spain  
Christmas in New York

The sun feels hot on my forehead; therapeutic

On my right, the Palacio de Crystal is  
Visible through the towering firs.

I have been sleeping late  
Spending lazy hours in the park  
Suntanning and watching the dogs, parrots and pigeons.  
Anna is busy studying  
And everything is closed anyway.

Bilbao

Tonight this city overwhelms me  
Everyone and their niece and their dog are out.

The people in Bilbao have been rallying today,  
Singing nationalist Basque songs in the street.  
They are all wearing blue stickers,  
Raising money for the ex-terrorist prisoners.

Crowds spill out of bars onto the red cobblestone streets  
I'm nervous for my camera as I walk down the congested avenues and empty alleyways  
Ashamed of the flash that flickers, before I push the shutter;  
*Shh baby, quiet.*  
Discreetly -  
We capture this city  
And its people.

I love all the gentlemen in their Basque hats.  
David says they all used to wear them,  
But no longer,  
They've become associated with the farmers,  
The "hicks",  
The men in the stained glass mural at the train station;  
Standing with their oxen,  
Beside a coal spewing train.

In the quarters where the "Africans" live  
Joyce says, "you don't hear a lot of Spanish in this area"  
Separated from the old town by water, hills and a Calatrava bridge  
That broke bones after it was unveiled

Calatrava hadn't taken into account  
The bowl effect  
The lips of the bowl reaching up on either side and the rain, running like milk down the middle  
People broke their legs  
On the wet glass.  
They had to go back and fix that oversight.

Gour·mand

Grandpa likes menthol cough drops  
And jolly ranchers,  
Lollipops in ziplock bags,  
Butterscotch candy in crinkly yellow luminescent wrappers.

And crabs;  
Stone crab claws, "you take a claw and it grows one back",  
And blue crabs that turn red in the pot  
And stromboli made from the end bits of processed salty meats,  
Sandwiched between greasy layers of cheese and bread.

He micromanages his world from a ridiculously oversized recliner,  
And cooks: *plantains, hot dogs, cabbage, homemade sour pickles.*

They say the taste buds are the last to go.

Little Alyona

Little Alyona,  
Russian chocolate  
Girl.

*Deserted*  
In Berlin

Little  
Blue eyes  
Stares up from the leaves,  
Discarded  
Amongst the magenta acorns

Alyonka's ruddy forehead  
Is dusted  
With peat, and a cyan color cast

Her soft, heavy  
plum-p-ink cheeks  
Weigh,  
Into her wrinkled scarf

Displaced  
Nesting doll,  
Housed between white walls  
That echo  
Of dreams of theobroma

What is this Soviet girl doing in the dirt in Germany

The Einem chocolate fabrik,  
The Red October,  
Krasny Oktyabr factory,  
Supplied confectionery to the court of the Tsar

Who did *you* serve Alyona?  
Who are *you* really?

The daughter of a worker  
Many women have claimed you.  
That child,  
With the ruddy cheeks and azure eyes.

The famous Alyonka,  
The company denies -

Not a real girl.

*Do I Contradict Myself?*

Talk to me about your selves

Who are they?

How

Are they?

I don't trust those who camouflage

But who am I

To speak?

There is no *one*

Only multiplicities

And paradoxes

Are you comfortable,

Not making sense?

Sometimes I think my stability

Is unstable

I turn the same leaf over

So many times,

In every light, shadow, mirror

Turn to see myself

As I exhibit myself

As I *might* be

As *you* see me

Butter Your Own Bread, This is My Jam

**I'm in my mf bag.**

Frost creeps along the windowsill like mold and our carved pumpkins are rotting

**It's brick, breadass.**

The sky is a hazy shade of winter, the air tastes like smoke and I am melancholy

**No funny.**

I can feel the static building, everything electrifies, sparking at my fingertips

**I am high key pressed.**

The seasonal malaise is setting in, and my classrooms are still air conditioned

**I low key just want to hibernate.**

The sun sets at 4:40 today, campus lights will turn on at 3:31 and shine cold, blue light on the winding asphalt

**Scorpio season is od suspect, and everything is in retrograde.**

Ice is licking the brown, brittle leaves underfoot

**No fake.**

The wind is biting, I cry unwittingly

**Yert.**

This sorry millennial energy, maybe I should get a UV lamp for my dorm room

**Sunlight is slept on, that shit hits.**

Wake me when ~~september~~ winter ends, when the grass grows green again

**That goes.**

"The Laugh of the Medusa"

Beware the dangerous female seduction.

