Calliope MMXX Lineage: Sown in the Earth, 50th Anniversary Edition

Calliope, University of the Pacific

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Calliope MMXX
Lineage: Sown in the Earth
2020

50th anniversary
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Dean's Office

PRODUCTION NOTES
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Past editions of Calliope, as well as submission information can be found online at: pacificalliope.wordpress.com

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Lineage: Sown in the Earth
Literary Arts Magazine
University of the Pacific

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Editor: Mackenzie Wieland
Photographer: Maria Malik
Cover Artist: Jennifer Nava

LITERARY STAFF
Editor-in-Chief: Carolyn Lee
Ericka Wong
Editors: Jennifer Morrow
Armando Borrego
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FACULTY
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Calliope MMXX, 2020,
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Calliope, pronounced Kuh-Lie-Oh-Pea is named for the muse of heroic poetry in Greek mythology and is Pacific’s student literary and visual arts journal. It is produced through the collaborative efforts of students from the Departments of English and of Art and Graphic Design under the mentorship of Professors Courtney Lehmann and Brett DeBoer.

Previous literary publications that served as an inspiration for Calliope were The Pharos, an annual published from 1893–1912 and The Hieroglyph from 1931–1933. The initial publication known as Calliope was first produced under the mentorship of English professor William Kollock, in the spring of 1970. It has featured original art, poetry, prose, fiction, and essays created by Pacific’s students ever since those early days.

The cover of the first issue of Calliope is the only one that has not been illustrated with artwork produced by a Pacific student. It instead featured a copy of an illustration by Art Nouveau artist, Alphonse Mucha. Ever since, the cover design has been original art created by a Pacific student reflecting a specific genre or theme. Since 2012, each cover has also paid homage to our namesake Calliope as muse. Calliope continues as a vehicle of self-expression and creativity for Pacific students, and each issue reflects the talent of the students who contribute to it.

Recent editions of Calliope have received national acclaim by winning an Apex Award for Publication Excellence. Calliope is currently sponsored by the College of the Pacific and we all benefit from this continued generosity. Submissions are accepted year-round. For a chance to be published in a future issue of Calliope, download a submission form from this website: https://pacificalliope.wordpress.com.

This year’s issue is particularly noteworthy for several reasons. First and foremost, it is the issue that commemorates the 50th year of continued publication celebrating the art, design and literary work, of Pacific students. In addition, it’s initial release is online as a result of the COVID-19 virus restrictions placed on all of us. As such, this issue marks a particular point in the evolution of Calliope and also reflects a pivotal point as we look to the future. As you read and view the following pages, all of us associated with past and present publications of Calliope wish you: strength, health and safety.

— Brett DeBoer
At the University of the Pacific, we are so lucky to have a literary and arts publication that has been thriving for 50 years. This year we celebrate the 50th year of Calliope's establishment and the amazing opportunities it has provided to students over the course of five decades. With each publication, we expand our communal love of art and literature. Calliope is, and always will be, a moment that is shared in all our timelines. Whether you're an author, an artist, an editor, a designer, or a reader, we all come together to celebrate the moment that our experiences and stories coalesce to create the unified form of Calliope. This idea of a collective, unifying experience for all people was the underlying theme of the 2019 edition of Calliope: how we become, and I continue to feel that the editions in the past, present and future, will forever have this theme ingrained into the very essence of the publication.

When I accepted the position as Editor-in-Chief alongside Ericka Wong, I was overjoyed to be able to read literary pieces that evoked the feelings of individuals at various stages in their lives. We approached the submission reading process with open minds and hearts, savoring the pieces that made us feel what it meant to be truly human. As we moved through the process, I learned so much from my fellow editor and readers, cultivating a team environment that enabled each of us to be outspoken as we selected our final pieces for publication. I was privileged to have the opportunity to lead and direct a team of intelligent and passionate young authors and readers. My favorite process during the creation of Calliope: how we become was the collaborative meetings between the literary and art teams. We engaged in ingenious, in-depth discussions regarding the pairing of literature to art pieces which allowed us to produce the official publication of the 2019 edition. The collaboration between authors, readers, artists, and editors is the most rewarding experience I could have ever asked for when I accepted the position as Editor-in-Chief of the literary team.

Shortly after the publication celebration in May of 2019, I graduated from University of the Pacific with a bachelor's degree in Speech-Language Pathology and minors in Ethnic Studies and English. Since then, I have begun working towards my master’s degree in Speech-Language Pathology at my alma mater, and I am looking forward to developing my clinical and writing skills throughout my lifetime. I am not writing poetry as much as I once was, but I find myself inspired by the simple moments of life. My notebook is filled with shards and scraps of these moments, indicating that I have not lost touch but that there is still room for me to develop my story. A clean page is not an indicator of emptiness, but a reminder that there is space, lines, and words to be found.

— Joslynn Howard, Calliope 2019
Letter From the Literary Editor 2020

Fifty years of Calliope. The longevity of this magazine is a testament to the timeless sentiment that art, in all of its forms, is necessary. This isn’t a profound bit of information, but this statement rings true now more than ever. As Calliope enters into the age of “mid-life crises,” we too find ourselves in a time of crisis and uncertainty. In the raging chaos of pandemics and social distancing, the world is isolated. Through all this, art continues to document and ground the way we perceive the world around us. It connects us over space and time; art cultivates empathy when human connection is so limited.

