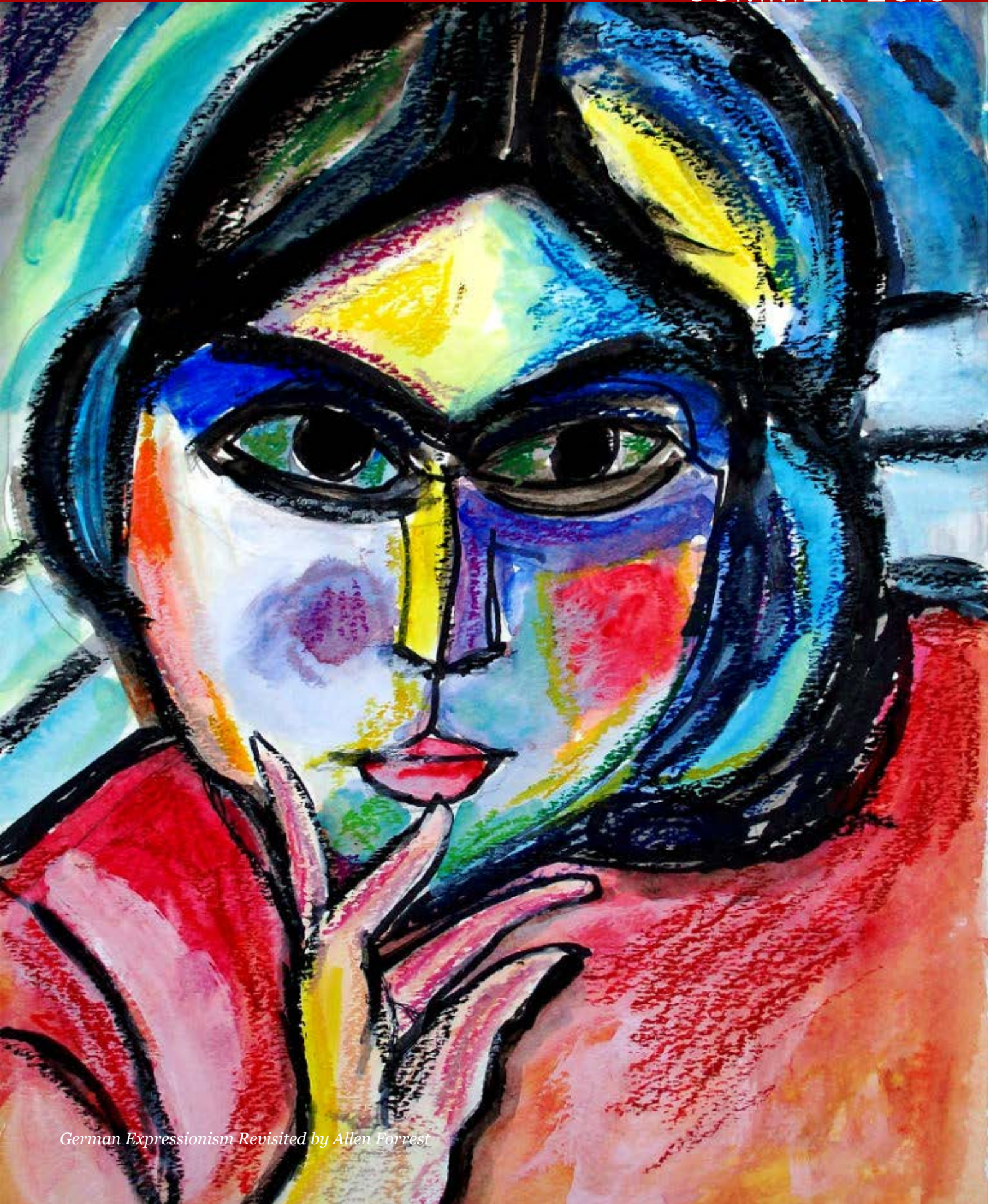


# THE MISSING SLATE

SUMMER 2016



*German Expressionism Revisited by Allen Forrest*

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*Wild East West 2 by Andrew Purchin*

“ We say to girls, you can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful, but not too successful. Otherwise, you would threaten the man. Because I am female, I am expected to aspire to marriage. I am expected to make my life choices always keeping in mind that marriage is the most important. Now marriage can be a source of joy and love and mutual support but why do we teach girls to aspire to marriage and we don't teach boys the same? We raise girls to see each other as competitors not for jobs or accomplishments, which I think can be a good thing, but for the attention of men... ”

~ Chiamamanda Ngozie Adichie

# DON'T CRY LIKE A GIRL. BE A (WO) MAN.

*A Word from the Editor-in-Chief*

*"We teach females that in relationships, compromise is what a woman is more likely to do. [...] We teach girls shame. Close your legs. Cover yourself. We make them feel as though by being born female, they are already guilty of something. And so girls grow up to be women who cannot say they have desire. Who silence themselves. Who cannot say what they truly think. Who have turned pretence into an art form."*

*~ 'We Should All Be Feminists', Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie<sup>1</sup>*

Women talk. And when we talk, we talk about subjects beyond the stereotypical conversations that concentrate on men, household politics, clothes, and fashion. We talk about the role we play in what is perceived as an evolving society, where progress by and in favour of women is glacial at best – and why victories are so cathartically celebrated – and all of this sandwiched between a regular eight-hour workday where, it must be noted, we are better qualified than the men, but paid substantially less, because apparently we don't "need the money". As though a woman's needs can be accurately assessed by the organization's (mostly male) senior management. As though our ambitions don't supersede a man's by 2:1.

In a wonderful article titled 'A Woman of War',<sup>2</sup> Pakistani-American writer and feminist Mehreen Kasana speaks to the different societal pressures between both sexes in Pakistani society, "*Male-entitlement dictates a woman's silence. If we could see the mimetic model of the erasure of a woman's voice, it would be an incredibly bloody sight.*" But look closer and you'll discover: it's not just us. Patriarchy and the male gaze exists just about everywhere and they will continue to exist until we, the women, the ones unfortunately tagged as the childrearing parent, push for a change. It may very well be a grassroots campaign that starts from one household and carries through to others.

Girls taught to shine but never outshine their brothers; taught to be the childbearing crucibles of household warmth; taught to make food and present it just right; to do well at school but have the showmanship of cake-baking trumpeted over academic prowess.

When I was growing up in Pakistan in the nineties, there were far too many television serials

attesting to the difficult and problematic relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, given that both were competing for the attentions of the man they loved. Why must it always be about pitting women against each other? Especially how infrequent the "catfights" are among men which are termed "competitive behaviour" or "male aggression". Aggression, it would appear, is strictly correlated with testosterone. We seem to be rooted in the same barbaric tradition that existed in pre-Islamic Arabia, of burying our daughters and elevating our sons. I cannot speak to how many female infants are buried alive in our rural areas, but the urban approach is no less barbaric. Girls taught to shine, but never outshine their brothers; taught to be the childbearing crucibles of household warmth; taught to make food and present it just right; to do well at school but have the showmanship of cake-baking trumpeted over academic prowess.

When women allow for their sons to be shown preferential treatment at the expense of their daughters, an entire generation of economic security, not to mention intellectual and emotional welfare, goes right out the window. We may talk ourselves to death about the pervasiveness and sheer disgustingness of the "male gaze", but we as women have allowed the culture to perpetuate by treating the men in our lives like gods. These are the husbands and fathers of tomorrow and how they treat their wives and daughters falls equally on the men and women who birthed them and the parent who raised them. Teach your sons to honour their wives and the whole patriarchy is thrown on its head; teach your daughters that they are only as ambitious as how high their arm goes and you curtail their boundless enthusiasm, creating the stereotypes so many of us are trying to break through. It doesn't help when men stomp around the world like it's their oyster, leer at women, make passes at women, all the while knowing that they won't get their due.

In 'Everyday Sexism', author Laura Bates, who uses testimonials from girls and women across the world including Pakistan, notes (in a strikingly similar way to Nigerian writer Adichie whose quote starts this piece), "*It feels a bit like a punch in the stomach every time I read an Everyday Sexism entry about girls being told, unequivocally, at such a young age, that they are somehow by definition inferior to their male peers. Marked out – sometimes even at their very moment of success – as if they're somehow defective on the basis of sex alone.*"



*Artwork by Andrew Purchin*

“Girls taught to shine but never outshine their brothers; taught to be the childbearing crucibles of household warmth; taught to make food and present it just right; to do well at school but have the showmanship of cake-baking trumpeted over academic prowess.”

So this isn't just a problem that men perpetuate; they parrot the world that society's created for them and the women who ultimately live with them. In an earlier editorial, I wondered why the burden of marrying and procreating must always fall on the woman, such that if there's a party that must give up and compromise, the automatic assumption is always that it will be the woman. If she chooses to do neither, "there must be something wrong with her", but in the case of a man, "he's just playing the field." The term "womanizer" and "slut" refer to the same thing in scathingly different terms (the term "man-whore" is no better; why not just call the man a whore? Why must it be so undeniably gendered?). And somehow, especially when it comes to domestic abuse, the burden to compromise and "keep the house intact" almost always falls on the woman. If she cheats on you, she's a bitch and you should leave her. If he cheats on you, well... he's a man. They're sexual beings. What can you expect?

Because sex is such an underrepresented topic in Pakistan, rape (and other forms of sexual assault), sexual harassment and domestic abuse are

almost always blamed on the victim, who is almost always a woman. Because "she must have deserved it", or "she must have said something to provoke him", or "did you see what she was wearing? Serves her right." Serves. Her. Right. As though a man's natural state is a rapist; anything with breasts and a vagina qualifies. But rape and sexual assault aren't the only forms of sex in the country; because of the pervasive need to not talk about the subject openly, teens as young as 14 – awakening as they are to their own sexuality and all these newfound "urges" – are discovering sex and pursuing it. Bring it to the attention of their parents and, in the case of boys, you'll get one of two responses:

"*mera baita aisi harkaton main multila nahi hai*"<sup>3</sup> or "*larka hai*",<sup>4</sup> but in the case of the pristinely clean girls where such an act is the definition of a stained reputation, there are instances of terminated pregnancies, parents kicking them out of the house, and in some cases, honour killings etc. As though there weren't two people in the room; as though it's okay for men to "experiment" and want a "zero-meter" wife.

What is the equivalent term for stripping a woman of her ability to exist as an individual, on her own merit, quite apart from who she married or who "sired" her? Where is the term that defines "don't venture too far, lest you wound your man's ego"?

