



WEAVE

A ZINE FEATURING
KUNDIMAN WRITERS
FROM THE
PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Weave

 **KUNDIMAN**

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Table of Contents

Jordan Alam	
Letter from the Co-Chair	4
Jonathan Wittmaier	
A dumpling does what a dumpling does	10
About an Actress	11
Daniel Tam-Claiborne	
Petaluma.....	12
Prachi Kamble	
Indian Dads	17
M.K. Thekkumkattil	
Tug of War	18
Mallika Chennupaty	
Mothered.....	22
Adhi	
When I Grew Up Angry	23
Amma, I Cannot Tell You How Much it Hurts	
When	25
Asela Lee Kemper	
Untitled.....	29
An Ode to Fuji Bakery down by where Oiji-	
chan laid to rest	31
Antino Art	
Postcards from Montréal	33
Liezel Moraleja Hackett	
The Calm Before Unhinged	40
Constellation	42
Ching-In Chen	
A Breath for Generosity.....	44
Winson Law	
We Roll Deep.....	45
Liezel Moraleja Hackett, Ching-In Chen, Winson Law	
Editor’s Note.....	46
Artist Bios.....	47

Letter from the Co-Chair

Jordan Alam

Welcome to the Kundiman Pacific Northwest chapter's 2023-2024 zine! In these pages, you will find a showcase of some wildly talented writers who have connected with the regional group over the years. As co-chair, I have found such inspiration and power in the variety of words that this group creates. I have seen folks conjure whole poems and scenes from a single random writing prompt at our salons and been an awed audience member at numerous readings. Everyone is welcome, from very established writers to those newly claiming that identity for themselves, and it is our great pleasure to build community that cares less for your professional accomplishments than your eagerness to connect.

The Pacific Northwest is a large land region. We have members who live across the entirety of Washington and Oregon, several in Alaska, and at one point folded in B.C. folks to our literary crew. It feels appropriate to pause for a moment and consider our relationship to the places we live. I am in what is now called Seattle, the ancestral home of Duwamish and Coast Salish peoples. Robin Wall Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass* applies the name "immigrant" to plants that may be foreign, but are not invasive and taking up the resources of other native plants. The metaphor can easily extend an invitation to us as people not indigenous to this region: we must pursue good

stewardship and gratitude for where we live rather than align ourselves with the norms brought by white colonization. Indeed, I sit in tension about how best to do that as I navigate white-built city structures, governments, and systems that obscure these invaluable connections.

I like this definition of "immigrant" with the implied sense of responsibility and action it has behind it. It calls us not to change ourselves to conform and "prove ourselves worthy" via assimilation, but instead to take care of ourselves and others relationally. It is unlike the way I often hear "immigrant" applied to me as a perpetual foreigner, even though my family has made a home of this place since the 1980s. I believe that Asian and Asian American writers always wrestle with the melancholy of having to make ourselves, at the very least, scrutable—which I find as a writer when I am deciding whether and how much to explain of my cultural practices on the page. It has been so refreshing to read these writers as they create worlds by us and for us.

We chose not to give a theme for this issue half-consciously. I say "half" because the other half of me was biting their nails, worried we would get pieces that couldn't sit next to one another comfortably without the container of a theme holding them in place. But I was pleasantly surprised to see that, even without a guide to specific subject matter, these pieces come into conversation with one another nevertheless. Themes emerged as I re-read the pieces. These authors boldly dive into family, care work, connection and

disconnection, belonging and isolation, blood (literal and metaphorical), language and what it communicates, and—of course—food.

The gift of these works is their specificity. Each is a vignette of that author's creative fixation at one moment in time. I felt like I was able to wander through so many different experiences in this region from just these brief beautiful glimpses, making me want to see more. And that is the beauty of fostering this regional group; in the brief moments we get to spend together in the midst of otherwise bustling lives, I get the chance to be blessed by the presence of folks I may not have met in any other circumstance. Thank you to everyone who has submitted, designed, and put your heart into making this zine come together. And I hope that one day you, dear reader, may come and join us.

Weave

A dumpling does what a dumpling does

Jonathan Wittmaier

It floats, it bobs, it tumbles to the floor

On the inside—hollow, nothing but air
And some soft squishy dough

Fill it with onion, chives,
some minced pork; all mashed
up in a thick filling,
the same way Umma
used to do.

Savor it, relish it, consider every
ingredient, every element
Because soon it will all be over...

Piece by piece, it will journey inward
through the labyrinth, through the elaborate
array of tubing and guts

Until finally, it will reach its end,
expelled at last into the bottom
of the bowl.