With half a century under its belt, the magazine has taken on a life of its own; as writers, editors, and readers, we have developed a mutual relationship with Calliope. We write about the chaos, the calm, past and present, and the magazine is the friend that patiently waits for us at the end to listen to our story. Calliope does not just offer a platform for a cathartic release of the complexities of life, it offers more. It is a recognition of potential that is so imperative in a writer’s lifetime.

Last year’s theme, “how we become” hoped that Calliope would be a small but important part of a writer’s timeline. While last year focused on the journey, this issue asks you to shift your focus to where it all began. “Lineage: Sown in the Earth” calls back to the beginning. While Calliope enters into a new decade, we reflect back on where it all began. After graduating in December 2019, I thought a lot about this theme. I joined Calliope in my sophomore year, and since then I have had the greatest pleasure reading and cultivating stories from all walks of life. I thank the authors for allowing readers a glimpse into their lives, and the reader for welcoming it with open arms. The literature in this issue reminds us that our roots are planted somewhere, you just have to do a little digging.

— Ericka Wong, Calliope 2020

Letter From the Literary Editor 2020

Reader: in such a time and hour as this, we are unable to be blinded by the chaos that has spun much of this world in havoc. I am left pondering what historians will document, what authors will narrate, what parents will tell their children. Where will our solace lie?

Fifty years after the first Calliope issue in 1970, the torch for creativity and literacy has not been put out. As the literature team for Calliope MMXX “Lineage: Sown in the Earth,” we are amazed by the strong writers who are branching out and sharing with us (and you!) their stories: all together carefully-crafted and thought-provoking.

This year’s theme: “Lineage: Sown in the Earth” stems from the common thread that has tied the writings you will soon read. As the fiftieth anniversary of Calliope, our team is continually contemplating what Calliope has functioned for its audience. And we believe that this “lineage” of Calliope reveals the annals of Pacific, and of living. From the pruning and uprooting to the first spring bud and creation in its entirety—every aspect of our life is being sown into a metaphorical, and physical, earth.

So once more, I am amazed by the timeliness of this issue. As most of the world is confined to their own spaces, there has become a physical danger of leaving to explore the “nonhuman.” That is why I am thankful for the words in this issue that are able to craft and restore. As the literature team for the 50th Calliope, we are honored and hope with great expectation that beyond Calliope, you will continue to sow your words into the earth that surrounds us all.

— Carolyn Lee, Calliope 2020
Letter From the Visual Editor 2019

Calliope is a celebration of human expression and the culmination of student achievement at the University of the Pacific. It was an honor and a privilege to not only create the 2019 issue with my design team, but also to highlight the work of such talented individuals at this university. It is truly humbling to be surrounded by peers who are driven and excel at their craft.

The entire process revolving around the creation of an issue of Calliope is not an easy or quick one. It requires careful consideration, strategic planning, and problem-solving. Reflecting back on my experience as the Design Editor-in-Chief, I was able to strengthen my design skillset as I created a unique layout that would best showcase and unify the extraordinary student work that was selected.

Curating literary and art pieces allowed for collaboration between the design and literary teams, and I am proud of the theme we decided on, which was how we become. It was an incredible experience to look so deeply into a body of work to realize that a common thread connected them all. This speaks volumes about the nature of the human experience.

I am grateful for the opportunity that I had to be a part of the tradition of the magazine. I look forward to the 2020 edition of Calliope and seeing the outstanding accomplishments of Pacific’s students.

— Emilie Jenkins, Calliope 2019

Letter From the Visual Editor 2020

I am beyond grateful to be part of this year’s issue of Calliope MMXX “Lineage: Sown in the Earth”. This year, we honor the roots of Calliope from the cover, to the visual style, to the overall theme of the first issue from 1970. I respectfully say, this issue pays an homage to the 50 golden years of student work that has been presented annually, allowing us to experience art, literature, and design through the years.

When I first heard about Calliope, I aspired to be part of it by creating and submitting my best work to the magazine. This year, I humbly say that I contributed to the making of Calliope as the Design Editor-in-Chief. I am also pleased to say I share this great responsibility with an amazing team of designers and writers, advisers, and artists who submitted their work. Although we encountered trials that were out of our control, during the developmental stages of this year’s issue, we rejoice as we successfully reach the completion of the fiftieth issue. This issue could not have been created without the collaborative efforts of those who were involved since the beginning stages of Calliope MMXX.

With the students’ unique and artistic identity in each piece, the literature and art teams were effortlessly guided towards the theme of Lineage. No matter where we are or what we are doing, we always come back to our roots; in this issue, we explore the concept of acclaiming our origins and beginnings. Together we exhibit the genesis of Calliope by celebrating this honorary moment and continue this widely appreciated tradition. Let’s continue the lineage of creating through art and literature by celebrating Calliope for the fiftieth time.