It's important to bring this devastatingly misogynist and sexist culture into the drawing rooms of society, supplanting the ever permanent discussions of politics and religious discourse, two themes sewn into the lifeblood of Pakistan. How we treat women and how they are perceived in society are sadly closely intertwined with how they see themselves. We must teach young girls the power of ambition, something they have in droves as children – ask any five year-old girl what she wants to be and I doubt you'll get "housewife" as an answer. These are protocols we imprint on them as they grow older, reminding them to never dip a toe out "too far". Adichie writes, "*We say to girls, You can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful but not too successful, otherwise you will threaten the man. If you are the breadwinner in your relationship, pretend that you are not, especially in public, otherwise you will emasculate him.*" Emasculate: "[to] deprive (a man) of his male role or identity". Just what is a "male role"? And what is the equivalent term for women? What is the equivalent term for stripping a woman of her ability to exist as an individual, on her own merit, quite apart from who she married or who "sired" her? Where is the term that defines "don't venture too far, lest you wound your man's ego"?

What are we so afraid will happen if women are given access to the same resources as a man and the same words of encouragement? We teach this to our children, to the generation that stands to break past our insufferable prejudices that are dutifully weighing down our society and preventing true reform. In my day job, I've travelled to Pakistan's remote villages and there are an alarming number of women who are working as teachers in schools or ploughing the fields and who are, for all intents and purposes, the reasons their households are running so smoothly both financially and civically. But when it comes to spending, their unambitious men are aces, and lord over the existences of their wives, daughters, mothers and sisters. And this culture has been allowed to persist in urban society just as much as it has in "backwater places".

The move to change status quo has to start from somewhere, but perhaps the best place to start is by asking young girls and young women what *they* want and to not bring a media culture that myopically defines what toys are "for" boys and which ones are "for" girls; that bombards them with ideals of impossible perfection to "land"... not a job, but a man (I'm sure there are far more 'How to Get Your Dream Guy' books than there are 'How to

Get Your Dream Girl' ones); and that raises girls up on a steady diet of "princess" stories just waiting to land their "prince", into our homes. Start from treating your children, sisters, mothers, other women in your lives with respect, merely as human beings and watch a society transform.

This change in mentality is a long-term investment in the emotional futures of the generations that follow; there needs to be some measure of honesty; some tempered expectation of what a woman's future can look like if she was treated like a human being. Educating boys especially on what both men *and* women go through on a daily basis, and encouraging girls to be more affirmative and assertive at home builds the environment required for women to be seen as independent individuals, not hanging on to the words of the men in their lives, being actively involved in social discourse, and working just as hard to effect change.

I'll conclude with a quote Google tells me is from Lebanese philosopher (and former President of the United Nations General Assembly) Charles Malik: "The fastest way to change society is to mobilize the women of the world." What else is there left to say?



Maryam Piracha  
Islamabad, Pakistan

#### Endnotes

Ngozi Adichie, Chimamanda, 'We Should All Be Feminists'; *Fourth Estate*, 2014

Kasana, Mehreen, 'A Woman of War'; *The Nation*, March 3, 2015

Translated from Urdu: "My son isn't involved in such activities."

Translated from Urdu: "He is a boy."



*Artwork by Andrew Purchin*

## THIS HOUSE IS AN AFRICAN HOUSE

This House is an African House  
This house is an African house.  
This your body is an African woman's body.  
This your vagina is an African woman's vagina.  
All three, you keep clean, you hear?  
Otherwise I will wash you out  
with bleach, scrub between your legs  
with a scouring pad, then I will take your body  
and clean the house with it.  
At eleven years old I didn't want a woman's body.  
I was sure my friends didn't have vaginas  
and I wanted to be just like them.  
They weren't from Africa either.

~ Kadija Sesay

# UNMASKING FEMALE CIRCUMCISION

*“This is what they fought for. Will we keep fighting too?”*

By Gimel Samera

Years ago, a high school friend delivered a rousing speech on women’s rights to an education to a class of mildly interested girls. In some countries, she said, girls of our age group, who had the desire to learn, were denied the privilege simply because their futures waited for them in the kitchen. Looking back, I don’t know how many of us were affected by her monologue but I do know that I still ask myself that same question. *Will we keep fighting too?* We’ve come far but there’s still a long way to go. My mother likes to remind me of the privileges that women have now, which were not available to the generations that preceded them. What were once dreams to women have become our reality. In the same way, our dreams, if we choose to fight for them, will determine the future of the next generation. But of course, the fight never truly ends. There’s always another brick wall to break down.

While some of us have some semblance of freedom to live lives on our own terms, there still remain a large percentage of women who are fighting to break free from archaic traditions. One such tradition is Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), an issue that many in the West have never had to think about beyond the occasional uproar over male circumcision prescribed in both Islam and Judaism. The recent practices on women in Tanzania, however, have thrown the issue wide open. It is a practice that occurs with unknowable frequency in different parts of the world.

For those unaware, FGM — otherwise known as female circumcision — is a centuries-old procedure that involves the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, and is mostly performed on young girls between infancy and age 15. According to statistical reports published by UNICEF, more than 125 million girls and women alive in the world today have undergone female circumcision, a twisted rite of passage commonly practiced in some rural regions in Africa, Asia and the Middle East to appease cultural, religious and social norms.

Though the origins of the practice are unknown, many medical historians believe that FGM dates back to at least 2,000 years. In ancient Egypt, it was customary for both sexes, once they were at a marriageable age, to undergo the cutting ritual to differentiate them amongst the



*Hands of Master by Iryina Lialko*

**“ The consequences of FGM are irreversible and long term, because it damages healthy tissues and interferes with the natural function of the female body. ”**

aristocracy. For others, the reasons are far more severe. In 1799, the English explorer William Browne wrote about the Egyptians infibulating (one of four major types of FGM) their slaves to prevent pregnancy. Gynaecologists in 19th-century Europe and the U.S. would remove the clitoris of female patients as a method of treating insanity and curing nymphomania. It was only recently, in December 1993, that the United Nations General Assembly included FGM in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, passing legislation to prohibit the continued practice of female genital mutilation in more than 33 countries.

Yes, the rise of anti-FGM campaigns and organizations, like the Rural Women Peace Link and the Desert Flower Foundation, saw to the decline in numbers of circumcised girls. However, many still believe that FGM is a medical necessity, but FGM has no health benefits for girls or women whatsoever. The procedure is brutal and dangerous, causing severe pain to the patient. As demonstrated by a Kenyan circumciser in an interview conducted by the *Guardian*, the cutting of the clitoris is like pulling grass out from the ground.

In rural villages where FGM is encouraged, girls eagerly anticipate the day when they will be allowed to attend “Tum”, what they refer to as the ceremony of circumcision. In an article for the *Guardian*,

anti-FGM campaigner Domtila Chesang recounts the day she witnessed her cousin being cut:

*“Six other women pinned her down, holding her head, hands, legs, with one sitting on her chest, overpowering her completely, with more than 10 other women watching while singing. The cutter, with her homemade curved knife, was bending over her. When all of my cousin’s genitals were out, there nothing left but red, bare flesh, I realized something was terribly wrong. My cousin lay naked and screaming on the ground. She was to stay in a secluded place for a month with her legs tied together to help her close up the wound, leaving a tiny hole and achieving a new shape altogether. All this for the sake of a rite of passage and transition from childhood to adulthood.”*

Homemade curved knives are just one example of the crude tools that practitioners use. Some utilize thorns, threads, broken glass or razor blades. Apart from some medical centres that administer this “service” with a little more professionalism, anaesthesia is mostly a foreign concept. In fact, the pain plays a pivotal role for it proves that the girl is strong if she endures it. The consequences of FGM are irreversible and long term, because it damages healthy tissues and interferes with the natural function of the female body. In time, the girls will suffer from excruciating pain, increased risk of

childbirth complications, infertility, haemorrhage, bacterial infection, and urine retention.

There are many reasons why FGM is encouraged among communities. Often motivated by beliefs about what is considered proper sexual behaviour, it ensures a girl’s premarital virginity and marital fidelity. It is believed that cutting off parts of the female genitalia will reduce a woman’s libido, which therefore helps her resist “illicit” sexual acts. As if the male species were any less capable of instigating sexual infidelity. The truth is this “belief” points to a deeper problem: they think they are entitled to control women’s bodies. In his book *‘Of Virgins and Martyrs: Women and Sexuality in Global Conflict’*, sociologist David Jacobson writes, *“who owns and control’s one’s body, especially when it comes to women: is it the individual herself or the community, through enforced practices of honor, virginity, veiling, and marriage?”*

From a cultural context, the practice is dictated by traditions, playing with the ideal of femininity and modesty. In addition, many doctors and midwives in poor countries benefit from the financial boost that their services provide, even if it is at the cost of the lives of young girls. The price for defying tradition is thought to be far more severe than a lifetime of suffering. An uncircumcised woman is looked down upon. Her failure to comply has brought her shame. She is not considered fit for marriage because she has not made the transition from child to adult,[xi] which is brought on by FGM.

According to Chesang, the practice prevails today because of the lack of awareness being raised in communities. Men and women alike should be taught that female circumcision is a direct violation of the human rights of girls and women, not to mention children. It disregards them of their rights to health, security and physical integrity. In addition, female genital mutilation, as stated by the World Health Organization (WHO), *“reflects a deep-rooted inequality between the sexes and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women.”* When Jaha Dukureh, activist and FGM survivor, spoke at a press conference on Engaging Health Workers to End Female Genital Mutilation, she wasn’t just speaking to a crowd of journalists; she was speaking to both women and men, attesting to the cruel realities and dangers that a large percentage of the female population is still experiencing. When I read about these girls, I think of my younger sisters and I am immediately overcome with the need to protect them. Can we do the same for them? Will we keep fighting too? As long as female genital mutilation exists, as long as it remains unchallenged, these women are not whole and intact.

*Gimel Samera is an articles editor for the magazine.*



*Leading Lines & Single Moment by Steve Perrault*

## PROPERTY OF A SORCERESS

*For a woman in northwestern Cameroon who wanted her own farm*

She dropped her walking stick, clutched  
at a cornstalk. A coffee bush cushioned her fall.  
She died under mango trees, under kola nut  
and avocado trees, her nose pressed to their roots,  
her hands buried in dead leaves, her thin legs  
spread out like palm oil in a hot pan.

The trees she loved were not her own.  
The townspeople called her a sorceress,  
a cunning second wife who used witchcraft  
to take her husband's land away  
from the children of his first wife — rightful inheritors  
of their father's coffee farm. The trees went to them

when she died. But they did not know what to do  
with the things she called her own:  
her blackened pot; a sack of rice;  
yams, potatoes, earth clinging to their skins;  
a blunt machete with worn-out handle; bolts of new cloth;  
gifts from her children, dresses she never wore  
because she did not go far

except to watch over the farm surrounding  
her husband's cluster of rooms.

The day she died, they found  
firewood burning beneath  
a stew of beans, onions, and palm oil.  
They saw the gray of wood smoke, restless and circling

inside her windowless kitchen,  
sliding its way down the mud walls, out through the door  
and into the farm to find her — their farm where she fell  
like a ridge of some new soil  
and planted herself into the smell  
of eucalyptus leaves.

*~ Viola Allo*



# SKETCHES OF MY MOTHER

By Chika Unigwe

1.

