

# LEGACY

AWAKENED VOICES: ISSUE 11  
WINTER 2020



**Seeds to the Wind**

Judith Dawn  
Watercolor

Awakenings Permanent Collection





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# INTRODUCTION

## An Editorial Note

Awakenings' tenth anniversary culminates in *Legacy*. In these pages, legacy is a survivor led examination of the past, a vision for the future, and a place for present creation.

Legacies are deeply personal, often flawed, and they depend on us to turn our memories over and over as we more deeply flourish in our creativity and lives. Our reviewers and editorial team saw writers wield legacy in a range of ways such as theme, character, and structure. Thea Matthews, Konrad Ehresman, and Virginia Barrett fold in nature's phases of birth, decay, and regrowth into their writing, and Donny Winter voices the self as nature after unwanted extraction. Kate P., Emily Mosley, and Melodie Corrigan connect modern family narratives with ancestral family and art forms. Each piece fully embodies legacy, and yet this issue does not encapsulate the full scope of what legacy can be.

Art can be the starting place or a continuum of healing and legacy. This summer Awakenings' first virtual exhibit *Legacy* highlighted visual art pieces

from our permanent collection and asked docents to creatively respond.

Art is generative, and we add to the legacy of survivors with our creative responses. We highlight a few docents in the special section of *Legacy* and hope legacy continues to spread across creative mediums as it spreads over survivors with strength and healing.

As a reader, you are part of the growing legacy.

The Editorial Team is Jeri Frederickson, *Creative Director*, Megan Otto, *Literary Associate*, Sal Goedken, *Literary Intern*, and Ania Garcia, *Programming Intern*.

## **Content Warning**

The following writing contains material including one or more of the following: Rape, Incest, and Sexual Assault, Abuse, Self-Injurious Behavior, Suicide, Blood, Racism, Sexism.

The intention behind this content warning is to prepare a reader so they feel safe, even if safety doesn't always feel comfortable, to take in this writing. May it also serve as a reminder that a reader can pause and take a break from reading. The stories will be here, waiting for the reader to return.

**LILAC | *Syringa vulgaris***

Thea Matthews  
to Grandfather

Take your filthy hands off me.

I SAID—Take your scarred wounded  
hands off me.

Your weight has no  
power over  
my wobbly toddler knees.

Your old construction hands calloused  
with generations of incest  
beatings children screaming pulverized  
these amethyst flowers.

I remember choking on the size  
of your retired labor-union  
tongue when my gums were getting ready  
to release their first set of baby teeth.

I remember you stretching my legs  
after kindergarten graduation  
I stopped liking school then my tights stained  
a rite of passage to the first grade.

I remember you spreading my legs  
at night when Grandma went to take a  
l o n g  
bath. Your oldest son pulled the same move  
like father like son two years later.

His gallant badge radiated from

extinguishing fires still your son  
this firefighter used his hands to  
burn the lips between my thighs yet I

survived. A field of Lilacs who  
run with the four directions  
Great Spirit oversees this field. I

clear out my throat  
each time I taste your mucoid saliva. I

lose my appetite when I feel  
your fingers circling my soft areolas. I

smudge my body with sage sweetgrass rose petals  
transmuting your residual sweat  
into tears leading me to the Ocean.

I scream into waves.  
Yemaya holds me the shore  
line's salty foam releases my prayers.

I dive deep soar high  
I unwind on the spine of a humpback whale.

Her oscillating muffled words travel miles.  
Her cryptic tones swirl violet within my aura.

I DECLARE—

you  
have NO  
POWER over me!

You have NO POWER  
over  
me!

YOU  
HAVE  
NO  
POWER  
OVER  
ME!

When dawn breaks I rise  
in the direction  
of the East I pick  
up shovel and seeds

I sow I weep  
I sow I weep I sow I weep  
for many moons I renew  
an ethereal field of Lilacs!

Swallowtail butterflies rest  
on petals pulsating purpureal shades  
leaves dance while oak trees wave their arms  
in celebration. At last

I return to where I first saw her  
where I first see me as a little girl

and where I tell her  
I love you

I've always loved you  
and I never left you

I never will leave you.  
She roams in this field.

She Rests In Power.

**FUCHSIA | *Fuchsia magellanica****Thea Matthews*

Believe me.

My cracked lips and stained tongue  
 a burning stomach in a no-backbone bedroom  
 did not deter the swift flight of endurance  
 the remembrance of sweetness of survival.

Hummingbirds came once I tasted my  
 tears yet sometimes I still close my eyes  
 to the Sun. I see the glaring red  
 of my florid skin swollen inside  
 irritated infected from  
 pesticides the warmth of invasion  
 of his cold fingers inside.

I cry growl slice arteries with teeth.  
 I wrestle with the treachery of men until  
 I twirl prayers into beads of nectar  
 break the hex of hatred  
 ground the betrayal into fertile land.

I grow from the whispers  
 of *ssshhhh . . . don't tell no body.* Fingers over lips  
 today my mouth like legs rests wide  
 open.

Believe me.

He knew someone would.

**Thea Matthews** is a Brooklyn-based poet, activist, and educator of Afro-Indigenous Mexican heritage. Born and raised in San Francisco, California, Thea is the author of *Unearth [The Flowers]* (Red Light Lit, 2020). Her work has appeared in *The Rumpus*, *Atlanta Review*, *The New Republic*, and others. Currently, she is an MFA Poetry candidate at New York University and editor of *For Women Who Roar* magazine.

Website: [www.theamatthews.com](http://www.theamatthews.com)

Links to purchase the book and have more info:

<https://bookshop.org/books/unearth-the-flowers/9780999889510>

<https://therumpus.net/topics/unearth-the-flowers/>

## Being Woman Once Again

*Margaret Adams Birth*

Though, at times, I have been compulsive  
about picking up after myself,  
I once lost myself:  
I shattered into thousands of tiny pieces  
one night—well, it was too dark to see  
to pick things up then, so I waited  
for daylight, but when the sun shone on me  
I saw that I was broken  
beyond repair. There was not one piece left  
that was big enough  
to have the strength  
to pick up the rest.  
So, I stayed broken.  
I know I told you that I was compulsive—  
and I was—I was so upset about my  
broken state, as a matter of fact,  
that I spent all my time  
trying to pick myself up and  
put myself back together.  
It didn't work, though—  
nothing worked—  
nothing, that is, until  
I forgave myself for being  
such a mess.  
And now?  
Now I appreciate the value  
of all the little pieces that,  
shattered or glued together,  
make me the woman I am.

**Margaret Adams Birth** is a native North Carolinian who has also lived in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains, upstate New York, southern California, a Caribbean rain forest, and now New York City. She is the author of *Borderlands* (Finishing Line Press, 2016), other poetry, short fiction, novellas, short nonfiction, and four comic books.

## Alabaster

Donny Winter

Dear Artificial Architect:

Listen to *me*, my voice resounds  
like a thousand mounting whispers  
from a gypsum mouth.

Look at *me* now, I'm Atlas holding  
up a world of marble halls, by choice,  
and your name has lost its luster  
like the quarry you stole me from.

Look at *me* now, I smile at your wasted effort  
because I'm not the misshapen sculpture  
you tried to force me into –  
no, I'm a castle that stands horizon-high.

Listen to *me*, fraudulent sculptor, you're a rusted refinery:  
I'm not your alabaster bastard anymore  
because my body is a natural resource  
with an inexhaustible value.

## Quarry

Donny Winter

The abandoned quarry sits,  
dissected for all its worth  
and splayed open, unsure  
of its unnatural nakedness.

Trees strain to grow  
in jagged vacancies because  
hillsides have no choice  
but to wear these gouges  
like scars – unable to mend.

**Donny Winter** is a LGBTQIA+ activist, YouTube blogger, and poet from Saginaw, Michigan. He currently teaches poetry at Delta College and has publications in *Flypaper Lit* and *Sonder Midwest*. His first full-length collection, *Carbon Footprint*, was released in September 2020 by Alien Buddha Press. Donny also has too many plants.

## Elegy for a Pomegranate

Zoe Mae Huot-Link

The pomegranate spurts  
out juice like blood, from wounds  
we couldn't hold long enough  
to spare a woman's love. She was more  
than her body. We failed when we  
promised her safety, watching persuasion  
take hold, escalating silently. Our blood  
now shed; our community exposed. Power  
always comes with a price. Heart  
and soul are forever young, power  
poisons and pretends.  
She was filled with sunflowers  
too bright for the ghost eyes always watching.  
She was too bold to be  
his queen. She dies today. We owe her  
the burden of memory. A young girl died  
because we preached  
that pleasure was forever. We transcend  
only when girls are raised to lead  
lands, when kings are not expected  
to be men. For her,  
we recognize our mistakes too late. For  
our children, we show them what we shed.