— Crystal Naive Baltazar, Calliope 2020
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The Creation (from the Gospel of Eve)
Christy Lenzi

The First Day
In the beginning, I dozed in the arms of the earth. Slumber clung to my eyelids, pressing me into the soft ground like heavy hands sliding over my skin. It was the Gardener. His calloused fingers clutched my bones, kneaded my flesh. The rhythm of his work set the pulse of my sleepy heart. But still, I did not know him. When he finished with me and rose, I felt unhinged as if I, too, were rising. But the earth held onto me, gentle and soft. The haze of twilight settled over me once again. The Gardener's voice, low and distant, murmured, "She's all yours." But he was not talking to the earth. A figure, blurry in the shadowy garden, lay beside me, moaning softly. The Gardener grew smaller and darker until he disappeared into the shadows and I was alone with my groaning companion. I swam in and out of moments. A moment floated by with an image of the moaning boy. He clutched his side. His eyes hated to look at me, narrowing and hardening into sharp edges, as if my presence injured him. I have hurt him. He told me this as red seeped between his fingers. It leaked from the gaps between the Gardener's stitches. I belonged to the boy. I was his helper. He said the Gardener told him this. The boy stretched his red finger toward me. He touched my side. My skin shuddered, but still he pushed his finger into my flesh, pressing it to the bone. This is mine, inside you. Mine. I closed my eyes and sank back into the earth, away from the boy's hard eyes and probing finger. I tried to slip back to the place I came from, before that moment the Gardener laid his hands on me. But I became lost. And there was sleeping, and there was rising, the first day.

The Creation/2
The Second Day
The earth cradled me while I slumbered on the waves of twilight moments, rocking in and out of the garden where the boy's stern voice summoned and sighed. Only when softness grazed my body did my eyelids flutter. She stood so near that her hide brushed against my skin, sending a shiver through my bones. Her large eyes were made of dark kindness and deep sweetness. She pulled the purple from the green leaves until it snapped free. Her long, tender jaw rolled as she chewed it. Purple dripped to the ground and sparkled on her hard little feet.
She would share if I promised not to touch her.
Her eyes told me this.
I reached out for a bead of purple and snapped it free.
Fruit.
The boy's voice stopped my hand from moving to my lips.
The Gardener says we are allowed to eat any of the fruit from the flowering plants in the garden.
The boy reached his fingers toward me and took the fruit from my hand. It disappeared into his mouth.
You are my helper.
As he reminded me of this, the purple squeezed between his teeth. The juice slid out the corner of his lips as he chewed.
He pushed the Dear One away with one hand and she leaped into the air as if her body's bones had never been heavy and sleepy like mine.
She belongs to me, too—the Gardener said. All the creatures, all the fruits. And you.
I turned away from the boy's chewing noises and watched the white tail of the Dear One disappear into green shadows.
As my slumber beckoned, I licked the sticky sweetness from the tips of my fingers. And there was sleeping, and there was rising, the second day.

The Creation/3
The Third Day
I swayed between each moment, nestled in the earth. She sang for me until rising time returned.
It was the Clever One who made the singing stop.
I did not see him at first. I saw green. And fruit. Flowering plants. My stomach ached and gnawed. As I reached for them, the plant's eye spun to look at me. It startled me, for I had not seen a plant's eye before.
A buzzing sound came from a tiny creature hovering near the soft, red flowers. The plant's eye spun toward the noise. The plant had a mouth—it opened and a long, pale tongue darted out, snapping up the Buzzing One. As the plant chewed, the green disappeared from its body and I could see its true shape. All the colors of the garden rose up inside him and he became a beautiful, scaly creature with a slender, coiled tail, not a plant vine as I had thought. It was the Clever One, all along.
The one whose eyes see everything. He understands the secret of how to change himself if he wants to.
The Clever One dwelled in my thoughts all through rising time and into my slumbers. In my sleep visions I reached out and touched his cold, gray skin and it flushed to the warm, dark color of my own.
And there was sleeping, and there was rising, the third day.

The Creation/4
The Fourth Day
My bed in the earth's arms grew uncomfortable. I missed the songs she used to sing, and her cold stones made themselves known to me. Still, my rising moments clung heavy as sleep, and I moved through their haziness searching always for the Clever One. As I helped the boy find fruit, ran with the Dear One, and caressed the soft flower petals, my eyes wandered the garden looking for him.
I had just stepped wet and shivering from the pool in the center of the garden where the four rivers spring when I heard the sound of a hard plant breaking. I squinted into the green at the Crooked Tree, looking for the clever eyes of my friend and saw, instead, the piercing eyes of the Gardener peering back at me from between the branches.
I wished I was clever enough to turn myself the color of water and stone, so those eyes would not burn me with their seeing. The Gardener's stare felt different from the gazes of the creatures or the boy, or even the Clever One. But I did not know what made it so. It weighed heavy like a hand on me. I turned back to the pool and sank deep into its waters, longing to become the dark pool itself, which the Gardener's eyes could not penetrate.
Later, when I helped the boy find a comfortable sleeping place, I saw the Gardener's stitches had been removed from the boy's body. I touched the scar that I had given him, but he pushed my hand away and spoke.
The Gardener says you did not eat your fruit from the Tree of Life.
I glanced at the hardened bits. The Gardener has told the boy we must eat of the Tree of Life every day. The Gardener himself brings the fruit to the boy while I am sleeping. It is bitter and I do not desire it.
The Gardener says never go near the Crooked Tree or touch it. If we eat its fruit, we will know what Good and Evil is and then we will have to die.
Whenever the boy talked about the Gardener, his chin lifted and his chest puffed out like the Crowing One.
I wondered what Good and Evil looked like and how it tasted. I did not know what it was to die. I could tell the boy did not know either. I remembered the Clever One chewing the tiny creature until it disappeared.
Maybe to die is to disappear.
Perhaps the hunting gaze of the Gardener would be unable to find me if I died and disappeared.
I closed my eyes and dreamed of climbing the Crooked Tree.
And there was sleeping, and there was rising, the fourth day.