About an Actress

Jonathan Wittmaier

I had a dream last night
about an actress from a TV movie—

We sat together on a soft leather couch,
eating popcorn and Red Vines.

She leaned in closer and said,

*Let's eat a piece together
and maybe our lips
will meet in the middle
like they do in the movies.*

Once, I read something about Hemingway,
how he'd always longed for this grand romance;

Left each of his lovers when that feeling
ran out.

I think sometimes, on nights like this—

so do I...

so do I...

When the only slice left is the crusted

end of the loaf.

And there's rust on all the knives.

Petaluma

Daniel Tam-Claiborne

“Do you ever feel like you’re losing it?” she asks. We’ve just finished dinner—take-out fajitas from La Cocina—and Chloe glares at me across the table. She’s smiling the smile that, in a former time, I might have perceived as an opening, but by now has already changed into something else.

“What do you mean?” I’m leaning in too close, I know, my torso cantilevered over my elbows. We’d agreed to split everything down the middle, but I insisted on keeping the mahogany table, which I bought at an estate sale when Chloe and I moved in together. It must have looked ridiculous when I came home with it: a table in the living room and not a single other thing to my name.

“I wake up in the morning, and I can’t find what I left out the night before,” Chloe says, pressing a napkin to her unmade lips.

“Where all have you looked?”

“Everywhere,” she says, taking in the whole of the room.

The shoji screens are drawn in from the walls and there are candles flickering on the table.

It’s a trick I learned from a video someone had posted about how to make plain spaces more intimate. It feels now like we’re floating in a cloud, a refuge of gray and white entirely our own.

“I swear I think my new place is haunted,” Chloe says. “Like someone is moving my stuff in the night.”

I stifle a laugh. “Like your clothes are sprouting ears and hopping like a rabbit?”

“Jun,” she says, rolling her eyes, “I’m serious. Nothing is ever where I left it.”

I remember when I first decided to move to San Francisco. Friends lectured all about soaring rent prices, gentrification, summer nights that made you curse not bringing an extra jacket. But they’d neglected to mention the most basic warning of all.

“I think I’m the wrong person to ask,” I say, taking a sip from my glass. “My things have a history of disappearing.”

I’d been driving through Petaluma when it happened. Chloe and I had been doing long-distance for a year, flying to see each other every month, when we finally decided to bite the bullet and move in. I packed up everything I owned and took off down the coast. It was just

after noon when I stopped for lunch. I didn't think for a minute about leaving my car out in the parking lot, but by the time I'd finished my meal and walked back out, there were shards of blue glass encircling the car. The window had been smashed clean through with a hammer. I lost everything I'd had inside.

Chloe pours a glass from the growler she brought. Kombucha—she insisted—because she's driving, though I suspect it's because she doesn't want to be tempted, however remote, to spend the night.

"I'm sorry I mentioned it," Chloe says, bringing a hand to her face. "I can't believe I forgot."

"Don't be," I say, firming up my gaze. "Water under the bridge."

For months after the incident, I didn't drive. I never left a bag unattended. I even carried the table back from the estate sale on the BART. It was the first impression I had of California, this feeling that I had to always remain vigilant. Get too comfortable and you could lose everything.

"Well, I didn't forget about the way you keep a place," I say, forcing a chuckle. She hasn't asked me over to her new apartment yet, but I can picture what's inside. I admit I even adopted some of Chloe's messiness after we broke up: wineglasses in the sink, rice cooker left out

overnight. It felt weird to remind her to take her shoes off when she came in. "It might be lurking somewhere else."

The truth is that it didn't matter to lose it. The laptop, the clothes, the whole car full of things. I would have given that up and more. I was just so glad to be living with Chloe that everything else—new friends, job, starting over in California—seemed bearable.

Chloe looks at me, but her eyes have grown dim, the spark extinguished.

"Jun, we've been over this," she says.

"I know," I say, holding both hands up. "I want this to work, I really do. I don't want you to think—"

A breeze wafts through the window, the smell of skunk filling the air.

"Do you think maybe an animal got to it?" I ask. "Maybe snatched it through a window?" I'm reaching now, imagining us in some mid-century modern, a pie cooling on the back sill.

But Chloe's stopped listening anyway. Her head drops down and her hands navigate to the phone in her lap. She smiles, and I resist the urge to ask who she's texting. Ever since she arrived, she's looked good, like things are going well for her.

When she looks up, I already know what she's going to say.

"I should probably get going," she says, her legs sliding up from under her seat. "It's getting late."

I nod, finishing the rest of my glass before capping the growler and handing it to her.