I missed my mother. This missing was not an abstract, distant thing, flitting in and out of my mind, but a palpable object, an exaggerated Adam's apple which threatened to choke me every time I swallowed. It had crept up on me sometime in my first year abroad, a slight ball of wool that bothered me now and then, but by my third year it had become this unbearable burden. When a colleague suggested to me that I might be homesick, I told her not to be silly, it was not homesickness that weighed on me but my mother's absence in my life.

I was 24 when I left home for the first time. Unlike many of the girls I went to primary school with, I had not gone on to boarding school even though I had passed the entrance examination to one of the top secondary schools in the country. I enrolled in a school which had proximity to home to recommend it. When it was time to go to university, I also applied to a university which was a taxi ride away from home. It was the cheaper alternative for my mother, and therefore the only practical one. Most people swear that daughters and mothers cannot live together for so long without suffocating each other. With my mother and me, it was the opposite. We were two identical hands on one stomach. Almost.

I begged my mother to come and live with me. I called her at least once a week. I promised her a rest from days of sitting in the sun selling pepper and tomatoes to customers determined to pay the least amount possible for them. I had a good job now. It was my responsibility to ease her life. After all her hard work, she could begin to reap the benefits, spend her days in my air-conditioned home and rest her feet on a side table in my living room. My wanting her to come was not just me being selfish. It was me wanting to tear her away from the heat, and the poor power supply and the mosquitoes and the water scarcity and the overwhelming dust she had to deal with on a daily basis. Problems I could not ease by just sending her money every month.

I was at the airport a full hour before her flight was scheduled to arrive. I drank endless cups of coffee while I waited. The first thing I noticed when I saw her was this: she looked startled. It reminded me of my own wide-eyed wonder three years ago at the gleaming smoothness of the airport floor. And then I noticed that this woman with her wig covering an eye looked nothing like the mother I remembered. She looked older. Unkempt. Ordinary. Not a hint of redness on her lips.

The mother of my memories was elegant. She would not step out of the house without her trademark red lipstick and perfect hair. She did not walk with slow steps as this stranger did. This was not the mother who told me that no matter how hard life got, a woman owed it to herself to dress well. The



“The mother of my memories was elegant. She did not walk with slow steps as this stranger did.”

mother, who despite the poverty my father's death and his brothers' greed had driven us to, always managed to look glamorous.

It took her a while to notice me. I waved, she waved back, her face breaking into a smile. And then I walked up to her. She smelled the same. At least that had not changed. I held her and soaked in her scent the way I did as a child when I woke up from a nightmare of her being killed in a car accident, the way my father was. I fought the urge to reach out and straighten her wig. I hugged her and the familiar warmth of her dissolved whatever embarrassment I felt at her deterioration.

“You look tired,” I said, taking over the trolley she was pushing.

“I have not slept in twenty four hours.”

“Why not? I especially booked a night flight for you so you'd be well rested.”

“I could not sleep on the plane. I haven't seen my own daughter in three years, was I going to risk missing my stop?”

My mother had never been on an airplane but I had not thought that she would think that planes operated like the buses she took from Nsukka to Lagos, making pit stops along the road, and if one slept through their stop, they were carried back to their destination. Although I wanted to laugh, I was consoled in thinking that perhaps her aging was temporary, that once she had rested she would be back to the woman I remembered. She held my hand in both of hers and I knew that she too had missed me.

2.

My mother's startled look stayed put throughout the first week of her arrival. They lighted upon my doorknobs (shiny); my TV (big); the rug (soft, soft like a baby blanket); the fruit basket (these bananas look plastic. You say they are real?). At the end of the first week, she set them on me (this house is too quiet. How come you never have visitors? Have you no friends?)

“Of course I do!”

“So how come they do not come here?”

“Because everyone's busy.”

“Doing?”

“Working.”

She clucked her teeth against her tongue the same way she did when I told her at 16 that the boy she had caught me with was just a classmate. While I was out at work, my mother divided her time between cooking and watching TV. My house smelled of my childhood: okra soup and jollof rice; yam pottage and beans. I could close my eyes and be the precarious eight year old on her father's knees while her mother dished out food in deep, porcelain bowls. Not even those bowls had survived my uncles' greedy hands. The car was the first to go.

The 504 Peugeot in which we had driven to church on Sunday mornings. Uncle Justus, my father's older brother laid claim to that. As he did the sofas, the TV and finally the house. My tenth birthday was spent helping my mother set up what was left of our belongings in a one-room apartment, smaller than the bedroom she and my father had shared only the year before. In that one room, she entertained my friends and hers. Once a month she hosted six women from her Christian Mothers Group. On those days, they sat on the veranda, and kept me awake with their laughter.

“This is like being back home”

“What is?”

“The smell of all the home food you're cooking.”

My mother said nothing. In her eyes I saw the startled look get wider. Then she clucked her teeth against her tongue.

3.

Five weeks into her stay, she complained that she was running out of foodstuff. Was there anywhere we could replenish her stock from? My mother had come with bags of ground egusi and dried bitterleaf; ground crayfish and smoked fish. I told her I had not imagined that customs would let her through with so much food. She said nobody checked her.

“Why did you bring so much food?” I asked the day she arrived.

“I was not sure I could stomach whatever it was you ate here. One does not learn a new dance in old age.”

4.

The day I took my mother to Farmers' Market was the first day I heard her laugh. It struck me that I had not realized before then that I had not heard her laugh since she came. She had smiled. She had complimented but she had not laughed. At Farmers' Market that day, she picked up a guava, pinched it, smelt it, laughed and threw it in the shopping trolley. At that moment, I realized that even though I had been unaware of it, I had dragged her around the city —taking her to museums and malls— especially to dazzle her into letting out that laughter of hers that made my father's death easier to bear. In her first week with me, I took her to the Georgia Aquarium where we caught a dolphin show and she wondered aloud how an animal that looked so dumb could be as intelligent as to dance in sync with humans. She wondered about how much water the aquarium contained, asked if we were single handedly supporting the place when I told her her how much — at her insistence — our tickets had cost. She had gone with me from one part of the

“ *The day my father died, I came back from school to find my mother wailing and rolling on our veranda the same way she was doing now.* ”

aquarium to the other but nothing had elicited the hint of a laugh. I did not see in her eyes, the same enthusiasm that had been in mine the first time I went to the aquarium.

When we got home from Farmers' Market, my mother sang as she cooked. Back in Nsukka, her singing would have been substituted with chatting with the neighbours. I remember thinking as a teenager who liked to spend time alone that the only time my mother was ever truly alone was when she was in the bathroom. She sought company. If nobody came to visit, she went and visited them. As a first year psychology student at the university, I was certain that my father's death caused my mother to suffer from fear of being left alone. Once I asked her about it, she said that the world was made to be enjoyed in company.

My mother's laughter lasted exactly two months. It was a generous, capacious laughter that accommodated even the most ridiculous: Judge Judy's tight smile on daytime TV (this Judge woman looks like she's being forced to smile with a lemon in her mouth. Ha! Ha! Ha!) the Geico advert with a pig on a date (a pig with a beautiful woman? You know our people have a saying that the beauty of a man is his wealth? Ha! Ha! Ha!) The fact that in this country, you did not just turn up at people's doorsteps. You were expected to make an appointment (Ha! Ha! Ha!) And then, just as it had descended upon my house, the laughter vanished. As did her voice. She no longer spoke to me. No longer asked if I had no friends. No longer marveled at all the shiny, new things my home had to offer. When we took rides, she no longer said anything of the size of the roads (wide! Does it not scare you, driving on such wide roads?) The house became a tomb of silence, too sturdily built for me to saw into with my own voice. My mother looked sad, and this her sadness permeated the house so that it seemed as if too was in mourning. The entire house, from the door knobs which no longer seemed to have the lustre my mother had so admired, to the smell of her cooking which constantly — regardless of what she cooked — smelled of the incense burned in the church the day my father's funeral. Often I asked her what was wrong. Each time she told me it was nothing. The sadness wound itself around my ankles

so that I lost the quick strides that earned me the nickname, 'The Running One', in primary school. For the first time, I began to wish that I had never asked her to come. This was not how I had imagined us living together.

5.

One day I came back from work and my mother was sobbing and rolling on the floor of the living room. The day my father died, I came back from school to find my mother wailing and rolling on our veranda the same way she was doing now. I had buried that image but now excavated, it hit me with a ferocity that it had not as an eight year old. At eight, as much as I loved my father and missed him, my grief was borrowed from my mother's. Now, I felt the full force of that grief. I opened my mouth and it snaked into the pit of my stomach, clutched it tight and came out in a bellowing sound I did not at first realize as mine. That day when my father died, my mother was not left alone on the veranda to cry. About four friends of hers were there, standing over her like guardian angels, crying with her. She had never been without friends. In that we differed. I found it difficult to form attachments. I spoke to colleagues at work but never invited anyone home for a coffee. Perhaps what I missed was not so much my mother but the company of someone who could act as a friend.

I rolled close to my mother and held her tight. I held her until we both stopped crying. She got up, wiped her eyes and went into her bedroom. I did not follow. I did not ask what was wrong. I knew. I sat at my computer and bought her a return ticket to her familiar life.

*'Sketches of my Mother' previously appeared in Mslexia, and is republished here with permission from the author.*