**Zoe Mae Huot-Link** was born and raised in Maplewood, Minnesota. She is a winner of the Manitou Creative Writing Fellowship at the College of Saint Benedict. To cope with constructs of beauty and power she journals, draws, and writes poetry. You can find her art on Instagram @zoemae.art.

## Beads & Bones

Virginia Barrett

Aisha caught the afternoon bus from the village into Galway. She wanted to buy glass beads at the shop on Cross Street to make a decorative piece for the large window over the stairwell. She woke up that morning in the hostel with a sudden desire to leave behind something of beauty she had made. After all, she wouldn't be living there in Bencorr forever—cleaning for Kieran in exchange for room and board. For the moment it seemed right, but moments quickly pass . . . even those that remain with you always, like a deep scar.

For a month now she'd been saving a piece of long, thin driftwood she found on the Bencorr beach with no clear purpose in mind. Now she knew it would work perfectly as the hanging rod for long strands of beads and bones. During walks in the hills she had collected small bones, mostly the remains of weakened lambs fallen prey to the elements, or hungry foxes. To these she added more bones gathered while tidying up, scattered throughout the hostel; guests were always leaving behind things they found on their walks. She envisioned the combination of beads and bones strung together would suit the ambiance of

the old rambling monastery, converted into a hostel now for fifteen years. Guests could appreciate the piece as they went down the stairs to breakfast each morning. The light from the window, even when misty outside, would shine through the glass beads, illuminating their colors. The bones would dangle in midair, as if suspended by some kind of spirit's incantation.

Aisha reminded herself to also buy some clear, elastic cord to make her mother a bracelet for her birthday. If she wanted it to reach her in Melbourne by the end of the month, she needed to post it soon. *Mum would have liked the bit of craic this morning at breakfast*, she told herself, as the bus bumped along on the rough Connemara road.

Kieran's brother-in-law, Patrick, had stopped by for coffee as he often did before heading to his computer repair business in Cloughden. Somehow the two men launched into the story of the Brit who came to Bencorr one day writing a travel book. Aisha had heard the story before; she figured the lively banter was stimulated by the American woman, Colleen, a guest at the hostel nearly a week now. Kieran's flair as a raconteur often fully surfaced, Aisha had noted, when he had the attention of an attractive woman. Other times

he could be taciturn, secretive, and downright cranky—volatile even—but Aisha was easy-going and for the most part minded her own business. *His flirting with Colleen does no harm*, she told herself. *Best to keep your head down in such things.*

Despite his mood swings, Kieran always remained considerate, even brotherly toward Aisha, and he trusted her discretion concerning what went on at the hostel. Friendly with his girlfriend, Mary, Aisha bought her a pint in the pub whenever she came to Bencoor, which wasn't often, having a school-age daughter at home. Kieran drove the thirty minutes to Mary's village a few nights a week after his usual rounds at the pub, sometimes leaving the hostel to fend for itself if Aisha spent the night with Cullen, a student at the design school in the village she met at the pub two months back. *Just a casual shag*, Aisha told herself.

"So this Brit did a book about hostels in Ireland," Kieran began the story that morning, pouring himself a second cup of coffee from the pot on the table. "He went all over the country

like, dragging this small refrigerator rigged up on a cart." He and Patrick glanced at each other and both let out a laugh. Out of his six brother-in-laws, Patrick was Kieran's favorite, married to his third-youngest sister, Aisling, a school teacher. "What an eejit!" Kieran added.

"A refrigerator?" Colleen repeated.

Kieran nodded. "That was his angle, see. Total shite. When your man got here to my place I had already caught wind of it. They rang me up from the hostel in Cloughden. He walked in upstairs of course, and when he didn't find a soul, started calling down the stairs. I was right here, in the breakfast room, but damned if I was going up. He called down four times and I just kept shouting back up, 'busy here, man, come down on your own and I'm willing to help you.' Of course the Brit wasn't going to tackle the stairs with his refrigerator, so that was that."

Colleen took a sip of tea and smiled politely. "I don't get it," she admitted.

Kieran shook his head and grinned, raising his coffee mug to his mouth. Colleen stole a sidelong glimpse of him, watching his full lips pucker to

blow at the heat before taking a drink.

Patrick took over. “Your man was writing his book, see, and the chapters started with the reaction he received when the proprietor of each place saw the refrigerator.”

Colleen shook her head in disbelief. “Well that’s just dumb,” she asserted. Then she paused, considering. “Besides, it seems a petty trick to play on people, setting them up like that. Why not just meet folks fair and square?” She looked quickly from Kieran to Patrick and changed her tone. “And don’t tell me the book actually got published!”

“It did,” Kieran practically shouted, placing his mug firmly down on the table, “and our Patrick here is in it!”

“How did Patrick get in the book and not you?” Colleen gave Kieran the fullness of her deep hazel eyes.

“By chance I ended up giving him a ride back into Cloughden that afternoon,” Patrick explained. “In his book he calls me “an affable Chinese chap.” Born Korean, an Irish couple adopted Patrick as a baby. “Chinese!”

“And your man didn’t include me, mind you,” Kieran added, “because I wasn’t fool enough to be taken in by his feckin’ refrigerator.”

Colleen giggled at Kieran’s swagger. “Well, good thing they called you up from the other hostel with a warning.” She took a sip of her tea, white with cream, and grinned. “But I bet you would have gotten the best of that Brit no matter what.”

Still waking up and groggy, Aisha brought her mug to her mouth for a sip of tea and watched Kieran blush slightly. While she hadn’t caught Kieran and Colleen having sex in the storeroom or any such place, the energy surging between them was palpable, even as they tried to contain it. When Colleen reached for a scone from the plate in the middle of the table, her hand brushed Kieran’s hand. Aisha saw it linger slightly and Kieran let it.

*Some might call him a rogue, she told herself, but Colleen feels that bloody enchantment of his. Her mind shifted suddenly. But spells are dangerous sometimes.* On impulse she pushed a new jar of jam toward Colleen, who gave her a gentle smile. In her face Aisha thought she caught a flash of . . . was it empathy, or was it . . . sorrow?

She quickly averted her eyes, glancing down at the jam, but then she found herself looking up again. *The light from the window is lovely on her hair, she thought, soft amber, like Mum's.* Aisha cleared her throat quietly, she hadn't yet spoken much that morning.

"You might want to try some of this," she offered Colleen. "Rhubarb and ginger. I bought it at the shop I told you about, Mill and Pantry, down by the old pier. It's sweet enough, but has a smack underlying it, comes onto your tongue after a moment, then lingers like."

\*

In Galway, Aisha had a late lunch of salmon, eggs, potatoes, and soda bread at her favorite cafe not far from the river Corrib, then she went to the bead store. Filled with hundreds of small containers replete with treasures, she deliberated over colors and prices for more than an hour. Aisha reminded herself to not get overly extravagant. She didn't have loads of funds in her savings, and the Australian dollar didn't fare well against the Euro.

Though her current lover, Cullen, wasn't enough to keep her there, she hoped to remain in Ireland at least until her visa expired in another three months. She had decided on Ireland for her first big sojourn because her mother had Irish roots, though she knew blood and family weren't everything. Blood could even betray.

Aisha wanted to be far away from home in order to begin to thaw the numbness that had settled over her for fifteen years now, since her eleventh birthday. Well, at least she had begun to recognize that she wasn't fully alive. And the hostel—filled with objects people had treasured for a moment in their natural surroundings, then abandoned once they brought them inside—fit her emotional state. You never knew, too, who might

walk through the front door of the hostel to shake things up.

*Maybe I need more shaking, she thought. Just look at the ruffling Colleen's brought Kieran simply by showing up one day. Ruffling, Aisha repeated silently to herself as she lingered over a bin of assorted blue beads, that's Mum's word.*

She found herself wondering if she'd ever truly feel ruffled about a man. A rippling up her spine? A good shag was fine, especially after a few pints, but no ruffling entered her body, let alone her heart. She knew she possessed an innate cheerfulness, a rosiness which matched the color of her cheeks against the porcelain tone of her skin, made more white by contrast with her curly black hair cut into a tousled bob. She could certainly see life as pretty and jolly, as if gazing through the glass of colored beads, but intense emotions for a man, that eluded her.

The horrific memory inserted itself into everything, like the brutal reality of bones. It was as if she dragged a weight with her everywhere

she went, but unlike the Brit with the refrigerator, she kept hers hidden. Her burden was far from a novelty, and she loathed the thought of reactions that people might give. She had never been able to reveal the truth even to her mother, who had raised her on her own. The closest person to her, how she missed her!

She heard herself again yesterday, suddenly confiding in Colleen. It had been in passing, really, as they both briefly stopped while walking in opposite directions down the long, upstairs hallway to pause before one of the deep-set windows. Together they watched the stray cat outside eat from a bowl of food Aisha had placed on the ledge earlier.