"Why don't you hold onto it," she says, waving me back. "At this rate, I'm not sure I'd be able to find it again."

"You'll find it," I tell her, with more conviction than I'd tried months ago to convince her to stay.

Chloe shoots me a puzzled look: "Why do you sound so sure?"

When I finally got to San Francisco, I filed a police report, submitted photos of the damage. But nothing ever came of it. I don't buy anything valuable now because I fear, one way or another, that it'll eventually be taken. Still, I know what she's been feeling. When I'm happy, I go searching for all the stupid things I haven't lost yet too.

Indian Dads

Prachi Kamble

Indian dads get lung cancer. They get pancreatic cancer. Prostate cancer. They get strokes and heart attacks. They work in engineering and medicine. As security guards. In middle management. They deliver food. Door and dash, they skip your dishes. They drive cabs. They earn PhDs. Deter us from art. They are proud of us. And not proud of us. They are mad at us. Want the best of us. They buy us books and push us on swings. Take us to clinics, get us braces. Don't understand why we need friends or sleepovers. Or more than three pairs of shoes. They brag about us. Are shamed of us. They teach us to drive. They bring the camcorder to Sports Day. They bring the camcorder to the Sistine Chapel. They ask the teacher for extra homework. They eat before our mothers. They won't let us into the kitchen. They pay for college. They pay for weddings. They buy houses and minivans. They teach us about castes. Who's on the top and who's on the bottom. They force us to listen to Mozart. But they discourage us from playing the guitar. They don't want us marrying white guys. Indian Dads are American Dads. They are Canadian Dads. They are Australian Dads and English Dads. They drop us off. They pick us up. But they never tell us they love us.

Tug of War

M.K. Thekkumkattil

All night, I stared through glass doors. I watched my patient: belly down, prone'd, head turned to one side and propped on pillows, face swelling. I stared not at him, sedated and unmoving, but at the monitor behind him. Green lines and numbers for heart rhythm and rate, white for respiratory rate, blue for oxygen, pink for blood pressure. Nothing was objectively wrong, and yet everything was wrong: heart rate higher than before, blood pressure worthy of a stroke, breathing rapid over the ventilator, temperature climbing. Sure, it could have been another infection, on top of COVID, on top of dementia, on top of cancer. But it didn't feel like it. It felt like aggressive weaning gone wrong: sedation had been cut in half during the day; they had tried to bring his vent settings down. It felt like this man was too awake, more awake than anyone should have to be face down in the ICU, more awake than I wanted him to be for the suffering we caused.

I talked to everyone about it: my charge nurse, my supervisor, the doc, the nurses next to me. The coworker I hated said, "You're such an attentive nurse, you're always so focused," and I bit my tongue. Every conversation went the same way: me explaining what I thought was going on, them agreeing with increasing sedation and backtracking what day shift had

done wrong. Every conversation ended the same way: reminding each other that the family would likely withdraw care today, their brother and uncle dead within hours.

It was a game, a tug-of-war. I pulled when I increased sedation, gave oral care, and repositioned him. I pulled harder when the vital signs changed, when the ventilator beeped, when the tele tech called and told me his heart rate was up, when I watched his back heave with gasping breaths. I pulled all night until I handed off, knowing my grip didn't change the outcome, knowing we would all let go at some point, letting the rope fall squarely on the side of death.

Letting go of that rope and offering a person to death had nothing to do with giving up. In the best circumstances, it was beautiful: a family shared stories as they drank hospital coffee and gathered around a person who was so comfortable they couldn't hear, see, or feel pain. My job was to paint death's realm in rainbows and pillows, to make it look good for the living. In the worst circumstances, it was a bloodbath. Broken ribs, blood gushing from mouths and IV sites, skin gray. We felt for a pulse near the patient's genitals, at the femoral artery, as security guards pushed down on a dead body's chest. We felt for what wasn't there, we felt as hope and inevitability battled in our fingertips, we looked at clocks and gave timed medications, we avoided looking at the dead.

Within one week's ICU shifts, two of my four patients died within 48 hours of my caring for them. A third was dying, heart barely pumping, her liver shot, eyes yellow. Before bedtime, we helped her wash her thick black hair down to her waist. She was very nice, but very dying.

The fourth got better. I used to think I went to work for the one who gets better, but working in Critical Care taught me to work for the dying. To attune myself to the sounds of death. To feel a heart beat near the edge. To see what happens next.

I later asked the nurse who I handed off to how his death went. She said it was as good as it could possibly have been: he was compassionately extubated and on medications to keep him comfortable; his family watched him through video chat. He was peaceful, painless, dead within half an hour once the breathing tube was out. No suffering.