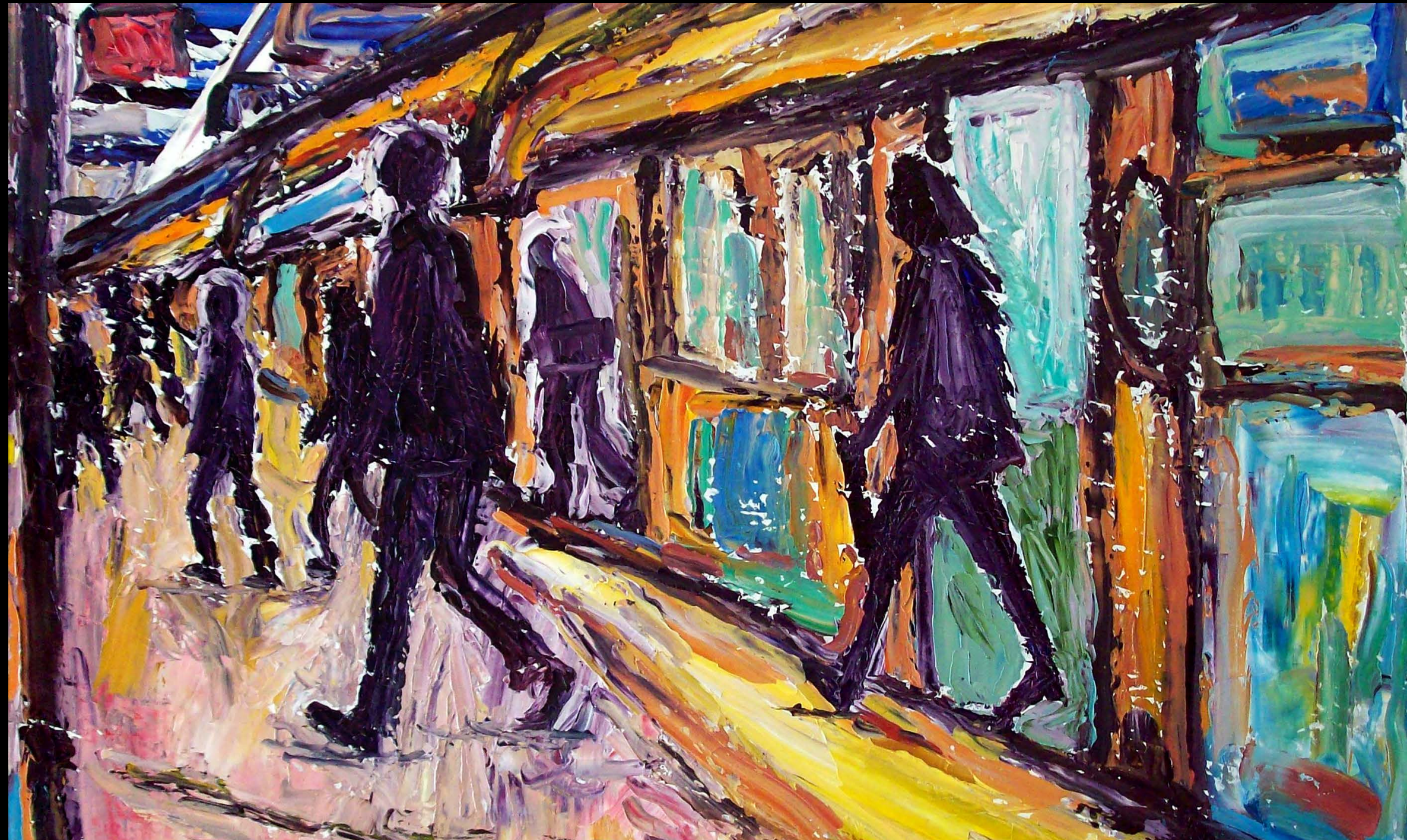
# NOT JUST A PHASE

*A look at violence against bisexuals*

By Aaron Grierson

Bisexuality, as succinctly defined by Shanghai Pride, “is the capacity for emotional, romantic, and/or physical attraction to more than one sex or gender. A bisexual orientation speaks to the potential for, but not requirement of, involvement with more than one sex/gender.” [i] While this is a rather broad definition and may apply to an unknowing majority of the world’s population, it is interesting to note that, at least as far as self-identified bisexuals go in the United States, it would seem that most self-identifying bisexuals are women. Men are more likely to be either gay or straight, according to the report *‘Bisexual Invisibility: Impacts and Recommendations’*, issued by the San Francisco Human Rights Commission’s LGBT Advisory Committee. [ii] This report concludes that bisexuals (in the United States) face widespread discrimination, even from their non-heterosexual peers. [iii] Extensive studies indicate that bisexuality is something the courts not only won’t consider, but will essentially sweep under the rug in order to keep the status quo in a binary stasis. [iv] In general, we seem to like classifying things, objects and people into neat categories, and bisexuality blurs more than one line. We have a clean, if somewhat unwanted, divide in hetero/homosexuality. While this is a passive form of discrimination, it is nevertheless capable of causing social rifts between groups of already marginalised people, as well as potentially debilitating stress on one’s self-image. Before taking a look at the victim’s mindset, however, we must take a look at the instigator’s mentality, and why they might not even be aware that they are discriminating against their brethren.

The term “monosexism” is as much an orientation as it is a social ideology. Categorically speaking, monosexism exists, even within the LGBTQ+ community as a sort of an unspoken mindset which can lead to several assumptions, especially pertaining to bisexuals. Perhaps the most immediately harmful of these assumptions is how bisexuals are only bisexuals while single, and are then expected to identify as gay or straight when coupled with the same or opposite gender. [v] In other words, people are passively deconstructing bisexuality as a way of being, pushing it off in the rather childish sense of it “just being a phase”. Consider that 15% of adult students (i.e., students above the age of 18 in post-secondary institutions), in a survey conducted by the University of Pittsburgh “had serious doubts about bisexuality being a legitimate sexual



*Seattle transit train commuters arriving at station by Allen Forrest*

orientation.” [vi] In other words, educated people are helping enforce a mentality that begins for many in their high school years.

I admit that during these years in my own life I was guilty of a number of things: not least among these is thinking poorly of bisexuals. At the time, I felt that a lot my peers claimed to be bisexual less because they actually were and more because they liked the attention this could generate. And maybe, just maybe, I saw this behaviour primarily in females. Before recoiling in disgust at my presumptive judgement, consider that studies have been done to show at least some substantial proof of this trend. [vii] I think it is worth pointing out the sort of insecurities people often develop during

these years, especially pertaining to their physical value and self-worth. Where those insecurities exist, fear perpetuates.

Though a cliché, it is nevertheless accurate to say that most people fear the unknown. But what happens when the “unknown” manifests itself in your sexual partner, an admitted bisexual, and while you don’t doubt their affections, there is a nagging fear in the back of your mind that one day they will just up and leave you for someone of the opposite gender? Even the most confident of individuals can be afflicted by such fears. Those who are closest to us are often the biggest threats in the sense that they can most easily cause us the largest amount of turmoil.

Fear can lead to violence, and violence doesn’t need to be the schoolyard bullying and brawling some of us might remember all too clearly from our youth. Rather, violence occurs in the workplace, and, perhaps more heartbreakingly, in the home. In fact, bisexuals have the highest rate of sexual assault acted against them, including rape, than gay or straight people, at least in America, as a 2010 study by the CDC (Centre of Disease Control & Prevention) found. [viii] This includes bisexual males, and more often than not, as far as reported incidents go, the assault is enacted by a sexual partner. [ix] The CDC’s report breaks down by percentage for different groups (gay, bisexual and straight), but focuses explicitly on sexually-related violence. In areas where



Bay area figurative revisited james weeks two musicians  
by Allen Forrest

there is insufficient information, the report states as much. A substantial number of sexual assaults are perpetrated by members of the same sex for each category, though men were most often indicated as the instigators.[x] However, this does not mean that even at a glance women are innocent of abuse. Quite the opposite, in fact, as the Huffington Post found, via a video posted online. Using the video as a base, they conducted a series of interviews concerning the topic of why, if at all, lesbians dislike bi-women. The answers vary, but the opinions seem to go beyond choice of preference, right into abusive territory, and certainly help solidify the idea that at least one rift exists in the LGBTQ+ community.[xi] Meanwhile,

in the workplace, a person can practically be forced out of their job by discrimination, taking numerous days off for fear of their physical safety and mental wellbeing. These factors are only partially in the hands of the individual. We all have our limits, and often need guidance or other assistance once we reach those limits. In an ideal world, everyone would have a family doctor, or “general practitioner” that they could refer to in such situations. This is the case in countries such as Canada where doctors are often more freely available, and certainly in America if you can afford it.

Unfortunately, the pain train doesn’t end with intentional abuse for bisexuals. Instead, it continues

right through the doctor’s office. Things do not start out well, as it seems that a sizable number of bisexuals remain closeted, so the doctor is probably getting incomplete information, especially pertaining to their sex life.[xii] As a result, important factors may be missed. Although this might not impact an individual, or several individuals, it is indicative of a greater problem: the inability of healthcare systems to properly deal with a full range of sexual realities, even if the patient is a doctor himself.[xiii] This is amidst higher mental health problems, suicide rates and higher rates of HIV as well.[xiv] And even more dangerously, bisexuals are being grouped together with homosexuals, despite their drastically different psychological distress levels.[xv] Each of these factors is further complicated by matters of ethnicity and social status, as health care is generally privatized in America and thus not always affordable for those in lower income brackets.

Each of the studies mentioned make a series of recommendations that health care providers should take serious note of. Largely speaking, this is simply a matter of being aware and informed of the differences between bisexuals, homosexuals, and heterosexuals, as each one is essentially its own. That, and people need to stop being so phobic, since it is inevitably the attitudes of other people that trigger an individual’s mental stress.[xvi] Visibility is of the utmost importance – institutions that serve bisexuals need to advertise, because not everyone knows about them. And the hospitals and clinics need to know how to distinguish between sexual orientation and gender identity, due to the impacts it can have on a person and collecting the correct data about their personal history, as well as how they publicly identify themselves.[xvii] It may also come as a relief to hear that, at least in some states in America, members of the LGBTQ+ community are legally protected not only from discrimination at work, but also when it comes to housing and public accommodations, such as restaurants.[xviii] While this is a small percentage of the world, it sets a precedent both in how it is progressive and how it has sparked contention over LGBTQ+ rights in a country known for being rather conservative and mono-religious. That said, if in the coming years there is even one country where legal rights are firmly established, we’ve taken a small step towards equality.

It is difficult, when you are not part of a community, to see what happens within it. It may also be extremely difficult to come out of a community and reveal truths about how you’ve been mistreated due to your sexual identity. The struggle for social acceptance is a long, hard road, but it is not something that can be accomplished in isolation by the victimized. Rather, the instigators need to pause and rethink why they pour such hate on their fellow

human beings. We might think that something is just a phase, and perhaps for a minority it is. For the rest, it is a gift we are cursing them for.

Aaron Grierson is a Senior Articles Editor for the magazine.

#### Endnotes

[i] “ShanghaiPRIDE Presents Queer Talks #2: Bisexual Invisibility: Impacts and Recommendations.” *Shanghai Pride*, 7 Apr, 2015.

[ii] *San Francisco Human Rights Commission, LGBT Advisory Committee. “Bisexual Invisibility: Impacts and Recommendations”, March 2011.*

[iii] *Ibid.*

[iv] Yoshino, Kenji. “The Epistemic Contract of Bisexual Erasure.” *Stanford Law Review* 52.2 (2000): 367.

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[vi] *Bisexual Men And Women Face Stigma, Prejudice, Discrimination In LGBT Community (University Herald RSS).*

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[viii] Walters, M.L., Chen J., & Breiding, M.J. (2013). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation.* Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[ix] *Movement Advancement Project. Understanding Issues Facing Bisexual Americans. Denver: LGBTMAP, 2014.*

[x] *Ibid.*

[xi] “Is There A Rift Between Lesbians And Bi Women?” *HuffPost Live, The Huffington Post*, 19 Sept. 2013.

[xii] *San Francisco Human Rights Commission, LGBT Advisory Committee. “Bisexual Invisibility: Impacts and Recommendations.” March 2011.*

[xiii] *Movement Advancement Project. Understanding Issues Facing Bisexual Americans. Denver: LGBTMAP, 2014.*

[xiv] *Ibid.*

[xv] *San Francisco Human Rights Commission, LGBT Advisory Committee. “Bisexual Invisibility: Impacts and Recommendations.” March 2011.*

[xvi] *Ibid.*

[xvii] *Movement Advancement Project. Understanding Issues Facing Bisexual Americans. Denver: LGBTMAP, 2014.*

[xviii] Chokshi, Niraj. “Where the LGBT Community Is Explicitly Protected from Discrimination, in 3 Maps.” *The Washington Post*, 30 March 2015.