Medusa wasn't a villain.  
She was a mortal, a celibate, and a rape victim.  
Cursed by the asexual goddess Athena.

Her beauty caught the eye  
Of the sea god  
Who took her in the sacred temple of Athena.  
*The multimodal image of intoxication, petrification, and luring attractiveness.*

Furious at the desecration of *her* temple,  
Athena transformed Medusa into a woman,  
A monster,  
With genitals for hair  
Whose gaze turned men to stone.

There is no universal truth to her myth.  
Beautiful victim,  
Monstrous villain,  
Powerful deity—  
She's all of those things, and more.

Cixous argues,  
"If they dared to look at the Medusa straight on,  
They would see that she is not deadly,  
She's beautiful and she's laughing."

Catherine of Siena

I saw Saint Catherine's decapitated head today  
And Saint Bernard's thumb

Three miracles happened at Catherine's funeral,  
That's enough to make you a saint.

You just need three.

There is a fine line between the sexual and the spiritual,  
Especially with ecstasies,  
Orgasms of the soul.

## Naples

Removed back to the streets of Firenze  
 By a three hour train ride,  
 I miss you

I missed you already from your pavement  
 You are alive!  
 Your soundscape  
 And throbbing sidewalks  
 Remind me of home.

Your grit and potential peril feel more comfortable to me  
 Than Florence's innocence and stodgy pompousness.  
 I feel safer in the Spanish quarter of Napoli at 1:00 am  
 Than I do a block from my Florentine apartment at 10:30 pm  
 How paradoxical is it that I am unphased by this lawless city.

Here people are Living!  
 Loudly!

On Sunday we awoke,  
 To more pastries  
 And plums

To the docks we ran  
 And got lost  
 And ran somewhere else along the way

Passing the Castel dell'Ovo  
 The seaside castle of the egg,  
 On the peninsula of Megaride,  
 The grave of the mermaid Parthenope

We bought round trip tickets from Beverello dock to Sorrento

The ferry ride reminded me of my trips to Staten Island with papa back in the day.  
 Sitting on my knees with my hands against the window pane,  
 As golden light lit my face and flooded the lower level of the boat

We claim a row of blue seats.  
I wake up and see Sorrento,  
Mountains and color

Steep stairs weave throughout the mountain face -  
An Incarnation of paradise,  
An unreal,  
Lusciously green island  
Adrift in the beautiful blue sea

No wonder Ligeia, Leucosia and Partenope,  
The amorphous sirens took up residence here  
Beckoning from the rocks of Cape Pelorus,  
To sailors passing on the Tyrrhenian Sea

## I Want All The Candles

It's cuffing season  
And I'm cuffed  
To someone an ocean away

Instead of watching tv  
I send whatsapp messages into the void  
And fall asleep

What about the cold is so lonely?  
Is it the dark?  
I need to tap into my Scandinavian roots,  
Learn how to withstand this isolation.

Candles!  
I want all the candles.