Caring for those who will die stretched me to the edges of purpose. I held my end of the rope so hard when I was at work: I did the right thing for my patients, even if it meant skipping meals and breaks, forgetting to drink water and pee, getting yelled at by doctors or annoying my supervisors. Even when I knew we were withdrawing care the next day, I felt the heat build in the edges of my palm and my skin burned. I didn't know what it would be like to loosen my grip. I needed to know what it felt like to push my feet against the ground, to lift with my legs, to grit my teeth and pull my elbows in.

I needed to know what it felt like for the nurses and doctors around me to all pull our weight. I needed to know what it felt like in that final moment before death takes over, the rope slides out of our hands like it's covered in oil, we never had a chance at all.

Mothered

Mallika Chennupati

Her hands working through tangles and knots
in my hair, sometimes yanking and sometimes
pulling my curls into a braid.

Hot gulab jamun, drenched in sugar syrup,
crunchy on the outside and soft on the inside,
oozing in my mouth.

Round and wide and beautiful and angry eyes,
open so wide that I can see the whites above her
pupils, looking at the paint spilled all over my
new pink Uggs.

Her hand thumping on my back, repeatedly, on a
night when I cannot fall asleep. “Dhai, dhai, dhai.”

500 miles by Peter, Paul, and Mary, sung in a soft
and lilting voice, lips brushing against my ear.

Her thick gold ring, encrusted with tiny crystals,
squeezing against my fingers as we cross the
street.

Her breath, tinged with scents of maroon MAC
lipstick and Taster’s Choice instant coffee, on
the morning of my first swim meet.

Her keen, devoted, and unhurried gaze.

When I grew up angry

Adhi

trapped / in a paradise / made for someone I am
not /
hands fisted in sand that cannot show me my
reflection / even though / it used to be glass—

I can’t tell you what I keep hoping / to see / in the
shards, / but I do know / in not knowing /
I must’ve been born, shattered; / all volume, no
sound / all breath, no air / all body, and yet no
body, *nobody*— / ~~██████████~~

I think, no matter how hard / I fight, the only
form of acceptance / I know / is erasure.

call me the sun— but I know / I am nothing but a
yowling star / burning, set aflame / with
something awful that we have learned to call /
light.

no sky overlooks this shore. / of the sands here, I
can tell you—
I know them intimately.
I have *tried* / to bury myself, I swear.

I always get washed in with the next tide, / the
next day, / the next hour.
the hourglass figure I never asked for / is so
literally a means / to an end.
I always know when my time is running out.

other than that / I know so little. I am sorry. I do
not have / the words / for everything.
I barely have the words for this.

time / is linear, but I am twisted up, kneeling / at
the edge of my own water / and begging to be
bathed in something other than shame and salt.

mine is a scream with no lungs.
the rest of my body / has picked up the slack.

*The following poem is written in an original form
called the 476 (said as the “four-seven-six”).*

*Each stanza is comprised of four complete lines and
a fifth, incomplete line, and every pair of stanzas
uses the principle of the poetic volta to pivot
on a single word from one aspect of a narrative
into another (to preserve incompleteness in each
stanza alongside the nonlinear continuity of the
work itself). The string of pivot words attached in
sequence to the title forms a couplet that ends or
begins the end of the poem.*

*Note that the four/five lines per verse specified in
the form are in greater number in this printing due
to formatting.*

Amma, I Cannot Tell You How Much it Hurts When

Adhi

You

used to dress me up when I was little. You grew
up in rags,
but I always left the house like a doll, fresh from
your hands, adorned in your pride.
I remember feeling out of place, your love heavy,
stitched into the cotton over my shoulders;
like every time another kid looked at me I was
getting caught making a mistake;
but the other girls didn't all look *that* different—
though maybe that's just me trying to

Deny

is what I used to tell myself, deny everything that isn't greyscale, men's, or at least two sizes too big, and my chest, also too big – just barely discovering itself at twelve years old – won't be able to speak for me, get me placed in anyone else's damning category. I was terrified of being perceived as a girl, though I didn't know it yet. I just knew that it would be wrong, and thought that a matter of morality, that I *could not* just be

This

past spring, you and I went shopping together, just the two of us. It was a good day. Lately, I've been relearning how to love myself around you, trying to relearn myself in general, and it was going well— until, at least, I wandered into the men's section of every store we went to. You stopped choosing my clothes years ago, but you, righteous in your anger, your abhorrence, still decide who I get to be in moments like these; look at me as I am and insist on a different