# TRANSGENDERED

Lagos is a chronicle of liquid geographies  
Swimming on every tongue it lands with tales  
Of how it disowned the parentage of loneliness  
So that her every cranny is the heritage of noise

The virgin now a woman was once a desired myth  
The very old one reverses into an ideated antonym  
Lagos is a Gemini—one is old the other is new  
Lagos is the old laughing at the new, and its tide of frowns

New Lagos is a resentful stranger haggling pace  
A place which would try to make a whore a virgin  
For imagination is not an artist's birth right  
It is determined by leaders who rebirth nostalgia

New Lagos is the future flirting with the past  
The fast-forward land, city, and the woman  
Whose adopted children call the land: mother?  
With a short memo: this Lagos is our Lagos—not

This Lagos is our Lagos—not, and not at all  
For every space is not for sale until owned by vagabonds  
This city is a myth of geography: Lagoons and land  
All who see shall know: Lagos is a raped woman

New Lagos is a cinema of clampdowns that shouts:  
This city has changed and can no longer be raped  
This city is ready to rape anyone standing akimbo  
No car no leg no arm no face no eye: this is Lagos

~ *Jumoke Verissimo*



*Artwork by Andrew Purchin*



*Artwork by Andrew Purchin*

# BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

By Amma Darko

1962. Jofri, a young man from Ghana is on scholarship to study at the (then) renowned Textiles Institute in the small (West) German town of Lauterbach. He and a fellow student, the pretty, young German woman Ursula, meet and fall in love. They marry after their studies, settle in Ghana and have twin girls. The marriage falls apart. Ursula flees back to Germany. Their twin girls live their first eleven years with their father in Ghana and thereafter join their mother in (West) Germany.

“ Ursula spotted the three black students immediately. Everyone did. They could not be missed because they kept to themselves and apart from the rest. ”

After the Prologue, the story moves to 1999. An old, retired, sick and dying Jofri seeks to reconnect with his estranged ex-wife and twin daughters. The younger of the twins, Ania, is travelling to Ghana to grant Jofri this wish. Ursula, (Mutti), and the older twin Nadia, refused to. All three are in Ania's apartment in Hamburg. Ania is packing for the trip. The atmosphere is tense...

(from Chapter 27)

The students, old and new, were assembled in the auditorium, waiting for the School Director. Ursula spotted the three black students immediately. Everyone did. They could not be missed because they kept to themselves and apart from the rest. They could have come from America or Britain or France, but everyone knew they were Africans because they were already aware that a group of African students, sponsored by their various governments, had enrolled in the school under a special program with the West German government to receive training in various aspects of the textiles industry. Several of the German students, who had never set eyes on

a black person before, stared at the three Africans in awe. Ursula didn't stare. She was only four when it happened: the episode with the Black American soldier who stormed their doorsteps in Wiesbaden. Certain incidents in life entrenched themselves in one's memory, no matter how young one was at the time. Ursula went on to encounter many more Black American soldiers after the war, but this was the first time she had seen Africans; so, while she didn't stare, she stole glances. Blacks though both black Americans and Africans were, it seemed to her that there was something peculiar in the demeanor of the Africans. The black Americans were second hand Africans. They had been Americanized. The three Africans were the real thing, the raw ones — and who hadn't heard of all those wild, weird stories about Africa? How did they make it to Germany anyway? Wasn't Lauterbach too cold for them?

“Beats me,” one genuinely shocked female student remarked to another.

“And look at them!” said her friend, “They look almost the same.”

“Except for that one,” the first observed. “Take a good look at his face,” she quietly urged her friend. “Be careful; don't let them see you staring.”

The friend did. Her eyes widened. She scowled. “What is that?” she hushed bewildered. “Where did all the scars on his face come from? Someone scratched him badly. Did he get into a fight?”

At this point, as if on cue, the auditorium door opened and in he walked — tall, dark and with a face full of enigmas — and he was wearing the biggest and brightest of smiles as if he owned the sun. He strode to the front, ran his eyes through the gathering and, spotting the three fellow Africans, started towards them. It wasn't only Ursula's attention he gained. Others were also staring and whispering; but, for Ursula, instant panic gripped her. The sight of him caused great agitation inside her chest. Her heart stopped a fraction of a second and resumed beating again; he walked in a certain manner; somewhat roundish. Her eyes were glued to his back like a magnet as, predictably, he made his way towards the other three to join them. Ursula's eyes remained transfixed on the tall and good-looking African student number four. Her stare was intense. She didn't bother to be discreet. It was so focused that her thoughts communicated clear and direct to his mind because of all the faces turned in their direction and the many eyes fixed on them; he instinctively turned his head slightly and, in the midst of the large and amorphous gathering, sought her face.



Indigo meditation by Iryna Lialko

The brief eye contact was deep and fierce. Each left the other affected. It was intense. It was confusing. Still huddled together with the other three African students, Jofri turned his head to where he earlier met the eye of the young and pretty blond student. She didn't look back in his direction even though in a strange way, Jofri felt convinced she had sensed his eyes on her.....

The four Africans were all in the weaving class, three Ghanaians — Jofri included — and the one Nigerian with the finely incised facial tribal marks misconstrued as scars. Going by their names, one would have thought that the other two Ghanaians besides Jofri were English: William and David. The name of the Nigerian however was long and complex.....

The School Director unceremoniously shortened it to Obu; and it was Obu who broached the issue several weeks into the semester, having made a lengthy observation.

“Ah, ah, you Jofri, my brother, why, is it that you are refusing to see or that you cannot see? Are you blind or are you a coward who is afraid of white women? Why are you wasting everybody’s time eh, ah, ah?”

William and David giggled helplessly. Jofri pretended not to have the slightest idea about what Obu was hinting at. That irritated Obu gravely. “Jofri,” he charged, “Do you mean to say you haven’t noticed, eh, ah, ah?”

“Noticed what?” Jofri feigned.

Obu placed a hand on his hips; wiggled his upper body; struck an exaggerated feminine pose and imitating a poorly managed high pitched female voice, gushed with a flick of his eyelids, “Jofri, can I borrow your.....eh.....head? Jofri, can I borrow your.....eh.....nose? Jofri, can you show me this and that? Always creating opportunities to be near you and you are telling me you haven’t noticed eh, ah, ah?”

(from Chapter 28)

“My brother, so how are you planning to attire yourself?”

Jofri pretended that he had no idea at all what Obu was talking about. “Attire myself for what?” he asked.

“Ah, ah, the carnival, what else; your two countrymen with those silly English names should undoubtedly dress like the colonial masters to match their ridiculous mode of identification; Master David....hey- haw! Master William....hey-haw!” imitating the posture of an imaginary arrogant colonialist and pulling an imaginary moustache and beard to complete the act.

Jofri roared with laughter.

“So how are you dressing?” Obu asked again.

Jofri shrugged, “I haven’t yet decided,” he replied.

“Ah, ah, as for me, my brother, I’ll dress like my village chief.”

“Here in West Germany?”

“Yes! Ah, ah....”

“You brought some of the attire worn by your village chief in the hot Nigerian sun all the way here to wear in chilly Lauterbach?”

“Ah, ah, of course not....”

“Then how do you intend to dress like your village chief, Obu?” Jofri asked with a little laugh.

“Anyhow, my brother, ah, ah; I’ll put on this and put on that and say that is how my village chief dresses. Who can challenge me? Who knows how my village chief dresses except me?”

“You think that will make your village chief proud?” Jofri feigned seriousness.

“You think I should worry about that?” Obu replied, making a funny face, “My brother, ah, ah, he is in Nigeria and I am here in West Germany. Have you forgotten?”

Both of them broke into laughter. Then Obu ceased laughing abruptly and said, “By the way....”

“What?” Jofri snapped.

“If by the time of the carnival you are still wasting time, I’ll ask her to dance with me.”

“All right,” Jofri replied casually.

Obu flipped out. “My brother, ah, ah, did you hear what I said?”

“Of course...!”

“Ah, ah...and?”

“I said, all right!”

“Eh, all right you said? My brother, ah, ah, you mean I can dance with her?” Jofri’s apparent calmness astounded Obu.

Jofri chuckled. “If she will dance with you,” he replied.

*Editor’s note: This excerpt from ‘Between Two Worlds’ (Sub-Saharan Publishers, Accra, 2015), appears with permission from the author.*

## TALKING GENDER

*A linguistic bias against women.*

*By Sana Fatima Hussain*

In Urdu, the colloquial word for rape is *ziyadti*. When translated, *ziyadti karna* is defined in the Oxford Urdu-English Dictionary under three heads: “1. Use force, show high-handedness 2. Exceed limits 3. To rape.” The everyday use of the word extends to describing an unfair act or an injustice done to an individual. So the meaning of this one word covers something as trivial as stealing a parking spot to rape. *Ismat dari* and *izzat lootna* are also words that are used to describe rape. While more purposeful than *ziyadti*, these words take away male agency from rape, and reassign the focus from the perpetrator to the victim. In contrast, English includes the word “rape” to explicitly define the crime of forcing another person to have sexual intercourse with the offender against their will. Yet, recently, the use of rape as a verb that describes a plethora of actions, ranging from defeat or victory in a sporting event, performance in a test or even being overcharged in the market, has become disturbingly common. The word has now been modified to a tech-friendly, on-trend variant, “frape”; casually thrown

around on Facebook timelines and comments to indicate that someone has been tricked and/or humiliated by a prank by one of their friends on the social media website.

These examples of the implications of the word “rape” are meant to contextualise how language reinforces negative attitudes towards women, often normalising and sometimes aggrandising them. The fact that a word used to describe a horrifically violent act is also used for other inconsequential things that are in no way comparable to rape, reflects a society’s desensitised attitude towards the issue itself. It also shows how the act is considered something that is inherently linked to a woman’s honour, shifting the burden from the rapist to their victim(s). When seemingly decent people make jokes linking masculinity, dominance and superiority to the vile act of rape, and express pride over it, they don’t realize that the language they are using not only trivializes the trauma, horror and pain of rape victims and survivors, but also makes them culpable in promoting rape culture. In fact it is often through the uninformed use of such words that language becomes a tool in perpetuating sexism and violence against women in society.