Continued on page 49
please go to bed
Madeline C. Domingo

he’s doing it again
the mindless tone of the television is drowned out
by the long, loud gasps
of my father as he sleeps in his chair
his belly rises and falls as he struggles to breathe
the air seems to catch and halt in his great big lungs
he stops, mouth agape, the world is still
we all hold our breath with worry as the pause lengthens
before he exhales and so do we
as he returns to his snoring
it is the same sleepy roar i would hear as a child
and imagine a great and mysterious beast in my parents’ bedroom
this was before i could see the cracked calluses on his hands
the blisters and scabs on his ankles
the slivers of silver that sprouted up in his dark hair
the way he slumps in his chair like his bones are made of lead
or maybe it’s the weight of our worlds weighing on his shoulders
every night he battles his own exhaustion
and every night he loses; his body cannot sustain his spirit
so he lays upon his comfy leather throne
our trusty canine slumbering below him in an act of loyalty
basking in the glow of some late night show
Gorgon's Stare
Dominic Rudd

There may not be snakes writhing in a monstrous wig
Nor scales like iron plates
Though it may not have the eyes to catch my gaze
This beast can still petrify

Like a dark Athena it is birthed
From within my skull it emerges
Filling my head with leaden fire
Suffusing my limbs with weighted ice

Like a Gorgon it has a weakness
Though it lacks eyes or senses
Take heed from great Perseus
The only defense is reflection

Straighten out bent logic and twisted context
It is not the hero, it is the monster
And monsters do not rule their myths
Monsters are slain and left behind

In the Light of the Sun
Mackenzie Wieland
Chang'e 4
Carolyn Lee

China successfully lands the space rover, Chang'e 4, on the far side of the moon, exactly 50 years after Americans landed Apollo 11 on the near side of the moon.

Chang'e 4 lands on the far side of the moon.
They cannot send a rover to the near side of the moon because it has already been done by the Americans 50 years ago.
It must travel further,
must do something never done before.

If you took the time to watch the landing,
you would notice 2 things:
that the gray, gray dust breaks softly,
rigid and sandy like the fingernail dust of my mother’s nail file,
and that someone has already been there:
a lonely woman, a white jade rabbit.
It’s as if the 4,000 year-old folklore prophesied a returning,
It’s as if the Chinese already marked their landing and claimed it theirs.
It’s as if someone, somewhere, immortal and not, whispered
do it again
do it again.

July 20, 1969.
If you took the time
to listen to the air-to-ground transcriptions
between Mission Control and the Apollo 11 crew,
you would notice that Chang’e and the white jade rabbit
were mentioned as one entity:
the Bunny Girl.

2019.
The Chinese, who skip the number 4
because ‘4’ (四: sì) sounds like ‘death’ (死: sǐ),
must have forgotten about that
old Chinese superstition because
it was the 4th Chang’e that made the landing,
and came back for the bunny girl.

When they both meet,
would the goddess recognize
her own name scribbled
on the metal lander? And would
the machine dismiss her as a pile of dust,
forgotten or collected for research?
And could you have seen
what Chang’e 4 saw,
would you have heard her whisper:
I am not angry
I am not angry.

Chinks in the Armor
Angel Zhong

The Chinese Exclusion Act, formally the Immigration Act of 1882, was the first and only major federal legislation to explicitly suspend immigration for a specific nationality.

distilled mahonias arraign
   bespoken flesh—delineating
   frontiers: id est
   the earthen quilt
that blankets the roof
of my grandfather’s mouth
as he gambols through jade levees—
my grandma in the distance,
illumined by moonstruck love;
   That which marks our unifying pursuit—
the maw where all blood rivers
inevitably converge—blindness obscured by
ancient shadows. there, we envision family.
envision unburnished tables still splintering—
   and jars of pickled shishitos nestled
close—platonic throngs along
slanted sills,
projecting slivered kaleidoscopes
   fanned across the shedding walls.
envision bones—good bones—holding them up.
and then tell them they aren’t worth
faces of their own.
   his knees:
envisioned red—
   threadbare—
   scarves
   —scented with crumpled peonies;
   render us specters at will. neither outside
   nor
   inside, but the limbo
between—meaning: remain—
   unfazed, in the face of being
   unfaced.
Chinese finger trap
Madeline C. Domingo

i am still tied to you
an impossible knot
looped beyond reason and rationality
the harder i yank
    and pull
    and strain to break the tension
the tighter it closes
angry red skin blistering
beneath the rough texture of your truth

the secret to freedom
is to simply stop struggling
and yet i find that i cannot sit quiet
bound indefinitely to past decisions

you have trapped me
because i trusted you enough to
extend my fingers out
    reaching towards something that
    was never mine to hold

Moon Shadow
Minnie Elvira
Here
Alex Abbley

Here lies the heart,
Pulsating on a thousand chests
The beating of a nation
Heard from the 3rd floor
Heavy to hold, harder to mold.