"Kieran doesn't want that one in the house," Aisha explained. "We already have the other cat named Ginger. This one showed up about a month ago. Just hunkered down there on the ledge and wouldn't leave. After a few days Kieran finally said to go ahead and feed it. Said he didn't want to 'watch it feckin' starve!' Do you see how her ear is torn at the top?"

"Poor little thing. She's like a pining lover." Colleen let out a quick, giddy laugh before her

voice became more sober. “She must have been mistreated somewhere.”

“Or she’s been called here by something. Maybe she’s one of the orphaned lads come back as a spirit. Her coat’s like a smokey shadow, don’t you think? And look at those golden eyes. Pleading and spooky.”

Aisha was half-teasing Colleen, testing her in a way, just to see her reaction. Colleen had admitted to believing in spirits just the other day in response to a story Kieran told about some haunting the hostel, and how a clairvoyant from Dublin exorcised them. She expressed no fear of spirits, even seemed to want to experience a visitation of some sort.

Colleen remained completely focused on the cat. “Her eyes do look lit with want and yet . . . wise, too, like she’s lived a million lifetimes. Breaks my heart to know boys were so badly mistreated here, many even sexually abused. And by Christian Brothers for God’s sake!” She sighed, her voice growing very quiet. “I haven’t even had the

courage yet to go into the former industrial school down the hill where the boys worked when this hostel was the Brothers’ monastery.”

Colleen lowered her voice to a near-whisper, as if revealing a great secret to Aisha. “You know, my grandfather was one of the orphan boys here, that’s why I came.”

Wearing yellow rubber gloves, Aisha’s right hand gripped a blue plastic bucket by its slim metal handle. Her body poised itself to start moving again toward the communal bathroom to clean. As she shifted her weight onto her left leg, the wide floorboard creaked, like a highpitched moan. Then she heard the words emerge from her mouth as if they had been lost for a very long time inside of her, only to surface in that one open moment.

“My mum’s brother, Jack, abused me when I was a girl,” she said flatly as she started to walk away. “A charmer, he was my favorite uncle, too” she added over her shoulder, just as the morning mist lifted, casting a ray of sun across the hallway through the farthest window.

Colleen stood frozen, unable to respond to the magnitude of what Aisha had so suddenly shared.

She watched her continue down the hall, crossing  
through the ray of light, the bucket slightly  
swaying in her hand like a little girl playing at the  
beach. Colleen fixed her gaze on the cat again—on  
the stark nobility in survival's savage need.

**Virginia Barrett's** books of poetry include *Between Looking* (2019, Finishing Line Press) and *Crossing Haight—San Francisco poems* (2018, Jambu Press). She is a poet, writer, editor, and educator. She most recently taught in the MFA in Writing program at the University of San Francisco.

**Just a Kid**

Mally Z. Ray

“Do you think Henry knew his father was molesting me?”

My therapist responds the same way she always does to my questions. “What do you think?”

When I get home, I shuffle through a box of photographs taken over forty years before and retrieve Henry’s high school picture. Jug ears, prominent Adams apple. Broad skinny shoulders. Brown hair stuck up in the back. He was the reasonable, dependable, and trustworthy older “brother” anybody would want to have. Like grownups are supposed to be. It’s funny—I had looked at this picture any number of times over the years and always saw an adult, someone much older than the four years he had on me. And here all along he had only been a kid.

The last time I saw him, I had just turned seventeen. I had flown up to Orlando to ride in a horse show for his parents and he picked me up at the airport. After we dropped my stuff off at his house and I changed into riding clothes, he helped me groom Penelope’s Choice, the three-gaited

mare I was going to show. I remember us laughing together as we curried her.

The following fall, I was at college in Colorado and Henry was in Viet Nam. Shortly after school started, I was raped. I tried calling him, but by the time he finally got my message, and I received his postcard with a contact address, I had already begun my slow downward spiral. I lost the card.

This descent took me through one abusive relationship after another until I left my husband.

---

I Google Henry. He’s an optometrist at a clinic in Sebring, Florida. I stop breathing when I see his picture. He looks exactly like his father. The same bald head, the same smile, the same slightly crooked front tooth. And yet. In the way our inner selves can shine through our eyes, Henry doesn’t resemble him one bit.

*Me: I’m wondering if you are the Henry Randall whose parents had a riding stable in Miami in the early 1960’s. Those years impacted my life in ways I never could have imagined. I live in Oregon now and it’s been years since I’ve ridden. I hope you are*

the Henry I remember.

Henry: *I have often thought about you. I told Mother you emailed, and she started talking about your riding. She's ninety-two now and in assisted care. The folks had a framed picture of you on one of Dad's horses in the showring hanging in their office for as long as they had a stable. Your derby was slightly askew and there was a very determined look on your face.*

*I always assumed you would be involved with horses as you went through life.*

I tell him I had thought horses would always be a part of my life too. My riding stopped when my husband stopped allowing me to do anything. After I left him, I started riding again, but work and finances made even occasional rides so sporadic that after a few years I gave up on it.

Me: *Those years at your parents' stable were the happiest and saddest of my childhood.*

---

Henry's parents moved to Miami when I was eleven and rented the stable where I was learning to ride. They brought with them a string of American Saddlebred show horses. My former once-a-week rides became daily lessons, with Pop Randall picking me up from school and taking me home after I rode. Everything I had ever wanted had come true.

Most of my waking hours were spent with the Randalls. Riding, eating supper, sometimes staying overnight, showing horses throughout South Florida, going on horse buying trips. Once, Pop Randall talked to my parents about adopting me. I was disappointed when they refused. That was before he started molesting me.

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Henry: *I spent a couple of tours with the Air Force in the 60's and went back to college to become an engineer but math had passed me by. I became an optometrist because it didn't require much math.*

I tell him about my work in domestic and sexual violence survivor services. When he asks how I became involved, I tell him about my husband's violence.

Henry: *I can't believe someone would treat anyone that way and ESPECIALLY YOU!*

I don't tell him that childhood sexual abuse often sets the victim up for further abuse on through adulthood.

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When I was twelve: Sherry, a year older, explained the mechanics of kissing to a bunch of us girls one afternoon up in the hayloft. Surrounded by bales of hay, we sat cross-legged on the floor huddled in a circle. Sunlight filtered golden through the dust and we could hear the horses munching in their stalls beneath us. Sherry had kissed a lot of boys and knew all about it. We held our palm up to our mouth and sucked on the fleshy part below the thumb. "The boy sucks back," she explained. Gross, I thought, and wiped my slobbery hand across my jeans, done with the whole thing.

When I was twelve: a bunch of us piled on top of Henry, trying to rile him up enough to chase us. He lay curled on his side, knees bent, on the

backseat of his Buick, reading some thick book, maybe *Hawaii*. Henry hid from us those afternoons after lunch when he took a break from cleaning stalls, we took a break from riding lessons, and the horses took a break from us.

We sang "And the farmer hauled another load away. You could tell by the smell it wasn't hay...."

Melinda and Cissy climbed on top of him. I fitted my butt inside his folded knees and banged my feet against the seat. Sherry wedged herself on the floor, her back against the front seat, and tugged at his book. Henry tightened his grip and scowled.

Then, oddly, that place just below my stomach fluttered. Melinda's and Cissy's and Sherry's singing sounded far away. I stopped banging my feet. I looked at the thick yellow-orange stitching, grimy with dirt, on the seam of Henry's denim leg. At my own denim legs draped across his.

The air inside the car went still. A horse fly buzzed outside the window.

I stared at my denim legs dangling over Henry's denim legs. The thick yellow-orange stitching. Air

heavy with humidity suddenly weighed too much to breathe. That place below my stomach fluttered.

Then Henry shrugged his body like a lanky bear and growled, “Go on now!” at us. We scrambled out of the car and scattered.

When I was twelve: Pop Randall shoved his calloused hand up my shirt beneath my first brassiere with its still empty cups and squeezed my almost-breasts. He forced his slimy tongue between my tightly pressed lips.

---

Like most children who are being molested, I believed it was my fault.

Though in the beginning, I knew it wasn't. This is why they came to Miami, I thought. There had been other girls. But how could Pop Randall do something this awful? It's hard for a child to make sense of such conflicting thoughts. I became a sort of shadow child – not unlike the changelings in

folk tales. I looked like a regular child and probably behaved like one, yet something inside me turned old.

I wanted to hate Mr. Randall, but I loved him too much. So I hated myself instead. My one act of defiance was that I never called him “Pop” again.

---

Henry: *I remember having to do Mom and Dad's laundry. Did you go to the laundromat with me? You didn't see my underwear, did you?*

Me: *Rest easy. I did not see your underwear. I don't think. Maybe it's a repressed memory. I'll let you know if I start having flashbacks.*

---

Even now, all these years later and after all my therapy, when I think of Mr. Randall lightly tracing his cold fingers up and down my arm, I shudder. That stroking was almost worse than everything else he did to me.