Simone de Beauvoir’s well-known opening line to Book 2 of *The Second Sex* [i], “*One is not born, but rather becomes a woman*”, is also indicative of how society constructs acceptable and unacceptable ideals of womanhood and femininity; which are then systematically reinforced throughout their lives by various means including language. Language, as a medium of social interaction and expression, not only reflecting the biases and prejudices ingrained in a culture, but also limits thought in terms of roles and norms related to gender. An article by Stephanie Pappas titled ‘*Gendered grammar linked to global sexism*’ cites a study conducted by researcher Jennifer Prewitt-Freilino and her colleagues, which finds that when presented with gender neutral pronouns like “they” or in languages where a single gender neutral pronoun is used for “he” and “she”, people automatically assume that those being referred to are men and not women. This is the result of years of conditioning, which begins as soon as children start to learn language. They are taught early on that “man” and “mankind” refer to the whole of the human race and that when talking about a person whose sex is not identified, he/him/his is used. A blog piece titled ‘*One giant leap for language*’ puts forward an interesting hypothesis on what language may have been used if it had been



*Ascension in the seventh space by Iryna Lialko*

women instead of men who had made that fateful landing on the moon. Would it have been “*the first womanned Moon landing*”; would the inscription on Nixon’s plaque have read “*Here women from the planet Earth first set foot upon the Moon, July 1969 AD. We came in peace for all womankind*”; and would the much quoted line be “*one small step for a woman, one giant leap for womankind*”? The answer of course is no; because in language, as in every other walk of life, mankind is representative of the human civilization as a whole, whereas womankind is just that.

The same is true for words and titles that signify power, dominance and superiority. Because society typically thinks of these qualities as being inherently

gender stereotypes to women. Michael Sainato in ‘*Sexism in the Dictionary*’ says that “*Modern dictionaries have incorporated sexism into several stereotypically feminine negative terms [...] There is rampant use of female-specific nouns used in example sentences that perpetuate the negative connotations in language that are inferred by traditional sexism*”. He gives the example of the Oxford Pocket Dictionary and the free online Merriam Webster Dictionary, where definitions of words and example sentences of their usage are blatantly sexist. He cites the word “impressionable” as an instance, which has been explained through the sentence “a girl of eighteen is highly impressionable”. Similarly, feeble, coy and naïve are explained through multiple

“ When seemingly decent people make jokes linking masculinity, dominance and superiority to the vile act of rape, and express pride over it, they don’t realize that the language they are using not only trivializes the trauma, horror and pain of rape victims and survivors... ”

masculine, in sentences such as “The president addressed the nation” or “The party leader’s service to the country will always be remembered with high praise”, it is a foregone conclusion that the people being referred to are men. Language also reinforces our socially constructed assumptions with titles like chairman, fireman and policeman instead of chairperson, firefighter and police officer. When referring to a woman who occupies a position of power or has a job “in a male-dominated field”, the need is often felt to add a disclaimer like “lady” doctor, “lady” reporter, “woman” pilot, and actress, to serve as a reminder that women typically do not belong in such professions, which is why in this rare occurrence their gender must be emphasised along with their professional titles.

Not only does language discriminate against women by portraying them as “Others” in positive, important roles, it also attributes words and phrases with negative connotations or those that promote

examples having both male and female subjects, but only the one attributing these traits to women are uncomplimentary and condescending. It is also interesting to note that in true patriarchal fashion, words with pejorative connotations for women either portray them as sexual objects or as weak, powerless, and subservient creatures.

It is a fact that the use of language mirrors social mores and values. Using language that is sexist and insensitive towards women is a reflection of the patriarchal values that we all imbibe living in society, affecting women both on a personal, day-to-day level, and on a collective, large-scale level. These values are reinforced when a boy is chastised with “you throw like a girl”, or a girl is admonished for being bossy, pushy or a nag. The firing of Jill Abramson, executive director of the *New York Times*, ostensibly because she was “brusque”, “pushy” and “mercurial”, is a perfect example of how language upholds the bias that society harbours



*Birds fly to the sun by Iryna Lialko*

against women. All the qualifiers that were used to describe Abramson’s “*arbitrary decision-making, a failure to consult and bring colleagues with her, inadequate communication and the public mistreatment of colleagues*” would never be used for any of her male colleagues. In fact, when speaking about the same traits in a man, the media would most likely describe him as a direct, authoritative, no nonsense kind of guy. Kat Lister, in her article ‘*Who cares if Jill Abramson was bossy?*’, comments on this double standard and women’s disadvantaged position at work, in language and in the media by saying that “*Try and forget the pay discrepancy story for a moment and simply concentrate on language and the expectations women placate to exert authority with one foot stepped back. Jill Abramson’s story shows us all what happens when a woman throws her ball like a man. She gets knocked out of the game altogether. She’s told it’s her fault... Assertive? Yes, but never aggressive. Commanding? Certainly, but always with a smile. Behave too professionally and you’re an ice queen, show too much emotion and you’re unstable*”.

Unfortunately, narratives about women, whether it be women in politics, women at work, homemakers, victims and survivors of rape, or women in the entertainment industry, are all insidiously and categorically sexist. And the bias is present all across; from Urdu newspapers with bylines that read “lady reporter”, to British newspapers carrying headlines, “mother of three poised to lead the BBC”. For anyone sensitised to

gender and language, it has become very clear while observing and participating in everyday discourse that language marginalises, stereotypes and belittles women. It reasserts the systemic prejudices that are ingrained in patriarchal society, and is often also used to rationalise misogyny. While it is true that gendered modifications in language alone will not end patriarchy, it would be a start. A much needed start that will, at the very least, force language users to confront their own biases and see how they are reflected in the everyday usage of language. Or, to quote Sheryl Sandberg [ii], it may also prompt one to reconsider calling a little girl “bossy”, and say instead “*that she has executive leadership skills*”.

*Sana Fatima Hussain is a Features Editor for the magazine and in her work, explores the relationship between literature and the social causalities it represents.*

#### Endnotes

[i] De Beauvoir, Simone, ‘*The Second Sex*’; Vintage Books, 1989

[ii] Sandberg, Sheryl, ‘*Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*’; A.A. Knopf, 2013



## A DRY SEASON DOCTOR IN WEST AFRICA

Little girl, small *pikin*, abandons her friends and a game of hopscotch, runs *quick-quick* through dirt-swept streets, bounds barefoot over littered paper and plastic, runs to her father with her itchy toes.

Papa sits on a low, wood stool, contemplating young soccer players on a nearby field, village athletes whose feet beat air into the dirt. Wagging tongues of lace-less shoes lap up grains of sand, imitate small whirlwinds from the Sahel.

An old woman in a green caftan peers into an empty well, lowers a bucket into it all the same, waits to hear it hit the water table rock. Behind her, a waiting line coils around and chokes a baobab for shade.

The girl finds her father on his cement front porch, feet turned out and chin in hand. She holds her foot up like a fist, shakes it in his face, twists his ear with a scream. *Take it out! Now-now! It scratches.*

He commands her to fetch a bottle of alcohol and two big cotton balls. *Go to Mama's sewing kit, bring me the silver needle with the fire-blackened tip*, he says. He ducks into the kitchen for the carton of matches with a picture of a boxer on it.

They assemble their tools on the porch. Papa studies her toes in the light of a harmattan-hooded sun, his corn-and-cotton-farm-worn hands function like mechanical clamps for her foot, his dented fingernails go to work for his daughter.

Her hands clasp his khaki-clad shoulder, his calluses tickle her arch. *Ai! he says. Little lady, wife of so-and-so, your husband won't be happy, if you live with a half-eaten toe.*

She presses her toes together. *I will never marry, she says. Jamais dans cette vie! Where can I find a man like you?* She shakes her foot. *Hold still*, he says. *And I hope you didn't scratch it.*

He steadies needle to toe, needle to toe, squints with the wrinkled concentration of a sun-baked archaeologist, gently excavates the devil beneath her skin. It takes him a while, the better part of an hour, to finish the job.

He doesn't want to burst the white sack and send out an invisible trickle of greedy eggs. This parasite could be a mother with vampire babies to feed. He digs around, does not disturb this flesh-eating creature.

With the little girl's skin peeled back in needle-cut strips, he scoops out the milky jigger, a maggot with a black full-stop dot of a head. He places it on a cotton ball, strikes a match. *I want to see, please!* She watches the jigger writhe on its fiery deathbed.

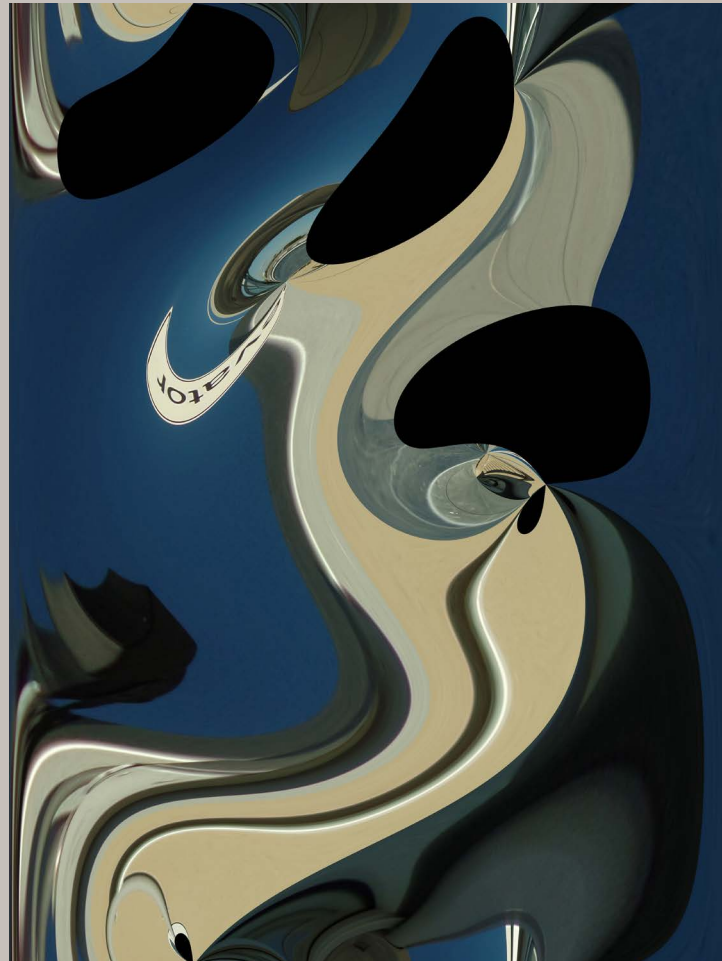
Papa slides the needle through a new flame, sterile. He presses alcohol-soaked cotton over the crater in her little toe. It burns. She feels clean. But, for days, trouble stirs in her foot.

The itching grows. Always, she runs to him. And sighs, in passing, for the girl who has no father. She fetches the tools—needle, matchbox, alcohol, and cotton balls—and goes in search of him.