Here lies our mother,
Handing over her heart
In exchange for freedom
Tears to fall, blessing the soil
Sacrifice comes up empty handed.

Here lies the nature of good and of evil,
Where night will kiss the day
Skies cradling their stars
Will open that door, leading to all
Heavens and a heart for Venus too.

Here lies the stone,
The seedling suspended midair
Where our ancestors now rest
Upon that earth, memory will be stamped
And tomorrow’s past will be erased.

Here lies our hope,
To beat back life into that chest
And plant those seeds, and bloom once more
Not to go on foot, only to take a step back
Dust will collect, but what we settle must be infinite.
Those Hands I Have Not Familiarized With
Carolyn Lee

My father’s hands are coarse.
They’re ash-black as if night
never met day, and if blackouts
were the norm.
My father’s hands are dry,
dry from the work he does lifting
heavy boxes and scanning barcodes
that don’t come with moisturizer.
My father’s hands are wrinkly.
Those lines that outstretch
outline a timeline that is beyond me.
My father’s hands I have not
touched—my place, robbed,
by money and unrealistic,
realistic priorities.
My father’s hands do not need more
hand sanitizer, but the vacation
of a marble sink paired with the lather
of a foam soap and scented with
the sweet suds of a family meal.
My father’s hands don’t tell time,
but enforce it:
time to leave home and time to work,
only to darken those pairs once more.
My father’s hands need lightening,
and the touch
of a longing daughter’s

Nevelson Box
Professor DeBoer’s Sculpture I class
lest the Heart collapses
Angel Zhong

and we two dissipate
into the stagnant air—heat
signatures unrecognizable
to the Wind.

and the places we saw;
frequented;
lived; grow moldered
and sepia—ancient
artifices
crumbling
without
light.

and you, alone, recall
the taste of happiness
in the back of your throat;
only to remark, “it’s bitter”
and turn away.

More Hair More Money
Olubori Babaoye
oranges
Molly Westlake

i know it seems slightly crazy, but

today i thought about us. i imagined what we would talk about if you were here with me. i conjured up all of the jokes we could make. flying around me, a dozen separate lives going past, dried leaves.

i know i sound insane, but

last night i considered what flowers we would plant in our garden, and what we could make for dinner. every evening i would enlist myself to ensure all of the chores in the house were finished so that we could sleep, encouraged and eager for the next day.

and i know this is all coming out of nowhere,

if i went out to get groceries i would make sure to stop and get oranges. when i come back i would split one in half with you. i know how much you like them. the oncoming of spring has put my mind into a wildly fanciful state. i’m beginning to see you in laughter, inbetween the keys of the piano, stuck in time a calmly moving mass in my life full of possibility and despair and love and unavoidable collision.

but i’ll just stop for now.
Twilight
Lee Kaj

The clouds are closer to the earth tonight
And the horizon further out
So the colors are cast
And dimmed
And scattered by the unsure breeze
To splatter back where they belong
Against a deep grey canvas

The world is solid tonight
Even the sky hangs heavy with it
Breath in lungs
Blurred streetlamps
Bound to the light that hangs on edges
For as long is it can
Before tomorrow's call comes

What is left on a night like this
A lonely piece of paper
Floating down
As an admission
Of the weight
To come to rest in the center of the river
And turn half, against the current
Held in a moment of resistance
Before sinking out of view

To Woo a Wyrm
Jennifer Nava
Inside Jokes
Livy Simms

You told me I was weird one night
I shrugged and said I was a space alien
You asked me how I got here
I said on a spaceship, duh
You laughed and asked me where I parked it
I shrugged again, I had lost it
You said we’d find it one day

You asked me how I was last month
I said I felt lost
You joked and compared me to my spaceship
I frowned because that wasn’t funny anymore
Not like it used to be
You apologize but
I don’t find it sincere
You shouldn’t joke about this

I waved when I saw you today
You walk over with a smile
I ask how you’ve been
You said you were finally happy
I couldn’t say the same
You smile sadly and tell me
I would find my spaceship someday

Planet into Space
Mackenzie Wieland, Jon Sosidka, Peter Park, Christina Tang
I Swallowed the Sky
Alex Abbley

I swallowed the sky,
And the taste was weightless.
On my tongue, the cloud shifted
Flat, like papier-mâché
Filling the lungs
With lullaby chime
Cells stranded together like pearls
Rolling off the vanity.

Mahogany smoke, drifted through
The room and settled at the shrine.
To the sea he spoke in German
And to the sea I spoke in mine.
The letter, hand delivered in fragrance
Passing by strangers in the night
Words coming up like shooting stars
My words his wings, but failed flight.