---

After his father started molesting me, when it was time to take me home, Henry would say, “I’ll do it,” in his surly tone. If he had a date, we’d pick her up on the way. She’d be wearing a sleeveless blouse, capri pants, and Capezio flats the same color as her Capezio clutch purse. Sprayed flip hairdo. She’d look over her shoulder at me slouched in the backseat in my dirty jodhpurs and scuffed boots, and whisper to Henry. He’d reply, not whispering, “She’s no problem.” And even if it was still daylight, he waited until he saw me go into my house before driving off.

---

When I think back on those days, I want to believe that someone had been looking out for me.

If I had told my mother, she would have believed me, but she would never have allowed me to go back to the stable or any other stable again.

Mr. Randall stopped abusing me when I turned fifteen. As suddenly as it began, it was over. Weeks later, they packed up their horses and moved to

Orlando. I must have put it away somewhere in the back of my brain because I didn’t think about it again for a very long time.

---

I’ve spent much of my life wondering if the price I paid for growing up with horses was worth it.

---

*Me: You are the only one who remembers me when I was a child. Sometimes I wonder if I made my whole childhood up. Did I exist?*

I am twelve years old again as I ask this and worry he won’t answer because I sound so needy.

*Henry: You can count on me to validate your childhood. You existed. You were a cute skinny kid. Quiet. You always pitched in with the never-ending work. I liked having you around.*

After they moved to Orlando, even though I flew up every month to ride, I had felt abandoned. I drifted between stables in Miami, but the horses weren’t as good and the trainers didn’t measure

up to Mr. Randall. I didn't really belong anywhere anymore.

---

Henry: *I sometimes think about my father. We did not get along when I was young but as I got older we became closer.*

I'm afraid if I ask Henry if he knew, he'll defend his father and turn on me. If he knew, he may not want to be reminded and will stop emailing with me. If he didn't know, I'll be giving him information he won't want to have and will stop emailing with me. He's the closest thing I have left to a family of origin.

Henry: *I do not look back fondly on my childhood. We moved every few months. Being in Miami was the longest we ever stayed anywhere. I never got close to anyone or let them close to me because I knew I would be leaving. You are one of the very few people that I remembered and would wonder about.*

---

I never asked outright, but I don't believe Henry knew his father was a child molester. How would he? I had worked as hard as his father to keep it secret. And nobody talked about child sexual abuse back then. It wasn't part of our consciousness.

Even if Henry had known, what could he have done differently? He taught me to drive in his old green Buick he kept so polished it gleamed in the sun. He explained that you had to spit if you ever chewed tobacco or you'd get sick. He taught me to play "Hang Down Your Head Tom Dooley" and "Jingle Bells" on his guitar. He made sure my horse was groomed, my derby straight, my tie knotted properly, and my boots buffed before I rode into the showring.

Telling Henry now wouldn't change anything. And it wouldn't have changed anything then. He hadn't been much more than a kid himself.

**Mally Z. Ray** is the pseudonym of a writer living in the Pacific Northwest. She discovered sexual and domestic violence advocacy work in 1980 and has worked to provide services and support for survivors ever since.

**no justice for brown girls**

*Kate P.*

I.

I never told my mother  
that I was sexually assaulted

in the street in broad daylight  
the first time I went to México

not that it would have mattered.  
when I told her that my father,

her husband, had sexually abused me  
as a child, she quietly cried

then told me that I could come back home  
and just lock my bedroom door at night

I don't talk to her much anymore—  
she'd rather have a family than a daughter

II.

when I was in México, I feared  
running into the viejo again

the fourth time I saw him,  
I texted the local teacher

who promptly arrived on a bicycle and  
exchanged stern words with him in Maya

*I didn't want to accuse him*  
*in front of everyone, the teacher apologized,*

*he lives with his family right there,*  
*he's someone's grandpa—I nodded, accepting*

while the American teachers looked appalled  
even if I went forward, he'd only get three days in jail

III.

when my godmother-aunt heard what my  
father had done, the family had him

polygraph tested and he passed with flying colors.  
my godmother told me about this after the fact

she charitably suggested that I wasn't lying because  
I might be mistaking a babysitter's boyfriend for my dad

I nearly tried to kill myself that night  
in her bathroom by relapsing

my uncle is the police, so  
what was the point in calling?

my father's father's ancestors  
won't even acknowledge that I exist

**Kate P** (they/them) is a queer poet of Mexican and Philippine descent.

## This Damage Is Not Your Destiny

Rachel Goodman

*Final Destination* reverberated  
over my friend's television,  
playing over your caresses—no—  
aggressions, as she stayed entrenched

in her own romantic endeavors,  
underneath a blanket, blissfully oblivious.  
I remained congealed to the couch, or lost  
in a foreign embrace I thought equated: love?

acceptance? gratitude? My hands,  
quivering in my lap, pressed  
against my borrowed, red Soffee  
shorts, a coveted article of clothing

in my eighth-grade class—a sign of the time—  
a mature and ready destination.  
Was it those shorts? My tanned, shaven  
chicken-legs propped up on the couch? What if I'd

been in PJ's? No, you took me  
then too. Three weeks later. Neon green  
footy pajamas with printed cupcakes for your  
picking, a zipper for your zipping,

flesh for your feeling. My virgin,  
14-year-old body spread on the couch: a buffet.  
I hadn't had my first kiss. You surely  
didn't kiss me. Didn't look at me. Just

fumbled with buttons,  
 cotton clothes covering your  
 desired destination, my heightened anxiety,  
 is this normal? Yes.

This is how I'm meant to perform,  
 how I'm meant to be. Silent.  
 Willing. Cooperative. A pair of breasts not  
 yet big enough for a real bra, twisted, brown hair

between my legs you make  
 a face at, as though I should have anticipated  
 your fingers making their way down  
 and into my body. Your thumb brushed

my bare skin. One minute frozen, the next,  
 I flee the scene. A dramatic exit you took with a grin.  
 I burrowed in my friend's bed, in another room—  
 another stage—and texted her,

I have a headache. This is where I am  
 meant to be. An object in your show,  
 designed for your pleasure when  
 you may feel obliged. This is my final destination,

my legacy: hidden under a pile of quilted comforters, unable to  
 understand the weighted days of torment? pleasure?  
 disorientation? immobile, zipped lips, with the taste of  
 bile and shame arising in the back of my throat.

**Rachel Goodman** is from Nashville, TN. She is currently a senior at DePaul University in Chicago, IL, studying Creative Writing and Psychology.

## The Spider

Melodie Corrigan

When she hears her mother calling from the hall below, Kathryn scurries behind the wing-back chair in the library. Her heartbeat quickened as footsteps mounted the stairs, the door creaked open.

“Kathryn?” Silence.

“She’s not here.” The door shuts.

“That child.”

After a few moments, her fear overcome by curiosity, the child creeps out to witness the ritual below. The cavernous house, usually orderly and subdued, reverberated with strange noises, doors banging, equipment being moved, voices shouting instructions. Caution prevents Kathryn from venturing downstairs to watch the proceedings. Once downstairs she could not escape the spider.

“Let’s do a shot in here.”

“Okay, if we can move some of this clutter and open the curtains. It’s like a morgue.”

Today the high-ceilinged hallway, encased in a plush wine carpet and a mahogany table with the silver mail salver, is stacked with spindly metal poles and half-opened boxes and wires snake across the carpet. Kathryn shudders. When Grandfather saw the disorder he would roar. In his domain even one forgotten toy caused a violent outburst.

“Get it out of here. Get her out of here. Can’t you control your own child?”

Her mother fussing after the old man, smoothing his blanket, hurrying in with his tea, and with his medicines.

“No, not that poison. Take it away.”

Her mother scrambling on the floor to clean up the spill, hastening to pull the shade, and to adjust the pillow.

“Stop fussing, Nancy. I can’t stand it. The three weeks your aunt goes to England are bedlam.”

Fortunately, as outsiders were present today, Grandfather would be subdued.

Kathryn knew that Grandfather Buckley-Smith was a famous Canadian who had written many books. She had seen him being interviewed on television. Although her other grandfather had only one name—Armstrong—and did not write books, she liked him better. She once confessed to her father that she disliked Grandfather Buckley-Smith.

“That’s a terrible thing to say,” her father roared, shaking her until her jaw hurt. “If your mother heard that, it would break her heart.” She never said anything to her mother.

Every summer for three weeks, she and her mother stayed with her grandfather while her aunt was in England. During the day the house was tense and ominous but when Grandfather was safely in bed, mother and daughter sat together at the long table, Brenda coming and going, bringing trays of food, like at a restaurant. At such moments, laughing and chatting, Kathryn felt her mother’s love like sun on her cheeks. She vowed never to do anything to sadden that soft pink face.

Late at night, folded tightly in the corner of the vast chilly bed, Kathryn longs for her own cozy room. Terrified by the spider creeping towards her, her body stiffens, her toes and fingers hard as icicles, hearing the spider in the hall, waiting. She listens, breath held, for the door to creak open, fill with the huge wrinkled shape, and squeeze.