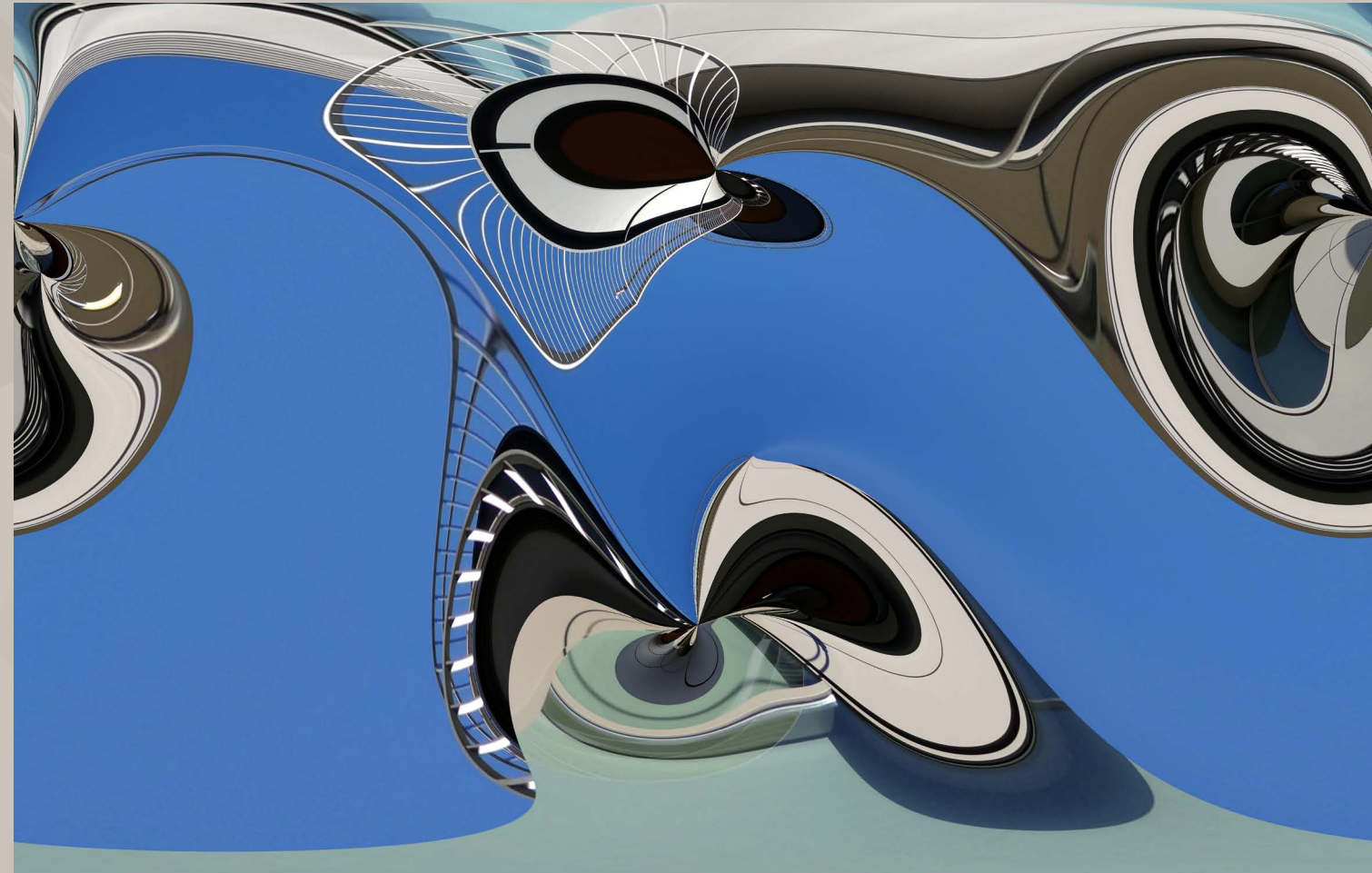
He is her dry season doctor who cures her the best he can. He holds her toes, spreads them like rust-colored coins in his hands. Helps her learn and remember what love must look like.

He is her dry season doctor and she makes the most of him.

~ Viola Allo



Land Shark by Tobias Oggenfuss



Organic Staircase by Tobias Oggenfuss

# THE BIRTH OF BIGOTRY

*The psychology of bigotry demands that we are each our own moral police.*

By Maria Amir

Often when one thinks about it, the idea of prejudice seems rather simplistic. Most of us are inclined to dismiss “other people” as prejudiced or bigoted based on an intrinsic binary each of us carry that indicates how “good” we are; and by good I am alluding to a number of modifiers “moral”, “clever”, “liked”, “successful” – it’s astonishingly fluid, this definition of “good”, when one thinks about it. Then again, so few of us ever think about it. Prejudice, in nearly every incarnation, is something that is cultivated and perpetuated by other people on even more “other” people.

The “I” is never prejudiced.  
The “we” almost never.  
The “us” occasionally.  
The “them” always.

There is a meme making the rounds on the Internet these days, one of those classic, hackneyed humanist memes that tends to resurface every time the human race is being particularly brutal to itself. The meme shows a baby staring into a camera and bears the caption “this baby does not hate anyone, please don’t teach it to”. I am always struck by how simple the idea of ‘not hating’ sounds but how it is anything but easy in practice. For the case in question, it is quite macabre – using the image of a baby to introduce a maxim on the birth of bigotry. The fact is, babies are raised by people, in places, with certain philosophies; each faction will multiply into a personality, and each personality will be a composite of values, and those values will begin with prejudice. After all, the human race has not yet found itself capable of defining a version of “good” that does not simultaneously include denoting what is “bad”.

It sort of begs the age-old



*Swing by Weldon Sandusky*

question “why can’t we all just get along?” It appears we can’t and history and experience suggest that we won’t. One of the reasons prejudice survives and thrives is that, as social creatures with the ability to reason, human beings rely on classifications to build structures. We ground ourselves in space and time by aligning with a gender, race, religion, cast, creed, country, colour, language, art, policy, ethic and power. It is how we tell our stories because a universal “human” story would just be too big and too complex and ironically “too simple” to be compelling if there weren’t points of conflict and dissonance. After all, doesn’t every great story thrive on conflict?

“ There is some measure of scapegoating that inevitably takes place when one places religion over rights and an ideal over human lives. ”

Psychological research on prejudice first emerged in the 1920s and was based upon American and European race theories that attempted to prove “White” superiority. At the time, on reviewing 73 studies on race and intelligence, an influential 1925 Psychological Bulletin article [1] concluded that the “studies taken seemed to indicate the mental superiority of the white race.” In light of medical, anthropological, and psychological studies purporting to demonstrate the superiority of white people, many social scientists viewed prejudice as a natural response to “backward” races. This perspective changed in the 1930s and 1940s as civil rights movements began to take root to challenge colonialism and anti-Semitism. But in some ways it grounded how we continue to view prejudice as being primarily rooted in race even today. There are many forms of prejudice but some part of our universal ethic grounds it in racism. This may be one of the reasons why modern variations of this phenomenon like “Islamophobia” are often grounded in race debates rather than religion debates. The words “that’s racist” has ethical appeal to underpin issues marking prejudice, even when those prejudices may be about ethical considerations themselves. This is also where many of the ideological pitfalls of “multiculturalism” are often located. There is some measure of scapegoating that inevitably takes place when one places religion over rights and an ideal over human lives. Then again, the debate of who gets to decide which cultures demand scrutiny and

along what lines is often prejudiced in and of itself. So there is really no escaping some incarnations of prejudice.

It is hard to identify at what precise juncture prejudice is perpetuated; some claim it starts at birth, others that it begins to take root with how one is socialised. And yet there is another dimension to prejudice, it operates differently on an individual level and a collective level. If enough people validate it, it can and often is incorporated into ethical frameworks – religions, philosophies, laws. After all, nearly everything that is considered prejudiced today was once considered acceptable, if not downright moral at some point in history, and who’s to say the variables in play right now won’t shift to form future prejudices?

However, one thing becomes clear in emerging and archived narratives on prejudice and bigotry – the real battle lies somewhere between the juncture where fact becomes fiction and when statistics start to converge into stories. The former grounds a narrative into rationale and the latter into the realms of romance. Most of our prejudices are rooted in some romantic notion of morality, we eulogise and glorify these acts for “the greater good”, bearing out the notion that curbing things we don’t like in the now serves a glorious overarching purpose. Human beings need to have “reasons” behind what they do. Doing the “right thing” is never enough unless there is some glory – personal or public – to accompany the act. This is where our morality is underpinned, not just in the face of ‘right’ but in the stories that can be told about it. This is why the science of prejudice can never completely be disassociated from the story of prejudice. The whys must always be grounded in a complex concoction of familiarity rather than mere facts and figures.

Carl Sagan said “The truth may be puzzling. It may take some work to grapple with. It may be counterintuitive. It may contradict deeply held prejudices. It may not be consonant with what we desperately want to be true. But our preferences do not determine what’s true.” [2] It’s a beautiful sentiment, noble and direct, but socially speaking, very hard to translate. “Accepting the truth” is very different from “telling the truth” in our collective consciousness. This grounding of truths is complicated when people need to find a way to rationalise them to their liking – and we all rationalise truths we don’t like.

Perhaps this is the point at which prejudice is born?

According to Georg Christoph Lichtenberg [3], “Prejudices are so to speak the mechanical instincts of men: through their prejudices they do without any effort many things they would find too difficult to think through to the point of resolving to do them.”

Hereafter, there is free reign for a spark of bigotry to take flight and prosper. As Voltaire held, “Men will commit atrocities as long as they believe absurdities” and by the strictures set out by Sagan, most things out of the realm of provable truths are some form of absurdity. Some absurdities are idealistic, romantic and naïve in the best way possible, and others are vile and dogmatic, but neither form “truths”.

The most standard incarnation of prejudice involves “Us versus Them” formations that begin the moment most of us start to compartmentalise. It is perhaps somewhat telling then that human education is founded on the act of compartmentalising both information and experience. Having an “Us” and a “Them” is a fundamental part of how we recognise ourselves.

Gordon Allport first explored this relationship between prejudice and categorical thinking in his seminal work ‘The Nature of Prejudice’ [4] While recognising the emotional, social, economic and historic dimensions of prejudice, Allport also proposed that it was an outgrowth of normal human

There is also a “natural” juncture where such prejudice into broad classifications often pushes people to assimilate. This is an intriguing and crucial consequence of categories: distortion and assimilation. Most individuals will try to minimise the difference within the categories they have been ascribed and this leads to “assimilation”, a rare few will try and exaggerate them leading to “contrasts” or distortions. Assimilation and contrast effects have been observed in a wide variety of domains from race and language to gender and art. Most research shows that differences within a group will tend to be minimised while differences between groups will be exaggerated. By this premise, any divergence within an “us” group will be painted over or consoled away, while points of difference with “them” groups will be highlighted and often expounded. Ray Davis once said that “People who insist on dividing the world into ‘us’ and ‘them’ never contemplate that they may be someone else’s ‘them’.” This phenomenon is being illustrated widely in Hollywood’s recent obsession with dystopias. A spate of films such as *The Hunger*

of Maslow’s meagre hierarchy of “needs” to a far more fundamentalist hierarchy of “wants”.