Version

histories of the great, classic, queer document that is my life all read the same way, more or less. It was less than a year ago I admitted I also like girls, and a little further less than that, when I started to admit I'm not entirely one of them. Sometimes, I'm femininity crafted in sweatpants that used to be their dad's, but more and more

lately

I am Not A Girl whether I'm in a dress or in men's jeans, or I am yet more things that I can't speak

Of

course, I'm normal, I tell you, for all that my actions, and my closets— both the one you can see, and the one you can't— speak for themselves. You love me, so much, but you have no idea that it has taken me years of confusion, of obsessively, frantically pulling at my clothes and hair in the pursuit of a more forgiving body, and of labor, to make me realize that it's *okay*, even if you don't believe it, that being this way is

My

my, my, my, my pronouns right now are— not just me stuttering over myself, I swear. But I don't need to convince you of it to believe that myself, not anymore. I can explore who and what and all that I am, maybe even accept it someday, even when it's difficult; even when I know I am more than what you, or my body would make of me. I can have the love of us both, and believe, finally, that it is up to me how I define my

—Self.

Amma, I cannot tell you how much it hurts when you deny this version of myself.

But I know you love me, even then.

These days, I promise;
I am learning how to do the same.

Untitled

Asela Lee Kemper

After Phil Kaye's "Canyon"

I lost contact with my obaa-chan
for a while. My tongue got tangled
from gibberish versions of overhearing
mom's phone calls with her sisters and the
English alphabet as the sonics of kanji
slipped slowly out of me, left me
speaking in haiku. I begged mom
to reteach me her first language but was pushed
back into a white classroom with Odysseus
and vocabulary lessons while the school's
speech therapist named Kathy stretched
the corners of my mouth for nine years until I
sounded like their version of a scholar. I can't
remember the last time we spoke in Japanese.
Even if I press my fingers
against a desk to draw what I wanted to say
in hiragana, I don't recognize the language I once
knew.
When I asked mom to teach me her language
she looked at me,

Don't you want to survive here?

I squished my cheeks and felt the inside
of my teeth, if there were any words from
my childhood left,
if I could find my voice
inside this American English mouth.

When I got older, I tried to reach out to
obaa-chan through scattered words
by little memory and whatever consonants
mom laid out for me before she shy away from
speaking the mother tongue.

I still can't trace the language, but my voice
slowly
trails back to its root words.

An Ode to Fuji Bakery down by where Oiji-chan laid to rest

Asela Lee Kemper

You were the conversation starter,
catered my family and me with matcha cakes,
and laughed in Japanese as if we were neighbors.
Comforting us after our second visit to oiji-chan.

You served freshly made cookies as I recounted
my day to you:
I entered the garden where oiji-chan was buried.
Some people saw this as a graveyard, but his
spot only
bloomed in sunflowers and roses
we plucked out from the grocery store.
The black marble stone stood above the
gray plaque, honoring his name in romaji and
kanji.
The last time I saw him was at the hospital. He
lay still in bed as the monitor beeped when his
heart was beating.
My aunt and I were playing patty-cake, but
I could feel him watching me. Almost smiling as
his family
surrounded him before he was ready to say
good-bye.

Mom showed me pictures of him once: he wore
white polo shirts
and navy blue cargo shorts as he cradled me in
his arms

with his grin smiling from corner to corner.

You asked then if I ever heard him talk.
I wish I could tell you. My obaa-chan probably
knows, but
I am still trying to muster my hiragana into a full
sentence. Every time I come and visit you, you
ask the same question.

Mom told me that you finally moved.
I thought about coming to visit you one last time,
reminiscing our conversations and oiji-chan
over matcha and chocolate cakes.

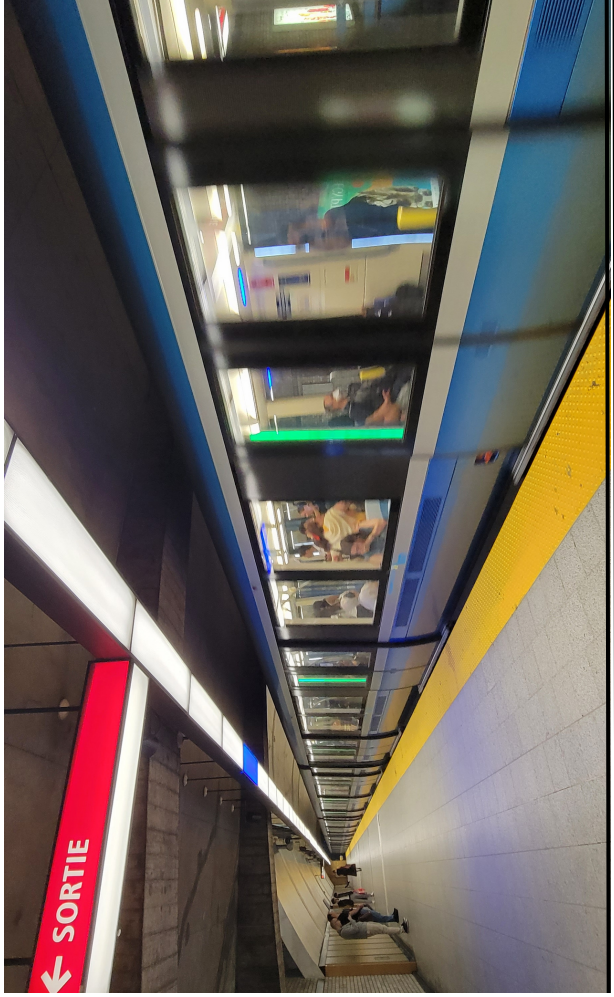
Maybe one day, when we meet again,
I can finally tell you
what oiji-chan sounded like