“Kathryn? Kathryn?” Her mother’s insistent voice.

“Fred, have a look upstairs.” Today the occasion is of such significance that her father has taken time off work to be present.

The child retreats down the hall, hesitates, and bravely pulls open the attic door. Breathless, eyes wide, she creeps up the narrow stairs to the loft, rustling slightly to scare the ghosts back into the trunk. Here, high in her fairy tale turret, she is safe from the spider’s touch. She peers through the clean spot in the dusty window, and studies the creature below—silver hair sticking out like spikes, knobby fingers clutching the wooden chair, head bobbing. Sometimes in the late afternoon the head twists back on the chair and bubbles ooze from the gaping red hole.

Every sunny afternoon, he waits there. Spiders are patient. Patient and deceptive. Seated in the middle of the soft, green lawn, the spider looks innocent, indolently dozing in the sun, but if you accept his invitation, venture near, step onto the web, he pounces.

Usually she is safe if she remains hidden, but today even the attic provides no sanctuary. Although Kathryn presses her hands over her ears, she can hear her mother calling, hear her parents gaining on her, like hunters bounding through the woods after a fox. The small desperate animal leaping this way and that, and so many of them, on horses, so many against the one little fox. She knew it was only a movie, but her mother said that people really hunted like that for fun. There is a black and white photograph of Grandfather when he was young dressed for hunting; her mother explained the jacket was red.

“Kathryn.”

They are mounting the stairs; she can run no farther. When they catch her, they will sweep her

up and take her downstairs to be sacrificed to the spider. And she mustn't cry, for her mother's sake, she must not cry.

Footsteps jostle up the stairs, the door handle turns, and the door opens to her mother.

The woman offers her hand. “Grandfather is so much trouble. Can't you help?” Depending on her.

The child marches bravely out the door. *I am not a fly that was tricked*, she thinks proudly. I am like Jesus, the lamb, who went willingly. It is better to be a lamb.

When the cameras are set, the child's hair braided, her face wiped clean, a brightly dressed woman with large red lips sits Kathryn firmly in a chair and instructs a man with earphones. “Let's get a short bit with the kid and then we can do some shots with her on Mr. Buckley-Smith's knee.”

The woman moves her chair closer and winks at the child. The bright lights burn her face, the camera glares. The man with earphones reaches over to adjust a button-sized microphone clipped to her dress.

“Kathryn, you and your mother come to spend the summer with your grandfather every year, don’t you?”

“Yes.”

“Did you know your grandfather is a special Canadian?”

“Yes.”

“Do you know what he’s famous for?”

“He writes books.”

“What’s it like having a famous grandfather?”

The child shifts in her chair, watching the spider dozing on the lawn.

“Do you have a special name for your grandfather?”

The child glances around nervously and whispers, “The spider.”

“The spider? Why’s that?”

“Because he waits in his web and if I go close, he grabs me and squeezes my stomach.”

The woman’s thick smile fragments. “Cut the camera.”

Kathryn’s mother yanks her roughly off the chair.

“That’s not funny, Kathryn.” The child shrinks back, frightened by the excitement. Everybody but the spider is moving; he still pretends to sleep.

“We’re short of time, let’s give up on the child.”

The man throws off his earphones. “Kids.”

“Do I have to sit on Grandfather’s knee for the show?”

“You won’t be in this show at all,” her father barks, yanking her by the arm and pushing her towards the house. He smiles hopefully at the embarrassed cameraman. “They’ll say anything.”

From the hunched figure across the lawn a  
hoarse cry, “Nancy,” and again, peevishly, “Nancy.”  
The anxious woman hurries to her father.

“Get those damned people over here. I said I’d  
do this as a favour to the Minister but I’m not  
taking all day.”

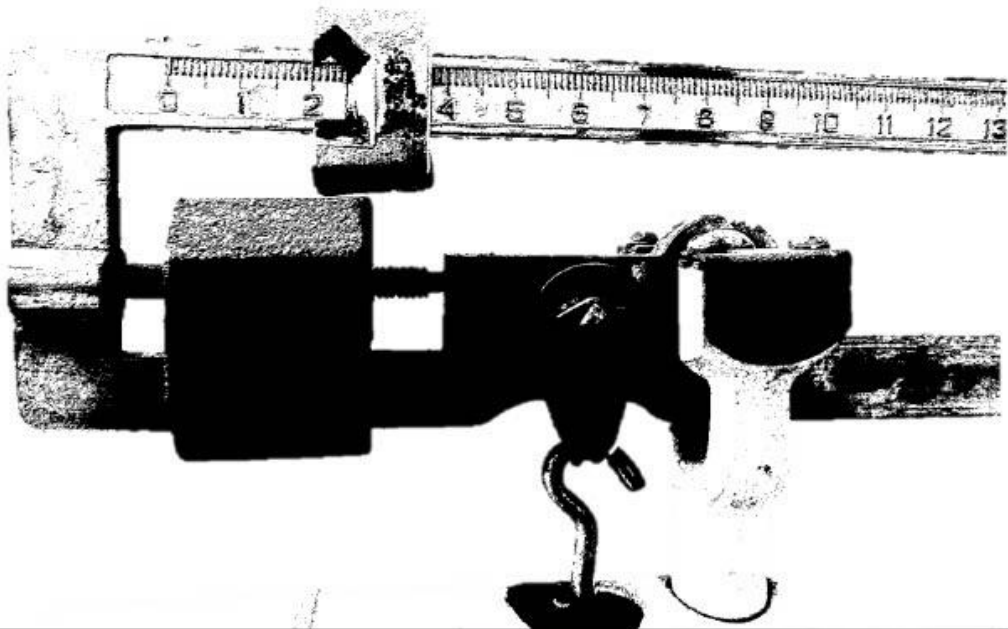
The woman adjusts the man’s blanket, evading  
the sharp eyes that tear her troubled smile.  
Turning, she sees her banished daughter peering  
from the attic window.

The flat pale face watches the spider  
resplendent in the sun, perched on his metal  
throne, waiting to be filmed.

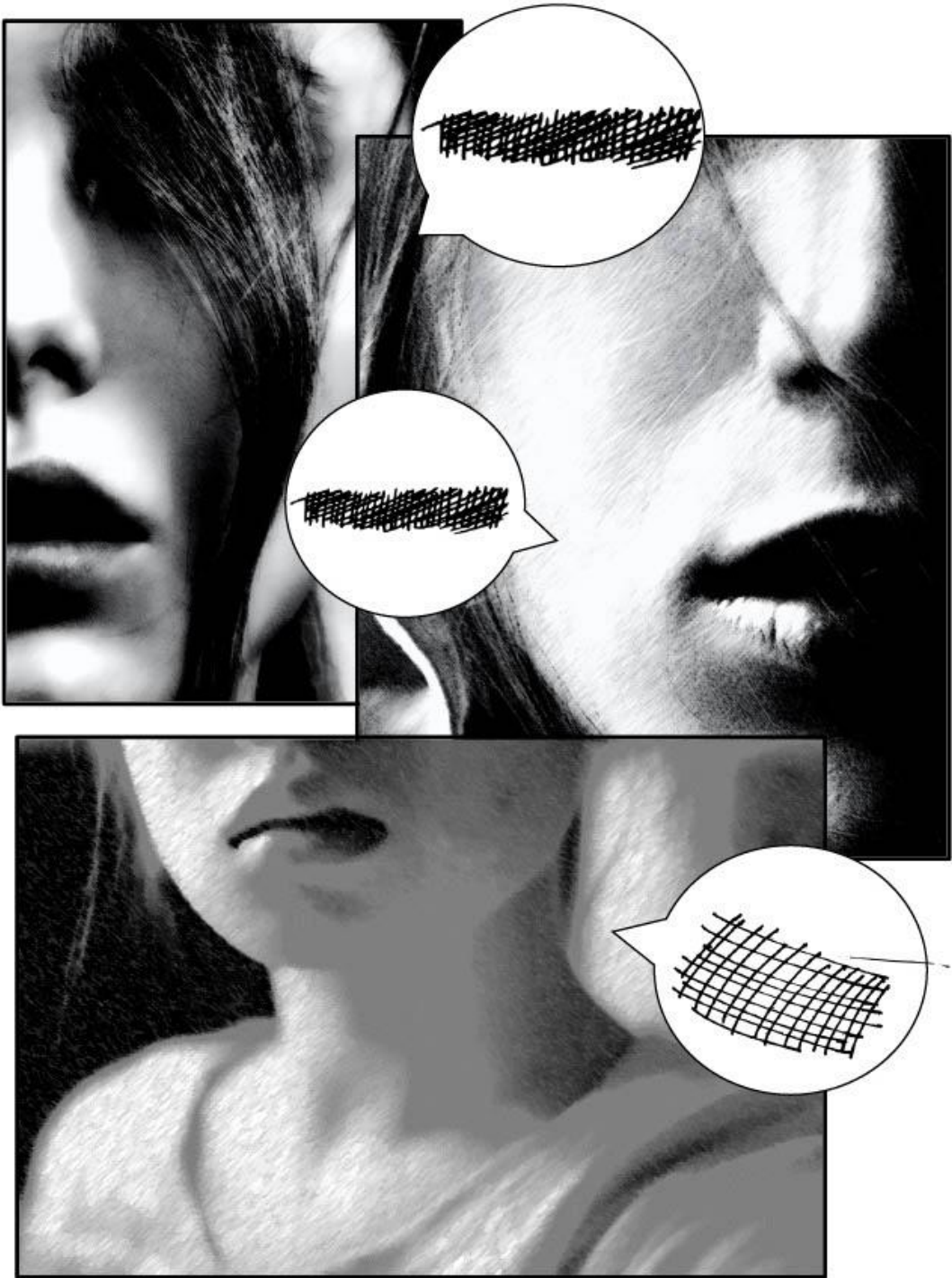
**Melodie Corrigan** is an eclectic Canadian writer whose work has  
appeared in Halfway Down the Stairs, Bethlehem Writers  
Roundtable, Corner Bar Magazine, Blue Lake Review, S/tick, Subtle  
Fiction, Blank Spaces, The Local Train Magazine and The Write  
Place at the Write Time ([www.melodiecorrigan.com](http://www.melodiecorrigan.com)).