A heavy arm  
On my chest  
Would help me sleep

Our Bodies Are Quiet

Our pulses ricocheting  
What is your pulse, what is mine?  
Interwoven,  
Interlocking,  
The crux of our fingers  
And the pillow of our palms

Our bodies are quiet

Don't leave your doors open,  
You'll get dying bees in your house  
I myself,  
Have been cohabiting with a wasp

*Social Media Centos:*  
*Found Poetry, Haikus and Tankas*

Yesterday I cried  
Soft tears, and today I smile  
And where there is space  
For love, it will fill you up  
Like a glass of milk

In California  
Emotions are not the same  
Here they are citrus  
Peach to lime, sweet turns to sour  
Old cars lose paint, sidewalks crack

Moments of total  
Sleeplessness. Creased eyes stare  
Unblinking at  
The ridges of old paint on  
The walls of my childhood room

These Santa Cruz trees  
Invented the internet  
Tall, mother networks

Popped fire hydrant.  
The rain that breaks the heat wave.  
I'm feeling magic.  
A man on the L train had  
A python around his neck.

A tree grows  
 In Brooklyn and I,  
 Am that tree

Yo don't come to NYC  
 To chase ur dreams if u can't  
 Walk fuckin fast son

Diary of a lady  
 Landscaper, cat call me and  
 I will crush your ego

Stop shrinking to fit  
 Into places you've outgrown  
 Bodega Barbie!  
 New york misses your childhood,  
 And everything has changed.

#### Runt Huset

Stjärnflocka, akleja  
 Pion, iris, prästkrage  
 Hundkex, daggkåpa  
 Tänk att allt det vackra växer här. Runt huset.

#### Horse in Zebra's Clothes

Life is difficult  
 And sometimes our stomachs feel funny  
 But isn't it great!  
 That we can lose and find  
 Ourselves in ourselves and in each other  
 That we can  
 Change our patterns,  
 Like a horse in zebra's clothes.

We Bleed Red

What if Danny watched the news and found out every black person was a crook or a robber?

You can't walk around with that kind of rhetoric.

That's just an *image* of a black person.

I don't consider myself any type of hood, I just consider myself a person.

People are ready to jump on you, for the color you are,

Not the journey you've been on.

Like real talk

It don't hold water.

The fact that we fuckin' bleed

Red when we are cut,

That's what connects us.

## Carrara

In Carrara,  
The marble is alive,  
Veins run through the mountains

Ivory cliffs  
Loom over the harbor,  
Where the Magra River meets the Ligurian Sea  
A site named after the moon goddess,  
Who shines on the pearlescent slopes,  
Selene, Luna, Diana

From the green waters of the Ligurian Sea,  
The Apuan Alps rise  
A landscape of craggy peaks covered in scrub brush, twisted trees, and marble deposits so white  
They gleam as though cloaked with snow.

It was the marble of Carrara that converted Rome from a city of brick huts to one of white palaces.

The landscape,  
The shape,  
Of these mountains  
Is changing

The face is slowly being hewn  
Like half finished ziggurats  
With Escher-like inverted ledges  
And sheer drops and chambers  
Entire peaks have been bisected.

Mario, a former stonecutter, told me  
The winds in Colonnata have changed as well

Marble is the protagonist of these valleys

## Portrait in my Head

The phone eats first  
This is-ness of things,  
A psycho gestural ballet

We're all culpable, it's very convenient not to look

Forgive me for staring,  
I'm probably just making a portrait in my head

Every window is a possibility,  
Every child a mermaid  
Color, light and delicacy  
A feast of texture

These images are a fairytale  
They're not true  
They're something I imagined

Portraits are abstractions  
It is not her  
It is of her,  
It is not her

Light is a rhetorical device  
The anima,  
The soul of the image

Don't break the energy  
Allow the moment to *bloom*,  
To give birth

Its decorative, there's not much there that is yours  
It needs the *thing* to happen

The image without the relationship

I was just trying to escape her eyes.

In Transit

There are moths in the subway

And Hopeless teenagers in the streets

There's something about listening to Panetoz  
As the R train speeds along the tunnels,  
Rocking from side to side

In the yellow light  
On these orange seats,  
With that train passing outside  
With their white light  
And blue seats.