Postcards from Montréal

Antino Art

*No one sends postcards anymore. So these are for
you.*

*Think of each one as a moment, from a particular
place, at a particular time, when someone you never
met wished you were here.*



L E S M O T S D E V I E N N E N T L E V E N T

CAFÉ L'ORBITE

No one knows me in old Montréal. _____

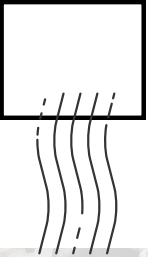
God is an immigrant on a park bench whose first language isn't mine. The only word I know here is mercy. _____

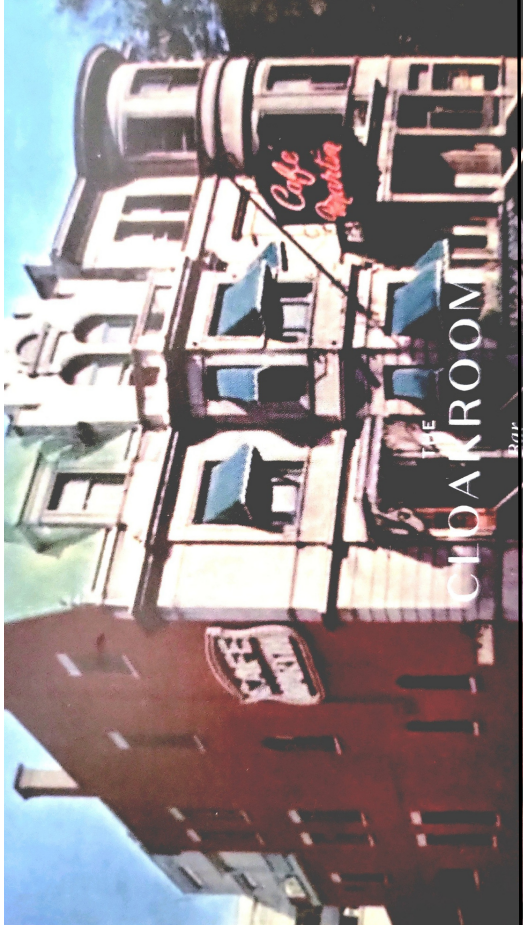
It's all cathedral spires and cirque tents. There's a legit pirate ship anchored at the port. I have questions. _____

(Jour 1/3)

I use my fingers to ask the woman with purple hair how to ride the metro. _____

Easy as une, doo, twah. _____



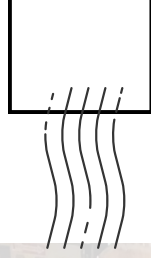


NOUS DISONS BONJOUR ET AU REVOIR
PAR VAGUES

DIESE ONZE JAZZ BAR

It's all a tambourine of tongues. And people of color sounding cool as French without having to white out their own cultures.