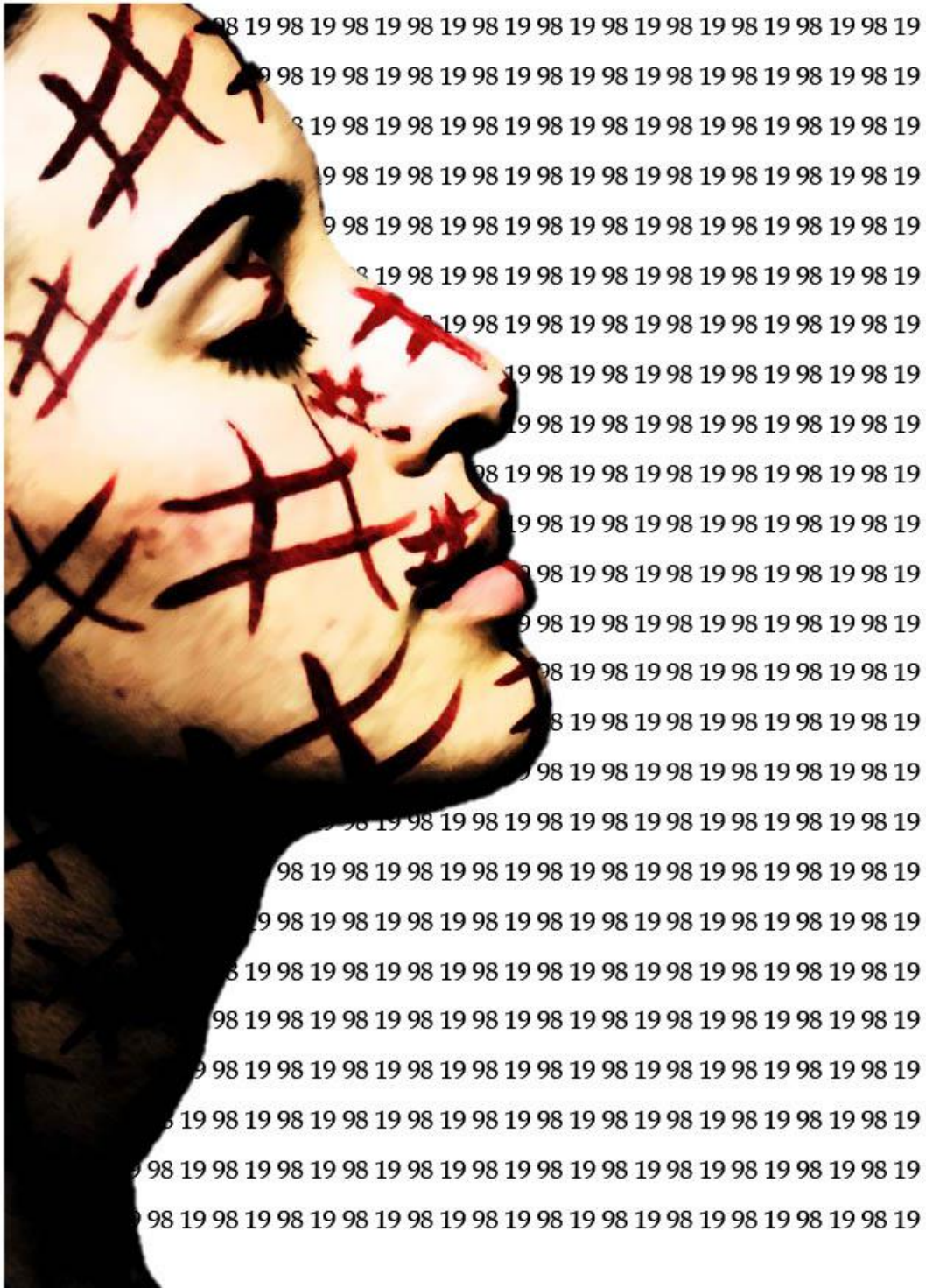
**Playing Doctor**  
M. Meyers

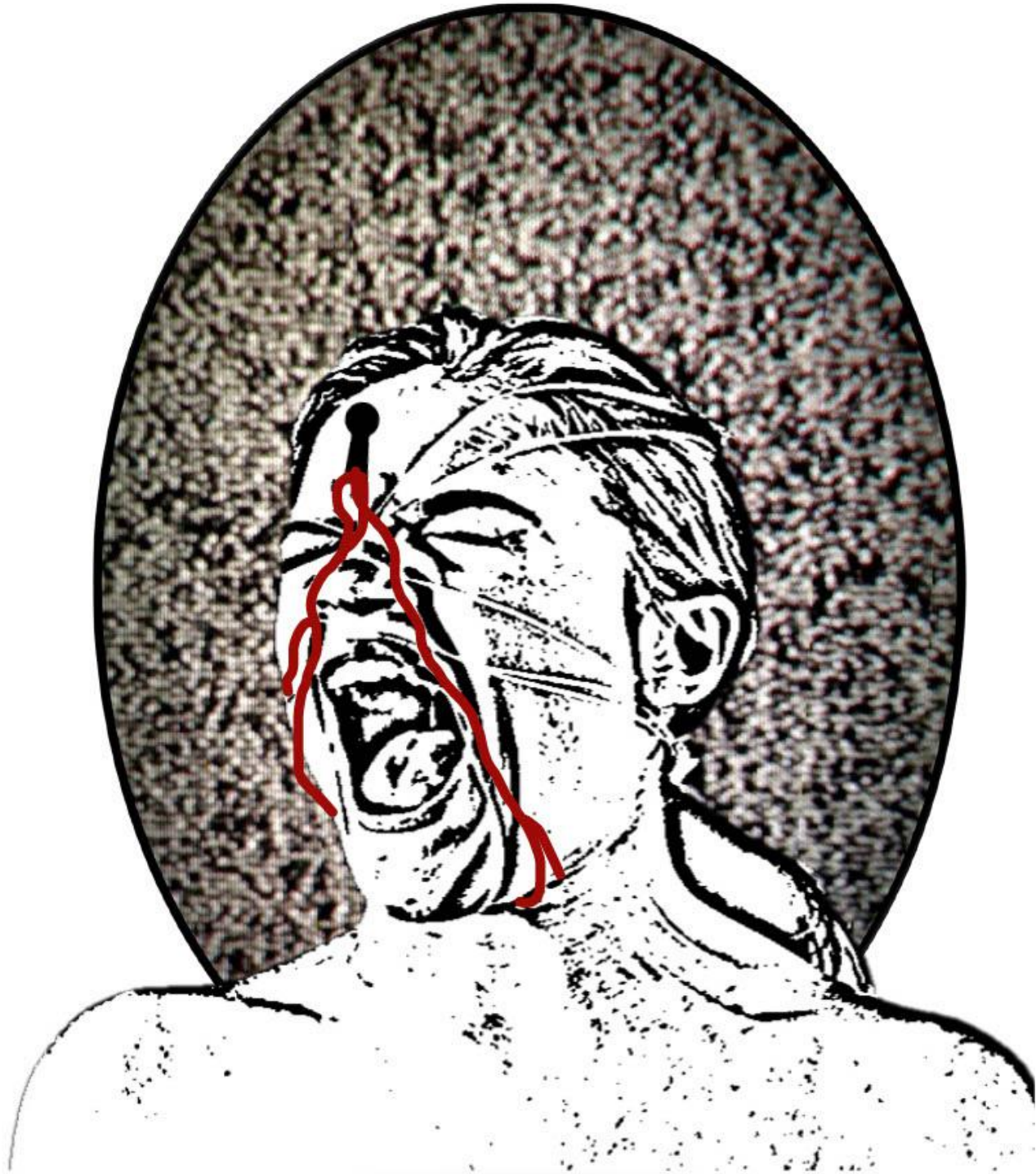












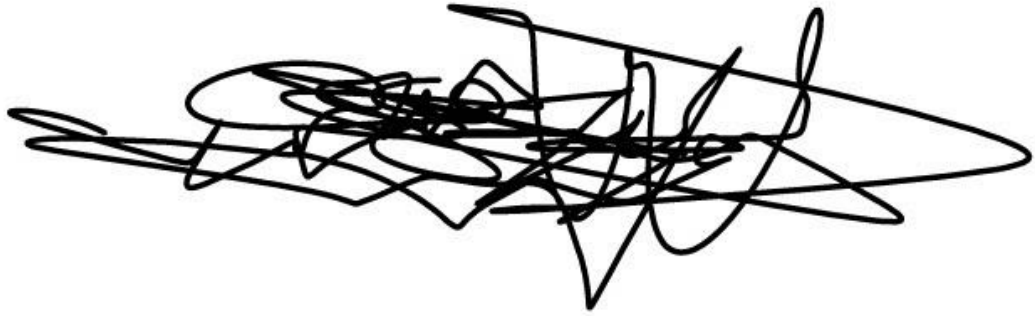




Do you solemnly swear that you will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?



End.



**M. Meyers** is a Special Education English Teacher at a residential mental health hospital. They have been published in the Oakland Arts Review, Lotus-Eater Magazine, Catfish Creek, and Brave Voices Magazine. This year, M. Meyers released their debut novel “Cold Spots”, a mental health recovery story with a paranormal twist.

Originally published in *why am i falling?: An Experimental Fear Comic*.

## A Skeleton Song

*Sarah Pobuda*

Place your fingers upon my skull,  
search through potholes and the pores  
feel over the sharp side, then the dull.

Come, my darling, rip up the floor  
stand upon my shoulders.  
Appraise how much I can bear  
before

my blistered feet break through the boulder.  
Notice how I sink into the loam, the confinement torturous,  
I cannot object with solid mud of deafening odor

crammed into every orifice,  
making me a mud spout.  
As if I were a common radish, a vegetable so inglorious,

heave my languid body out.  
Resuscitate me until I sputter  
dirt into your waiting mouth.

My love, you cruelly exhume me before the end of summer.  
This time, you do not stop after the husking  
of my silken cover.

You strip me of my entire skin, even my earthy  
musk, ardently sucking away my flesh  
as you watch August sun nestle into dusk.

**Sarah Pobuda** is a current MA/MFA student at DePaul University. She enjoys wandering through used bookstores, and drinking copious amounts of tea.

## 7 Things

Konrad Ehresman

Seven things nobody tells you about life after rape,

One: That even after taking six different showers,  
you will still feel his hands roaming over your body,  
like tourists in an unfamiliar land,

Two: Some nights you'll come home,  
turn off all the lights,  
wrap yourself up in blankets so tight,  
hoping and praying that your comforter is strong enough to keep you from falling to pieces.

Three: That some days your lungs will forget just how much they like the air,  
your insides will feel like that have been lit on fire,  
every time you open your mouth to scream,  
you expect to see smoke billow out past your lips.

Four: When you tell people what happened,  
they will treat you like a hastily wrapped package,  
marking you with giant red letters,  
spelling out the word; "Fragile"

Five: That when your acting teacher asks why intimate scenes are so hard for you,  
you will say nothing,  
even though you want to scream in her face that your intimacy was stolen,  
smashed into a thousand pieces,  
by a petulant child, who doesn't understand the meaning of the word "no."

Six: That regardless of how you felt during one through five,  
your worth is not up for grabs,  
it is not some jewel hidden away,

That can be stolen from you by a thief under the cover of night.

You are worthy because you are you.

Seven: Your body is NOT a fucking temple,  
those can be desecrated or destroyed,  
Your body is a field of purple wildflowers,  
your body is white capped peaks piercing the sky,  
your body is a thick green forest of maple and pine.

After fire and destruction,  
your body, like that forest is destined for only one legacy;  
regrowth.

You can, you will, regrow.

**Konrad Ehresman** is a young and emerging poet and spoken word artist based in Los Angeles Ca. You can find their other work on instagram @callmemomrad

**Death Without a Body***Emily Mosley*

I want to know what kind of  
mother  
I could be  
if I were in  
a happy marriage  
where a raised voice  
would never be followed by a raised fist  
& apps to track cellphones  
would truly be  
for safety  
& not  
control,  
so he would never appear at my car window  
after an argument, ten blocks from our house,  
black-passion clouding the green  
of his eyes  
pounding his fist against the dash & his  
rage into my ears until  
I opened my door  
& ran—

In the dark  
I hid  
behind a cypress tree  
whose sea-serpent roots  
became my toeholds,  
palms flat against rough bark  