The climate of the subway  
A world within a world,  
Stationary while everything else moves

The only indicators of the external world  
Are puddles on train seats,  
Snow on the stairs  
The icy air projected by the AC  
And condensation on the scratched plexiglass

The hot the cold the humid  
The throng of people  
The noise  
The silence

Wanderers versus wonderers

## The Runt

Grandpa has eyes like a pigeon.  
They are dusty slate, with dark circumferences and electric white rings that crowd his tiny pupils.

His breathing is labored now,  
There's too much feather dust in his lungs.  
The birds would stir up sweet fetid clouds of dander when we entered the coop.  
Now he trails an oxygen tank behind him, tethered to its incessant clicking.

He's had a strange attraction to beaked creatures  
For 75 years he *homed* his pigeons  
And shot at hawks.  
Even Ringo's gone now,  
The brown and white parakeet's tidy bowl-cut and ceaseless song just a memory.

Reigning monarch,  
He has acted God over our 30 acres,  
Deciding who gets to live, and who doesn't,  
Subjugating nature in order to keep talons off his koi, and his pigeons wings soft and unruffled.

I remember the severed snake head,  
Whose jaw continued to open and close after he had cleaved it off with a shovel,  
And the white tailed deer with an arrow in its side,  
Splayed across the back of his green four wheeler,  
And the Kingfisher who's iridescent blue feathers shone from inside the rusty burning barrel.

Come fall, we'd feed the red eyed white rabbits in their elevated cages.  
Come spring, Grandpa would put naked pink pigeons with their oversized beaks in our small gloved hands.  
Come summer, we'd feed the koi off the dock, their soft scaled bodies brushing against our toes.

Grandpa hasn't lost his hustle, it still rustles and crunches green.  
It's in the pillow he is stuffing for my Grandma,  
As if financial security can replace a man.

## Tech Men Talk

Theatre techies are crude  
It's all curses,  
And hyper masculinity.  
Even amongst this species of underground, glasses wearing, keychain jangling nerdy men and women

Women trying emulate,  
to be *one of the guys*  
Language of mockery,  
of danger,  
of self deprecation.

They brag over the number of things that have fallen on their heads  
"Once a wrench fell on my head while someone was on the big ladder,  
That's why I'm the way I am"

I'm tired of these tech men.

"I don't want to call Ross, I'm not into dudes"

"Two sound guys - people at a light board"

"Just make sure the stage is clear, that John isn't on stage jerking off or anything"

"In other words, fuck off bub"

"Don't fear the tool"

"He's a toolbox"

"How's my penis? It's fine, you?"

"Tape measures are one of my greatest fears"

Somehow I Brought Rhode Island With Me

The thick and salty air still smells sweet.  
The crickets still sound like summer.  
The Grass still feels wet beneath legs.  
I am not the same.

Pebbles roll along the ocean floor,  
Mimicking the red and yellow buoys  
That bob restlessly above on the rising tide.

The sand is stretched,  
Rippled, by fresh water streams  
That bleed into the Sakonnet strait.  
The beach is laden with beach glass;  
Every hue and shape tucked in between the rocks.

Haunt of the Wild Black Goose  
East of the river's mouth, at the southern tip of the mainland peninsula  
The water roils with striped bass  
And I can hear the birds.

The 'I' Includes the Body

I was born at 1:32 am

I remember being closer to the ground

I remember reaching up to hold hands

Everything on the ground was in such detail

I would find the most delicate mushrooms behind my Nanas old cabin

She nicknamed me *eagle eye*

I remember the house from a different angle

Sometimes my perspective feels wrong

Just too tall

But, I am so young

The youngest I will ever be again

The oldest I have ever been

My Very Own Pillow.

Twitching to breathe  
I remember claustrophobia

Touching the most important bodies in my life  
Mama's fingertips combing through my hair  
Or trailing my back

Papa's leg and arm draped over me, as he breathes deeply

I can be still  
I was still

But the breath against backs  
The heat  
The covers  
The limbs weighing, heavily

I want their love  
But I can't always handle it.

Out I'd crawl  
Back to my own bed  
With the frightening dreams,  
But my very own pillow.