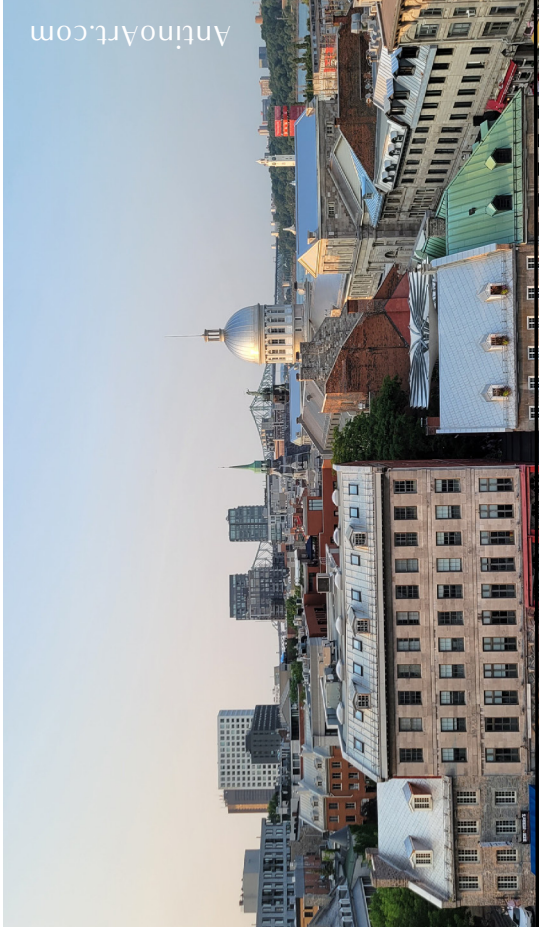
On top of some building, a tourist from Italy takes my photo while I look out over the square like a gargoye. I take theirs. Merci. Is all about giving back.



(Jour 2/3)

Saturday night on the Rue Saint-Somebody is all basement jazz joints and boulevardiers. God is the soloing pianist who affirms what I keep telling myself: all I need is one.

I order a *deux*. The string bass chimes in. *Trois*. Then the drums.



N O T R E C O U P E D E S I L E N C E S E D É V E R S E

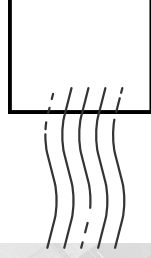
BASILIQUE NOTRE-DAME

Sunday morning in the hotel room is all blurry, like leftover poutine from a corner store takeout box. And an aspirin.

Divine merci is all about giving yourself grace. So I sleep in. Drink plenty of water.

God is the aproned server who pours my coffee as black as possible and smokes their cigarette on the cafe steps.

(Jour 3/3)



Alone means *all one* in the language of solo travelers like me. Yet I talk to more people I don't know in 24 hours than I have in forever. Guess I'm not alone. I'm talking to God.

I learn to follow the *sortie* signs. They all point to an escape.

I don't know me in old Montréal. When I'm here, I'm all new.

The Calm Before Unhinged

Liezel Moraleja Hackett

The Calm Before – for Jin
He wore blue but he was red

Hungry.
Alone.
Focused to exact clarity
with sharpened skill

He wore blue
to attain, to aspire, to become
the calm of his discipline
an ocean of crystal conviction

Calm simply meant
Confidence in his bladed edge

He wore blue
to conceal the red
of ridicule, of revenge, of rage

Calm simply meant
a brewing storm.

But he wasn't calm.

He was lighting
Swift and severe
Electric and elegant
Powerfully precise
Beautiful.

He wore blue that turned red
from those who met
the Quiet Katana,
a harbinger
marked with laceration

Calm
simply meant
Run.

Unhinged – for Mugen
Some days I am Mugen-

His unfocused focus
spinning
like a dance
into reckless precision

His impulse
My pulse

My emotion
becomes a blade

I have always
been a blade
unsheathed

Some days I am drawn

Test me
catch me
cut you

let's dance

Some days
I am impulsive
aimless, hopeless-
fearless

Some days are good.

Most days
I am just
hungry
and restless

Counting sunsets
Waiting for a breeze.

Constellation

Liezel Moraleja Hackett

What kind of star
in the night sky am I
if instead of hydrogen
my blood fuses with
tolerable poison and
biologic suppressant
that seeks and destroys
the rogue cells of my DNA?

Cells from a country western
collapsing under gravity
a shooting star
a lone star
Alone star

Under my skin
my blood is brewing
fusing with
subcutaneous conspiracy
to rewrite myself with
a liquid that conquers and
forces my body to cooperate-
breeds captive blood into
destroyer
blood that was

sedimentary --
Am I a canyon?
Memories hardened into stone
a rock star

an echo of myself
when I had a voice that
shattered earth?

Now a slow burn
a kindling
a whisper of myself

I hear the
fragments of my comet

ghost stars
making a wish.

A Breath for Generosity

Ching-In Chen

Tomorrow, I release
a golden thread into pool of dark
water.

Each shore hums and strays, asks
for violet.

Trees full of chatter.

Even if my name many corners mulching. An
even hand waits into next day.

Blessings to empty square, you cut
my hair to shreds.

You say there are other gifts, other fields to
lay in.

Every monster already arrived, every eaten its
full.