In the beginning, Atlas sketched
our names into Orion’s Belt
Looping holes, another notch
Whispering, “Liebst du mich noch?”
I already knew your answer,
And surely, you my final thoughts.
With a belly full of sky,
I forgave all you forgot.

I swallowed the sky,
And the taste was limitless.
On velvet foreheads,
Glints of gold fell between curls.
To eat my words, I washed them down with ink
Down came the shore, and on it our final brink.
I swallowed the sky, and I got the mouthful
And learned that even stars leave scabs, so be careful what you wish for.

Eclipse
Jasmine Torres
eye contact
Madeline C. Domingo

the key is to not look at people directly
but to observe them in pieces
a glance and a glimpse
studying the lines of a figure
through a hazy reflection nearby

but eye contact is dangerous
the world is full of medusas
and too many people cannot distinguish the hair from the snake

everyone knows that burglars and robbers and thieves
(the good ones, at least)
always begin their crimes with a look inside
the windows of a house
before forcing their way in through broken glass
and so i feel my breath hitch
when your eyes latch onto mine
glued together by the common thought of each other
you peer into the windows of my soul
and i wonder what it is you are wanting to take
From Birds
Zaizhen Xu

When You Are Awake
Look, sunlight combed lark
Floating in the ebb of dreams—
Paints poppies with song.

After The Tumult
Moonlight glazed robin
Shattered; segments vaporize
With silk tweet—silent.

Rat Race
Olubori Babaoye

Phases of the Moon
Paola Baltazar
I know you want to hear about the grandeur that gave birth to my port city
I want to give that to you—
but the broken windows have blighted Her elegance
I know you want to learn about how the Delta’s veins nourish our young
I want to give that to you—
but the churning murky water whisked their purity out to sea
I know you want to hear about butterflies and bees frolicking above acres
of asparagus shoots under the rainbow sky
I want to give them to you—
but the monarchs are vanishing, and the bees are dying, and there are no
prismatic raindrops in the cloudless sky
I know you want me to describe the life perched outside my window—
I want to share it with you—
but my landlord dismembered the two trees on my front lawn cutting
away every limb
now they stand, two 10-foot-tall skeletal bone stumps, leaving no refuge
for the birds
I know you want to know about how my neighborhood glows
I want to share it with you—
but I can’t see my neighbors light through my closed blinds
I know you want to hear about how I let in the light
I want to tell you it’s true—
but I keep them closed all through the day and night because I live alone and
am afraid
I know you want to hear about how the red fox claims Swenson Oaks
at night
I want to give that to you—
but all I can hear are her hungry cries as she searches for scraps to take back to
her den
I know you want to picture her adorable cubs waiting for her—
I want to share that with you—
but the predators came and snatched their innocence away
I know you want to hear that their father is near watching over them
while their mother trades her dignity for a mouthful of processed food
I want to give that to you—
but their father got trapped in a steel cage never to return
I know you want to hear that there must be some good souls to be found
I want to tell you it’s true—
but there are so many to save and we can only reach a few as we stand on
the levee helplessly watching the rest sink like heavy stones to the bottom of
the channel

Stockton, CA
Jennifer Joy Pierson

I know you want to hear about the beautiful water hyacinth violet blooms
blanketing the Delta
I want to share them with you—
but they’re choking the life from our children

I wish a Great Blue Heron would pluck them up and carry them North
along the Sacramento River
until their mother’s veins run clear
until their fathers are waiting for them
at the base of Mount Shasta
with outstretched arms
ready to heal their wounds

I know you want that too
A Gossamer Cycle of Immigration
Leila Valencia
The Natural Order
Isabel Acevedo

A few memories emerge:
A straw hat slowly unraveling,
Dirty gloves,
And a man, still like stone.
Except he wasn’t stone.
He was a tree, tall and magnificent.
He swayed with the wind.
In every memory I have of him,
He is in the garden
Tending the fruits and vegetables:
The rising cucumber vines and brushes of strawberry gold,
A protective defense of lemon and orange trees
With their prickly trunks and outreaching limbs.
He gave us shade in the summer and peaches in the spring.
He belonged out there in his garden, as much as he belonged with us.
No matter how much I search,
Desperately,
I cannot find one memory of the garden without him in it--
Which is why when he was gone, it went as well.
Now it’s just
Overgrown, patches of brown, neglected and
dead.

The Roots of Life
Riley Kinder
Metamorphic
Dominique Cottrell

I used to sit for lunch where the dirt glittered,
Full of mica like someone had left me a gift.
Muscovite forms in tiny sheets only a molecule thick,
Peels apart at the slightest breath, but it leaves beauty
As it flakes apart, the first of the silicas to decay.

When left to their own devices,
Ants will choose garnets preferentially to build their hills.
A small mountain of perfect, red dodecahedrons. To them it must seem
Like a momentous thing, a garnet that I could fit underneath
The nail of my pinky finger.
Humans are not the only ones who love beautiful things.

There is something miraculous about how when rocks
Are under monumental pressure—so much heat and weight that they’re
Forced to melt, reform—
They create perfect dodecahedrons of garnet and delicate, flaking mica
As if to say, if I have to change, I’ll change for the better.