steadying  
centering  
crouched, I could have been a child playing.

What kind of mother would I be  
without the anchor of fear that keeps my face  
just barely above the  
rising tide,  
if I'd never said to a friend  
on a thick summer night  
after too much wine  
"If something happens to me,  
he did it."

What kind of mother could I be  
if instead of explaining what a bad childhood  
Dad had  
& wondering  
if I'm setting you up for a lifetime of similarly  
cold & broken men,  
If we could have the carefree kid silliness  
that I had with my own mother,  
Simon Says, armfuls of daffodils, scary movies  
with all of the lights turned off  
& a whole Hershey bar to myself,  
a Cabbage Patch doll for each visit to the  
dentist—  
I want to make our darkness disappear for you  
gift you  
the teenage bonding, nurturing  
over heartache, friends over for sleepovers,  
a party for making the volleyball team...  
anything but the fibrous connection of love,  
fear

apprehension  
& guilt that we have,  
bonding over the black eye that  
your father gave you.

**Golden Repair***Emily Mosley*

I never thought crockery would be comforting  
but it  
steels my spirit  
washes clear the lens of my worldview  
to know of  
the Japanese tradition,  
Kintsukuroi  
appreciating the beauty  
celebrating the history  
visualizing the potential  
of that which has been  
broken,  
choosing to mend splintered ceramics with  
threads of golden filament  
rather than discarding them,  
the sharp  
& useless pieces  
brought together again  
each shard born of rage, of  
heartbreak, sorrow  
Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's entire mosaic of grief.  
There are moments  
in life  
an especially fragile  
piece, a  
bridal gift, an  
invaluable  
  
heirloom,  
a mother's urn, perhaps

—slips—  
through careless hands  
explodes,  
dusty tsunamis of  
shards strewn,  
pottery & bone,  
constellations against a sky of ruin.  
Kintsukuroi  
translates to  
“golden repair”  
the gathering of fragments  
of something once so valuable,  
garbage now  
to most

But  
there is space for  
meticulous care, rinsing of blood,  
grime; a steady hand  
to bring together again  
to make whole  
that which seemed forever lost  
forming an almost breathing being  
worthy of wonder

**Emily Mosley** grew up in rural Georgia, but has spent the last six years in the gritty wonderland that is New Orleans. She can often be found sneaking into strangers' yards to smell their flowers and pet their cats, and is mother to three surly but hilarious daughters.



# LEGACY DOCENTS

SELECTED VISUAL AND LITERARY RESPONSES TO  
AWAKENINGS' PERMANENT COLLECTION



**Invisible Girl**

Ty  
Acrylic on Canvas  
24" x 24"  
Awakenings Permanent Collection

# LEGACY

Summer 2020

Allies, advocates, and fellow survivors acted as docents of our visual art permanent collection as we created our first virtual gallery, *Legacy*. Our docents responded through dance, essays and poems, paintings and sculpture to guide the viewer and add to the legacy of the artwork.

*Legacy* represents Awakenings' devotion to community-based healing and collaborative expression. The artwork of the four docent responses in this section spans Awakenings' history from *Grandmother's Silence*, which was one of the founding pieces in the collection, to *The Silence*, which entered the collection in 2018. Julie Brannen's poem appears like a thread that could be woven into the quilt of *Grandmother's Silence*. Ru Zhou embodies *Packaged Meat* through fabric and poetry. Sal Goedken unearths a single frame of her own film work that sparks the connection to *Invisible Girl*, and Kacey Arnold amplifies *The Silence* with her painting and literary creation. Our docents invite the viewer into a living conversation with the artwork.

As you view these responses, consider the creation of your own legacy. What will you leave behind as you move forward? What have you found that you want to protect? And how will you continue to heal?

All docent responses and Awakenings permanent collection remain on display in the virtual exhibit *Legacy* at [awakeningsart.org/legacy](http://awakeningsart.org/legacy).