Penumbra

It rained every single wednesday this summer  
The old ladies and I knew to pack an umbrella  
As soon as wednesday rolled around.

I ripped paper until my nail beds began to separate from the nail.  
Cleaned trays until my skin was stained with platinum  
Silvery specks embedded in the surface of my hand's  
That remained  
For a week or so -  
Don't touch your eyes,  
You could develop them.

Printed on pictorico  
And stole food  
It was good enough for government work.

Abbekås Båtklubb

Muddied salt water  
Sloshes on the durk  
Sandal tans and steering wheels

Wind  
Waves  
Blonde hair

Better than the stillness  
When the båt just sits  
And gups  
Nauseating nothingness  
Forearm resting on the kant  
Wet fingertips

Little boys brave the ocean  
Little girls want to prove themselves to bigger brothers

## In This Space

I've never experienced a Richard Serra like this  
 I feel dizzy, disoriented,  
 Leaning, like I'm going to fall.  
 The spiral just keeps going.  
 The ellipse remains, but it contorts and twists and dances -  
 Like a canyon, and my center of balance is thrown off.

In *this* space. with its vaulted and waving ceilings  
 That curve, and undulate like vertebrae.

Serra and Gherri, a match made in heaven or hell.

I feel like Jonah  
 Inside the belly of a beautiful beast  
 Like those buttresses above are ribs and those windows are the surface of the ocean

The French man behind me whistled  
 And it echoed  
 Off the steel surfaces

Going out is easier than going in,  
 I know better what to expect.  
 I thought I liked the grease marks on the ones at Dia:Beacon,  
 Left by all the hands that run against the corten face  
 But I also like how unblemished these walls are  
 Marks that come from creation and from age, not left by humans

The pieces feel appropriate here  
 Memories of the shipyard,  
 And rusting storage containers,  
 That used to sit here.

Am I the sand in this hourglass?  
 I feel like I'm slipping after all  
 Never before has an art piece made me nauseous

I feel compressed

And swaying

Tort

Tort

Tort

Vecchiaia, Morte e L'Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova

Do more people die in this city  
 Than in others?  
 Innocent,  
 Non gang related deaths -  
 This isn't a systemic oppression kind of thing.

Maybe I haven't seen any young Italians here  
 Because there aren't any.  
 Simply put, this city and its inhabitants are old.

Is that why the ambulances push -  
 Their sirens piercing,  
 Spitting blue light,  
 In the early am, and late pm  
 Because somewhere in this quilted city,  
 Another old man fell onto the pavement?

Fell on his face  
 And couldn't turn over

Perhaps this is why the Italians complain  
 About the disorder.  
 This disorder isn't just inconvenient,  
 It's fatal.

This idyllic,  
       pretty,  
       prideful  
 City is dangerous.

He fell slowly  
 Exaggeratedly,  
 Lagging motion.  
 As he reached for his keys

His face descended into the intersection  
Of pavement, concrete step, stucco wall, wooden door  
The bridge of his glasses snapped  
And sliced  
The bridge of his nose  
Skin  
Dislodged  
Dripping

I dislodged half of his glasses from under his shoe  
And placed his keys in his hand

We asked the passersby,  
'Do you speak Italian?'  
They said  
'Sì'  
But didn't stop-

Didn't ask him to sit for a minute  
Or call an *ambulanza*.

His eyes were unfocused  
As he waveringly opened his door and walked inside  
And slipped away

Seconds later the sidewalk had refilled,  
With people who would never know.

Is this how the city lives?  
In private?

I thought Venice would be a hard place to grow old,  
But Florence too -  
With her stairs,  
Cold floors and stone walls,  
Uneven, cobblestone streets,  
*Italiani ostili*.

The oldest population in Europe  
Is in decline.  
Lying in hospital beds across the street from my apartment.

Snapchat streaks

Fed by updates on the tacky puddles of blood

Outside the hospital today.