I used to pick up mica and put it in my pocket, hoping each time that it would
stay intact;
Keep garnets in the bottom of my bag,
I’d put a pen in there, or my wallet, and the muscovite was destroyed;
The garnets slipped into the lining, forgotten.

Still, in the dead of winter, I took out my old rain jacket,
And for the first time since summer, I put my hand in my pocket;
In the darkness, in the rain, I saw sparkling mica on my fingertips,
Almost wet in the street lights,
And I thought of New Mexico sun,
Of the desert, of beauty under pressure;
Of the perfect summer.

A gift for myself. Only 40 million years in the making.
What will I become, under pressure?
My Mother’s Hands
Livy Simms

my mother’s hands
have always reminded me
of a skeleton’s
I know there is one
inside of her
there is one
in all of us
I never thought I would see
those bones so soon
some skin has managed to
grow back over time
it grows back thicker
and stronger only to be
torn away again
every few months

my mother’s hands
that anxiously
pick away at
chipping nail polish
yet somehow they manage
to stay clean
my hands never feel clean
my hands make mistakes
they fumble
they ache
despite my youth
I didn’t receive
my mother’s hands
and I hope I never do
my hands should be my own

my mother’s hands
know how to be caring
they also know
how to hurt

After Degas
Madison Miller
Sweet Silence
Ryan C. Kyner

Silence is a haven
A place where I feel safe
from any ailment

Things that could wound
Are all outside our walls
I know there is someone else here,

I don’t have to talk to her,
She doesn’t mind if I do anyway
Even if today we don’t talk,

The world outside is so loud
We hardly get to hear our hearts
She sits over there

And I sit over here

I can throw off my shoes
Let my toes get lost in the forest of carpet I don’t clean
She smiles at some video from someone I can’t stand

She hates it when I snore
But, we could be like this forever
Vincent Looks Up At the Night Sky
Monica Luona Mendoza

In the darkest of places
Beauty still finds me
Though in profound depths
I look up and see—

Stars of brightest gold
The moon with her gentle glow
A sky of deepest blue
The town asleep below

This sky is not static
It whirls, it blends, it dances
Clouds, moon, and stars mingle
Unpredictable yet balanced

In the darkest of places
I can find beauty
It takes my breath away
All this I see
The Creation (from the Gospel of Eve)—Continued

The Creation/5
The Fifth Day
Always the Gardener watched us. His ravenous eyes followed me around the garden. As soon as I rose from sleep, his eyes reached for me as the Clever One’s tongue had stretched toward the buzzing creature. But in the heat of mid-day, the Gardener slept in the shade of the Tree of Life and I could rest.
The boy told me a secret.
The Gardener said the tree of Life is a special tree, the tallest in the whole garden. Its fruit keeps us exactly as we are, always. But we will spoil everything if we go near the Crooked Tree.
I told him a secret.
I have stopped eating the bitter fruit from the Tree of Life.
It makes the rising moments too much like the sleeping ones. There are other trees in the garden with much sweeter fruit. I wonder what the Crooked Tree’s fruit tastes like.
My whispered words made the boy frown. He glanced over his shoulder.
I told him another secret.
The Tree of Life is not a good tree for climbing. But the Crooked Tree has low branches and plump, golden fruit.
The boy’s eyes narrowed and became sharp. He poked the dirt with his stick, so I stopped speaking to him.
I did not care about the Tree of Life. I wanted to change like the Clever One. I wanted to know Good and Evil. I wanted to know what it is to die.
My clever friend came to me in sleeping visions. His scales were black like the dome of the night sky; his scales twinkled silver like stars. The Gardener was not the only one who could make such beauty—my clever friend created himself each moment into something new, all by himself. I would find him when the Greater Light rose into the sky. The thought comforted me the way the arms of the earth used to do, back in in the beginning.
And there was sleeping, and there was rising, the fifth day.

The Creation/6
The Sixth Day
I woke before the Greater Light. The boy slept, still, red fruit stains covering his mouth and fingers. The Gardener had not yet come to peer at us through the plants. I walked along the river to the spring. The Swimming Ones splashed. The Flying, Singing Ones called to me and I laughed back.
Today I would find him.
I passed the Tree of Life with its dark needles, pointed top, brittle bark, and bitter ground-fruits that I did not desire. But I breathed in the tree’s scent—greener and
sharper than anything else in the garden.

On I went.

I came to the spring from which the four rivers flowed and stood before the
Crooked Tree. I felt someone's presence—not like the Gardener's burning gaze,
but quiet and calm.

My eyes searched the ground, the plants along the rivers, the stones, leaves, flow-
ers, fruits. I ran my gaze up the side of the Crooked Tree, studying every crevice,
crooked limb, gnarled branch. I searched every piece of golden, dangling fruit until
my eye caught one piece that stared back. I squinted at the fruit. The fruit winked
at me.

The Clever One!

He uncurled himself from around the hanging fruit and became himself. The golden
color drained from his scales, and all the colors of the Garden rushed to fill its place.

There was a bite mark in the fruit. Golden juice dripped from the creature's jaw.

No!

The word tore at my throat as it leaped from my mouth.