**[UNTITLED]**

Ru Zhou

*A response to 'Packaged Meat'*

**Ru Zhou** received her BFA from SAIC with an emphasis in Fiber Art and Arts Administration; she then continued her passion in non-profit sector upon graduating from MSLCE at Northwestern University. Besides art, she is passionate about animals and the environment. She's in her element when cooking delicious vegan meals to hip-hop/jazz music.

**EXCERPT FROM THE ABANDONED  
16MM FILM PROJECT "I SEE THE  
DEVIL'S HEAD"**

Sal Goedken

*A response to 'Invisible Girl'*

**Sal Goedken** (she/her) is a writer and artist-filmmaker based out of Chicago. As a filmmaker, she works primarily in non-narrative experimental modes on 16mm, and saves narratives for her written works of speculative fiction and science fiction.

**PSALMS**

Kacey Arnold

*A response to 'The Silence'*

**Kacey Arnold** is a visual artist based in Chicago, IL. She has worked in arts administration for four years and has worked at various museums around Chicago as an intern, a docent, and a studio assistant. She is an Associate Board Member at the Awakenings Art Gallery in Chicago, IL.

**BREAK THE CHAIN**

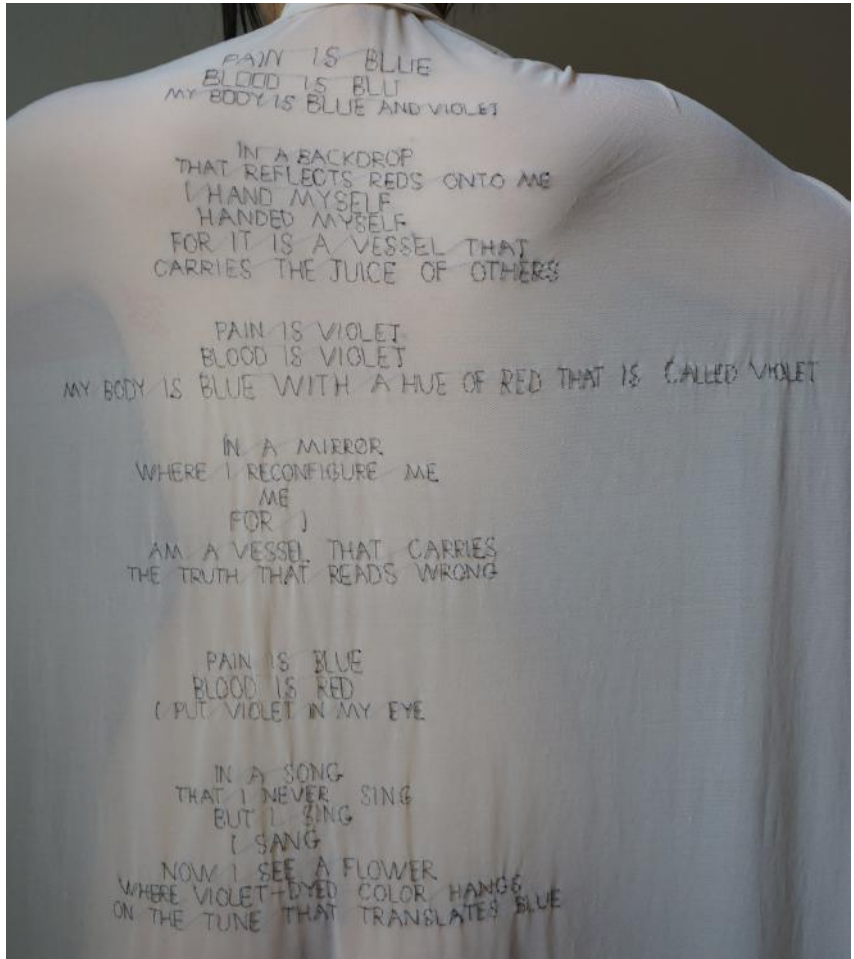
Julie Brannen

*A response to 'Grandmother's Silence'*

Dancing through life, **Julie's** experiences are abundant in creativity, community, education, health, + healing. Some of her roles include artist, director, healer, teacher, mover; she follows the path of heart + soul. Her greatest joy comes from guiding folks into an organic + compassionate practice of fiercely approaching vulnerability + embodying whole-hearted living. Her goal is to create brave, inclusive spaces in order to allow for radiant expression, courageous liberation, + uplifting connection.

Awakenings permanent collection remains on display at [awakeningsart.org/legacy](http://awakeningsart.org/legacy).

**[Untitled]**  
Ru Zhou



The colors in *Packaged Meat* triggered my response initially. Violet, blue, red and all tighter, violet again.

Our bodies are so vulnerable that in our own eyes, they sometimes become objects of alienation.

My body carries the idea of “protection of the inner mix”, but what protects it when its mere existence is nothing but a container?

Twisted, bound, flipped, stabbed, branded

The true color of my skin plays tricks with my eyes, for it no longer fits my idea of perfect.

It unclaimed me, where do I go?

Maybe into these words that carry my reminiscence;

Into a slight inch of my skin where the needle penetrates, so it leaves a trail of materials that does not easily let go of the clench.

**Excerpt from the  
Abandoned 16mm  
Film Project “I See  
the Devil’s Head”**  
*Sal Goedken*



For the past two years, I have been attempting to make the same film about my first and only relationship over and over again. Each attempt has failed in different yet disastrous ways, and I ultimately only shot 300 feet (~10 minutes) of 16mm color reversal film. Out of the 12,000 frames I shot that day, this is the only frame that isn't entirely black. Yet this single overexposed frame of me hiding my body behind a statue is a better representation of the feelings I was trying to express in the film: how small I had felt, how solitary, isolated, and invisible I had become. This image mirrors Ty's *Invisible Girl*, which reveals the (paradoxically) shared feelings of invisibility and isolation, and how we use our art to emerge from hiding. Sometimes these things are hard for others to see because we are hiding on purpose.

**Psalms**

Kacey Arnold



Mighty is the first word I think of when talking about Bobbie Groth's *The Silence*. The piece alludes to feelings of freedom, rage, and courage while exuding the forcefulness that only truth and survival can.

In the painting and the accompanying poem, Groth explores the theme of breaking the silence, the silence that both victims and witnesses take on in the face of sexual violence, and freeing one's self from its painful and devastating aftermath. Groth's piece is a fascinating exploration of the liberation that can break said silence and act as a "torch" that can bring light and freedom into the survivor's life and those around them.

The vibrant reds and oranges in Groth's painting recall the "fury" that the artist mentions in the accompanying poem as a bright light that shows the way for others to break their silence and live courageously. The piece is exceptionally emotive in the movement that the central figure creates, the color scheme, and the animated landscape that the painting depicts.

In my response to both the poem and painting *The Silence*, I chose to expand on the theme of releasing one's self from agonizing and destructive forced silence to light the way for other survivors and themselves and tear down obstacles that hold them back from speaking their truth. Using a similar style to Groth's, I painted multiple figures intertwined and howling forcefully into the world. Referencing both Groth's piece and the *Legacy* exhibition, I wanted to explore the phenomenon that occurs when survivors speak out and courageously choose to no longer live in shame and oppression. Such an action creates space for the survivor to heal and encourages others to speak out and break the silence around sexual violence.

**Break The Chain**

*Julie Brannen*

Who  
will break  
the chain of silence?  
I  
have carried  
this weight  
for years, generations,  
lifetimes.  
She  
did her best  
with what she had.  
Yet  
the pain ripples out  
and in.  
The key  
is near  
inside of me  
held within  
the rumbling thunder  
of courage.  
I reach for it  
again and again,  
for her, my daughter,  
my granddaughter's daughter.  
The chain stops here.



## Awakenings

Awakened Voices is a literary program of Awakenings, a non-profit organization dedicated to creating a physical and virtual artistic space in which to engage in an open dialogue that furthers awareness and understanding of sexual violence and promotes healing of survivors through the arts. Please consider helping us spread our message of healing by sharing and supporting Awakenings.

### **Call for Submissions**

*Awakened Voices*

Our Spring 2021 Issue will be unthemed.

Find our visual and literary art calls at Submittable:  
<https://theawakeningsfoundation.submittable.com/submit>

## Special Thanks to:

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## Interested in supporting our work?

Join our core squad of Awakenings' supporters and join Judith's Circle. By committing to making a monthly donation of any amount, you are directly impacting a survivor's healing process. Your contribution directly supports our artists and Awakenings' ability to provide trauma-aware, professional arts experiences like this for our survivor artists. Join the Circle at [awakeningsart.org/judiths-circle](https://awakeningsart.org/judiths-circle).



## Upcoming Exhibits

### **Bloom**

Live now at [awakeningsart.org/bloom](https://awakeningsart.org/bloom)

### **Return**

February 2021

### **Embodying Justice**

June 2021

*Check our website for additional events.*

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