We Roll Deep

Winson Law

We gather around formica,
relatives tasked with vital roles:
one aunt stirs tapioca dough,
another simmers sugar syrup,
an uncle toasts sesame seeds.

Mom and I turn dough balls to nests,
whose delicate skin shrouds bean paste rounds.
we roll them like we warm our hands
until they resemble the moon.
our collective work makes us whole.

From the Editors

Ching-In Chen, Winson Law, and Liezel Moraleja Hackett

A single palm leaf beautiful on its own

but when bundled together, become plate,
hat, basket, roof; a place to share food, to hold
things, a shelter.

As artists, poets, writers, we wander through
palm leaves- searching for the right length,
texture, tone, words; the right vulnerability.

As Asian diasporic artists, poets, writers, we
build more when woven together. We explore
and interrogate our identities and become a
community through these conversations.

With this zine, we gather at the table with all of
our palms –some plates, some worn as hats in
the rain, some a basket to collect our memories,
some fragments inherited; all ours to weave, all
celebrating together under the roof we built.

Artist Bios

Adhi (he/him) is an emerging poet of South Asian descent who measures happiness in how many books surround him at any given moment; and how much of the human experience he can translate for others with the language he has at his disposal. He identifies as queer and trans, is enthusiastic about creative prose, poetic form and stage reading, and is currently an undergraduate student.

Antino Art (him/clan) is the creator of *Postcards From Nowhere*, a travel writing project where we collect postcards from the places we've been, write a poem on each one, and send them to one another. Reach out to antinoart@antinoart.com with the subject line POSTCARDS to sign up.

Descended from ocean dwellers, **Ching-In Chen** is the author of *The Heart's Traffic: a novel in poems* and *recombinant* (2018 Lambda Literary Award for Transgender Poetry) as well as chapbooks *to make black paper sing* and *Kundiman for Kin :: Information Retrieval for Monsters* (Leslie Scalapino Finalist).

Mallika Chennupaty is a writer based in Seattle, Washington. You can find more of her work, including articles, interview features, and fiction, at mallikachennu.com.

Prachi Kamble is an Indian Canadian writer living in the Pacific Northwest of Canada. She is completing her MFA in fiction at NYU.

Asela Lee Kemper (she/her) is a poet and editor who resides in Southern Oregon and is currently pursuing an MFA at Pacific Northwest College of Art. She is the author of digital chapbook *Cherry Blossom Festival* and the audio microchapbook *Finally: The Mixtape*.

Winson Law is an emerging writer of fiction and poetry. His website is winsonklaw.com.

Liesel Moraleja Hackett is a Filipino American writer and choreographer from the Pacific Northwest. She is a contributing writer at *Write or Die Magazine*, with works in Sampaguita Press' *Sobbing in Seafood City Vol. 1*, *Clamor Literary Journal*, UOG Press' *Storyboard: A Journal of Pacific Imagery*, and Ponyak Press' *The Friday Haiku*.

Daniel Tam-Claiborne is a multiracial essayist, multimedia producer, and author of the short story collection *What Never Leaves*. His writing has appeared in *Catapult*, *Literary Hub*, *Off Assignment*, *The Rumpus*, *The Huffington Post*, and elsewhere. "Petaluma" was previously published (with slight changes) in *LEON Literary Review*: <https://leonliteraryreview.com/2021/03/daniel-tam-claiborne-petaluma/>

M. K. Thekkumkattil (they/them) is a nonbinary femme writer and Critical Care nurse. With the perspective of a queer and trans, sober, kinky, chronically ill and disabled, South Asian child of immigrants, their writing is informed by disability justice, consent and negotiation practices from BDSM, the politics of care work, grief, intergenerational trauma, alcoholism, ancestral wisdom, relationship with land, and queer theory.

Jonathan Wittmaier is a Korean American adoptee (born in South Korea--raised in New Jersey) with an MFA in Creative Writing from Adelphi University. He has taught English and creative writing at various college campuses all across Long Island and has recently relocated to the Pacific Northwest. "A Dumpling Does What A Dumpling Does" was originally published in *WordCity Literary Journal*: <https://wordcitylit.ca/2023/05/03/a-poem-by-jonathan-wittmaier/>

About Kundiman

Kundiman is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to nurturing generations of writers and readers of Asian American literature.

What does Kundiman mean?

Kundiman is the classic form of Filipino love song—or so it seemed to colonialist forces in the Philippines. In fact, in Kundiman, the singer who expresses undying love for his beloved is actually singing for love of country. As an organization dedicated to providing a nurturing space for Asian American writers, we find in this name inspiration to create and support artistic expression.

Kundiman is pronounced with the emphasis on the second syllable.