You will die!

The Clever One's eye slid up, around, and back to me. His scales turned green as
leaves, grey as bark, black as shadows until he disappeared. Surely, he had died as
the Gardener said.

I fell to the ground, my knees scraping stone.

The tree's eye swung around to me. It blinked at me so cunningly, I laughed.

You will not die.

This is what his eyes told me. I smiled at my friend as his colors reappeared and
his eye slid back
to the golden fruit.

You will live with your eyes wide open; it is better than living forever only sleeping
and rising.

The golden fruit snapped from the branch when I pulled it.

I heard steps near the spring and glanced over my shoulder at the boy who had
followed me. He picked up a handful of pebbles and started throwing them into
the pool. He did not like how close I had walked to the Crooked Tree or how I
had touched it after he had told me the Gardener's words. He threw the rocks
harder and harder into the water. A line formed across his forehead like a crack in
the bark of the Crooked Tree.

You did not help me find my morning fruit. I am hungry.

His stomach made a rumbling noise.

I have found the best fruit in the whole garden for you.

At my words, his eyes dropped to the fruit in my hand. The spot where the Clever
One had taken a bite glistened and dripped like a gash in smooth flesh. The boy's
eyes grew large and round.

Now you will surely die.

Now I will know Good and Evil. I will be like the Gardener.

The Creation/7

I lifted the fruit and breathed in its ripe, warm smell. I pressed its skin until juice
rose up into my thumbnail. I licked it from my thumb. Sweet and sour together.
This was what Good and Evil tasted like.

I took a bite.

The boy's pebbles fell to the ground. His eyebrows slid to the top of his head.

Have you become like the Gardener, now?

I nodded, though I felt no different than I had before, except for the shiver of
pleasure that tinkled through my body at having obeyed my own wishes instead of
the Gardener's.

The line across the boy's forehead grew deeper.

But you still belong to me. You are still my helper.

His stomach growled with hunger.

I held out the fruit. With both hands, he lifted it to his mouth and took a bite. He ate the whole thing.

I heard the Gardener coming. I took hold of the boy's arm.

We must die.

Die?

Disappear.

How?

We must become part of the Crooked Tree.

I reached for the first branch and pulled myself up, then climbed to the next,
toward the blue.

The boy followed me up the tree. When we reached the highest branches, we sat
still as the Clever One so that we would disappear behind the leaves.

The Gardener stood near the foot of the Crooked Tree, casting his gaze around
the garden. It was the first time I had seen him clearly. He looked the very image
of the boy, with hungry eyes made of sharp rocks. But the Gardener owned more
might in his arms, more swiftness in his legs than the boy. He did not look up into
the Crooked Tree.

I gazed up through the leafy branches to the blue. I peered over the treetops and
saw a great wall covered by plants, circling the garden like the Slithering One who
wraps himself around the Squeaking Ones before swallowing the tiny creatures.

Still the Gardener searched for us with his hard eyes. His fingers curled into his
palms, turning his large hands into stones.

This was the first day my twilight moments had separated into light and dark—day
and night moments—and the haze that had covered me had begun to clear. The
bitter fruit of the Tree of Life no longer held me to the earth. I felt I could soar
into the sky like the Flying, Singing Ones.

The Gardener called for the boy.

Like the Clever One, I held still. I slid my eyes to the boy. He slid his eyes to me.
The Crooked Tree is sweet. The Gardener is sour.

Our eyes told each other this, that the garden was both Good and Evil together.

Where are you?
The Gardener’s angry voice rushed from his throat like the four rivers springing from the earth.
The boy shivered and made a sound like the Squeaking Ones.
The Gardener’s eyes searched the branches of the Crooked Tree.
Come down!
The shivering boy shed the colors of the plants and climbed down, trembling before the Gardener in his own colors.
I stayed cloaked in my leaves.

The Creation/8
Who told you that you could disappear from me? Have you eaten from the Crooked Tree?
His voice shook the boy until words tumbled out.
The girl you gave me for a helper—she gave the fruit to me and I ate it.
The boy turned his face up to my leafy branches. Together, they peered at my colors, trying to see me.
I slid my eye to the Gardener.
What have you done?
His voice was made of thorns.
The Clever One has shown me how to disappear.
I smiled as the leaves spoke my words.
The Gardener’s eyes threw stones in my direction.
Out! You must leave the garden and never eat from the Tree of Life again. Go!
The Gardener’s mouth grew full of curses. His wrath fell loud and heavy, booming through the garden like a great tree crashing to the ground.
But I had stopped listening to the Gardener’s voice. I heard only the song of the Flying, Singing Ones soaring above me.
I rested my hand over the place inside me that the Gardener said belonged to the boy. I would make it mine. So I fashioned it in my own image and I saw that it was good. It grew wings like the Flying, Singing Ones. This is the knowledge the Gardener wanted to keep to himself—that we do not need him.
I returned to my own colors and climbed down from the Crooked Tree, my new knowing shining like all the colors of the garden inside of me.
And there was sleeping and there was waking—the sixth day. And I, mother of the Living Ones, forever blessed that day and made it holy, because on it I left the Slithering Wall of the garden and freed myself from the Gardener.