With no rain to wash it away

Is That You Mrs. Sabo?

What a terror inspiring name  
Sabo

She who lets you know  
When a laptop has been stolen  
A student hit in traffic  
Or  
Tied up in their home

I would hate to be her

Crime Alert  
Safety Alert  
Crime Alert Update  
Crime Alert  
Crime Alert  
Crime Alert

All in the past two moons

I wonder what the difference is between a safety and a crime alert

Unknown individuals in your bedroom is considered a crime  
Binding students while armed with a handgun is a crime  
A student struck by a car is a safety alert

What about

*Campus Alert*

“an individual observed a man  
(no further description available)  
who exposed himself”

What is Vassar’s end-all solution?

“We have ordered new street lamps for greater visibility”  
“Check your doors and windows”

*Hide your kids, hide your wife, and hide your husband*

## The Last Bufalino

Four days ago great uncle Tommy died.  
Nana's voice sounded broken and hollow on the phone.  
The last Bufalino -  
Hold your screws Brenny,  
It's going to be okay  
I will miss Tom's great, booming laugh  
The way his face folded when he bellowed  
How happy he was  
To get to know us  
How obvious his love for his sister was  
How much he admired her even though  
He didn't entirely understand her  
Before the illness his and energy was contagious.  
That was the first time he came up the mountain  
The second time he was thinner  
His eyes were tired,  
They didn't sparkle like before  
There was fear in them.  
He was a kind man  
But he was overly humble,  
He didn't have faith in his own worth -  
And didn't want people to see him  
Suffer.  
He didn't want to be commemorated.  
But how could that be?  
Perhaps he didn't know how to ask for it.  
He spent his life fighting the good fight, providing for  
And loving his family.  
Poor Nana,  
She will miss him  
Miss knowing that he is on this planet too

It's Raining in Cinque Terre

The big waves are coming in  
But not like yesterday.  
Yesterday, the water roiled  
With wind driven waves  
That crashed into the sand  
And stone  
Water above  
Water below

1.

Trinity

I said -

“I understand why being part of an organized religion would bring comfort, you can go anywhere in the world and the churches all smell the same.”

Kathryn said -

“They don’t smell the same to believers.”

2.

Helen points out the window  
Chiesa Dell’Autostrada in passing

Church of the Freeway

A church for the people of the highway  
As they travel  
Towards the *high* way

A roadside attraction  
*Ought* to slow motorists

The problem is convincing drivers to stop

Not for physical

Rest

But for spiritual

Uplifting

You’ll see the highway church as you’re driving down the A11  
But,  
With speed limits now 130 kilometers an hour,  
it’s difficult to slow down  
and look

“I wonder if you look both ways when you cross my mind (Jesus)” - Tyler the Creator

3.

I wrecked my ankles and feet again today  
in the name of art

Helen led us to,  
                    through,  
          and from  
                    Ravenna

My camera roll is inundated with early christian architecture

I found  
A heterogeneity I did not expect there

Unity  
is the true outlier

And I always thought asymmetry was immoral -

Each Corinthian carved by different hands  
Every second column a spoil

A cycle of rebirth,  
From one church, another is born

The marble whispers disjointedly of past cathedrals and foreign lands

Judy Says

Photography is always about loss and regret  
She says,  
When you put two photographs together,  
there is always an implied third

The depth of chlorine  
The residue on the body  
Adhered to the skin  
Photography as a trace, what remains

Abstracting from what?  
Do I mean reductiveness,  
Not burdened by narrative?

Slipping into the meta  
Photos about poems  
Poems about photos

Photography, is the medium of the underdog  
The individual who'd rather carry their own leash  
The creature hungering for representation,  
And identification,  
of self and of the world.

Photography's desire to 'salvage' is (almost) carnal,  
An art so set in time  
Intrinsically linked to my mortal fear of loss

When I photograph people, I already miss them

Fear of the erasure of images,  
Memories,  
Vision,  
Impressions,  
Of my, your, this, world.

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