There are many who say that human beings, on aggregate, are becoming more moral. Much of this is down to industrialisation, globalisation and to a broader extent survival. And yet, we have not managed to transverse our collective prejudice. We have made efforts, however, but seem to be struggling with the follow through. This may well boil down to a case of practice versus principle. The preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights underpins our modern human “principles” with the following words:

“Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people. Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law.”

Again, sounds so fundamentally simple, doesn’t it? Simple to understand and anything but easy to do given that the parameters of prejudice — whether subtle or sadistic — always qualify these words into hierarchies when it comes to practice. In practice, we universally acknowledge that it is harder to un-teach prejudice than to teach it. Yet, while most of us accept this truth, many still ground their morality and on the premise of excluding people rather than including them. Our “Us” is nearly always an exclusive club rather than a free membership global gift.

In his novel ‘The Stand’ [6], Stephen King describes the birth of bigotry in these words:

“Show me a man or a woman alone and I’ll show you a saint. Give me two and they’ll fall in love. Give me three and they’ll invent the charming thing we call ‘society’. Give me four and they’ll build a pyramid. Give me five and they’ll make one an outcast. Give me six and they’ll reinvent prejudice.



*Deaf by Weldon Sandusky*

Give me seven and in seven years they’ll reinvent warfare. Man may have been made in the image of God, but human society was made in the image of His opposite number, and is always trying to get back home.”

We generally try to paint our own compartments as moral, ennobling our bigotry against the larger, more pervasive “others” trying to attack our life choices. King, who knows a thing or two about the macabre, suggests that the process by which most of us construct our goodness and our gods may be taking the wrong way home.

Maria Amir is a contributing editor to the magazine and previously served as the magazine’s Features Editor.

#### Endnotes

- [1] Garth, T. R. (1925). ‘A review of racial psychology’. *Psychological Bulletin*, 22,343-364.
- [2] Sagan, Carl, ‘Wonder and Skepticism’. *Skeptical Enquirer*, 1995.
- [3] G.C. (Georg Christoph) Lichtenberg, “Notebook A,” aph. 17, ‘Aphorisms (written 1765-1799)’, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale, 1990.
- [4] Allport, G. W, ‘The Nature of Prejudice’, Basic Books, 1979.
- [5] Orwell, George, ‘Animal Farm’, New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co, 1946.
- [6] King, Stephen, ‘The Stand’, New York: Doubleday, 1978.

“ We are all conditioned and trained to see through only one side of the telescope, looking out, never in. ”

function by saying, “The human mind must think with the aid of categories... once formed, categories are the basis for normal prejudgment. We cannot possibly avoid this process. Orderly living depends on it.” This is the reason why even though social categories form an indispensable part of human thought, they are open to approximation because of markers such as race, sex and age; all of which form a sort of continuum and are therefore the bedrock of social labelling.

This is the problem with binaries; they are inherent in concept formation but almost never pan out in fact-finding missions. Even seemingly clear cut binaries such as “Day and Night” and “Land and Sea” on closer examination have degrees of variance and instances of overlap. Tentative boundaries always exist but they are confusing and often blurry. This is why the variances and shades seldom survive when summarised for the benefit of an audience. Narratives of prejudice are built on summaries and oversimplifications: good / bad, wrong / right, more / less, big / small, powerful / weak, moral / immoral and the constant underpinning lens is always us / them.

Games series and the *Divergent* series marketed at young adults highlight the demerits of group think and assimilation. The rebel is now being fetishised, even if only for profit rather than any kind of ethical grounding.

This leads us along another segue, how many of us ever stop to think who considers us to be a “them”? We are all conditioned and trained to see through only one side of the telescope, looking out, never in. Much of why this is natural for us rests in questions of power. Human beings, like other animals, have hierarchies and as Orwell would have it, “Some animals are more equal than others.” [5] Power is the pivot to why we seem to have been unable to genuinely sustain a world without overt prejudice.

After all, even if it is impossible to eliminate all categories, it should certainly be conceivable to eliminate the ostensibly cruel ones like racism, sexism and war. And yet what is so hard to conceive of today is that most narratives that centre on global peace and prosperity are often universally regarded as naïve. Today’s rational narrative is economic and inevitably grounds itself beyond the purview

# THE WAY OF MEAT

By Nana Ekua Brew-Hammond

We knew what they wanted by their accents. If we heard Mexico or Guatemala in their English, they wanted the babies. If we heard India or Pakistan, they were there for the one-year-olds. Jamaica: the bucks would jerk, dragging their feet to the end. Ghana, Nigeria, or Senegal—same as the Americans: the cries would rise from every corner of every pen.

Most of us were born and bred in south Jersey, but we couldn't help but pick up a little culture on the farms. There isn't a goat in the tri-state doesn't know the Tasmia or Shahda, or what "*what agwan*" means; not a nanny or a billy whose ear isn't attuned to the difference between the tentative Ghanaian cadence, the direct Nigerian brogue, and the seductive Senegalese drawl.

“Every day—any day—any one of us could be picked out for any reason, and we would be. The accents would come, standing just outside the pen, pointing; then the farmhand would come in. We'd part like hair, pushing into the walls of our containment area...”

We knew the relevant national independence days, culture-specific celebrations, annual food festivals, and the religious holidays too. Eid-al-Fitr. Eid-al-Adha. Easter. Christmas. Pentecost Sunday. The Annunciation.

Among the regulars, we watched out for big life changes. If we saw an engagement ring, the *behs* would abound—traditional weddings, and increasingly, hipster nuptials called for a goat. When pregnant buyers would come, we would groan—an outdoor or naming celebration was imminent, complete with a roasted kid. If an adolescent Ghanaian girl trooped in with her parents, it was 50/50 she would pick one of us out for her dipo puberty ceremony. Gray hair, too, was a death knell.

Every day—any day—any one of us could be picked out for any reason, and we would be.

The accents would come, standing just outside the pen, pointing; then the farmhand would come in. We'd part like hair, pushing into the walls of our containment area, then alternately cry, call, or sigh when he wrestled his pick off the floor.

"*Not him!*" a mother would sob, almost halfheartedly, for her wethered boy, the real wailing having happened when the wethering had been done in the first place. Every goat knows a castrated male is condemned to go the way of meat.

"*Not me!*" the eunuch would beg.

Relieved we'd been passed over, the rest of us would coo "*It'll be alright,*" even as we all heard the prayers, watched the blood spurt and dribble, smelled the burning hair, and listened to the mechanized spray of water that preceded the hacking.

For the most part, I was content with my lot in life. I had had the fortune of living all my years on the farm I'd been born on, and by the same providence, I was designated a breeder.

A breeder is the safest position a male can occupy on a farm. Bucks are considered hard to control, even when they can't smell a doe in heat; but breeders are responsible for siring half the herd—an integral part of the farm's economy. To prevent the deformities associated with incest, there can only be one or two male breeders on an average-sized farm; whoever that is, is the alpha of the herd.

On the totem of status, the breeder falls just under the angora goats, which get fed and brushed all day, and just above the dairies. (A dairy would dispute this fact, I'm sure, but you tell me if you would rather mate or have your udder squeezed raw twice a day, every day.)

Even on my high perch, I remained aware that one day, perhaps when I was nine or 10, I would start to age out of breeding. My kids would begin dying early or start exhibiting abnormalities: Distorted faces with one eye, or three horns, no nose, six legs. Thereafter, a younger buck would be brought in from another farm, and that would be the meat of me.

I hoped, when that happened, a discerning accent would bypass the tender kids for the well-earned flavor of my long and aged loin. When my time came, I intended to go without the requisite theatrics. I would stand still and stoic under the executioner's knife, content to let the hysterical dirge of the nannies and kids usher me into the afterlife.

But this was not the way it was to be for me.

The season preceding my last one on the farm, I was at the height of my powers. I was six years

## SHOOTS

Sapling legs bend smoothly, power foot in place,  
her back, parallel to solid ground,  
makes her torso a table of support.

*"Es yusef na me back; I ge fo carry yu, me pikin."*

I'm unconvinced – my thick calves dangle;  
heavy breasts squashed-up against the shoulders  
of her five-foot one-and-a half inch frame.

Her thinned breasts, ridged, matured,  
hang like sappos from a tree  
as they droop, dried.

Forward leaning, her torso supports  
my legs for one – less than one – minute,  
me, afraid our bonding may break her,

but her drive leg is ready to spring back, as I slide  
off,

now knowing it is Granny's legs each  
time I'm ready to take off when I'm on my marks  
to get ready, get set, and go!

~ Kadija Sesay

old, carrying the grain-fed weight of 225 muscular pounds, and my does had produced 50 kids without blemish. There were more than enough bucklings to sell for meat, with some left to chemically castrate for teasing, and there were a preponderance of girls that would be bred when they came of age the following year. But the season passed with less traffic.

The accents came, but not in their numbers. This was initially good news to us. Less traffic in the pen, meant life for us. What we didn't realize at the time, though, was that life meant death for us. A different farm would have been able to weather a slight dip in business, but the unexpected loss came at a time when finances were stretched thin. After 42 years in operation, management had made the reasonable decision to replace the fencing and buy some ultrasound machines. They were slowly downsizing the dairy business to focus on the less labor-intensive meat breeding. They invested

in tightening the property's security after a few bucks had vanished, and used the new ultrasound machines to take better care of the pregnant does and build budgets against the number of kids the does would have per season.

These were intelligent measures, but, as anyone on a farm knows, everything is subject to providence.

To cover the shortfall, management started selling some of the babies. Usually, about six weeks after the kids are born, they are separated from their mothers into neighboring pens to be weaned; the cries are almost louder than when the farmhand comes in for a kill. But that spring, instead of moving the kids next door, the hands packed them onto trucks, never to be seen again. My nannies lowed with bitterness into the night for weeks, and they didn't forget.

“ I had lived my whole life on this farm and didn't know anywhere or anything else. Where would I flee? How would I eat? Who would I be if I wasn't a breeder? ”

When the next mating season came, the does had seemingly conspired not to reproduce. I tucked my nose in each nanny's undercarriage, as usual, but they gave me no heat. They were cold as winter. All of them. Under the circumstances, my own interest was minimal.

In seasons past, my owners had had to force me to eat when it was time to mate, but now I had to be goaded into performing. "You're not so different from me, are you?" the sterile teaser buck they brought into my pen taunted.

I did what I could, but breeding is a business of passions; when it isn't there, it isn't there, and so there were less kids.

The season passed, the trucks came again, and, this time, the hand's lasso became my noose. I used the size I had put on that year grazing instead of grunting after does to protest. I dragged my

hooves and bucked at the farmhand. I could hear encouragement from the pen and it girded my resolve as I squalled louder and louder.

I felt the rope loosening, and, then, suddenly I was free. I was outside my pen, not to eat or mate, and for the moment I was not under the clear control of any hand but my own. I knew I would be caught, but I didn't want to be sold to an unknown fate, and I didn't feel I deserved to be. After all my seasons of reliable service, all the bucks and does I had produced, management owed me a better send-off than this. So I ran.

I was not a young buck anymore, and, again, I had put on weight, but I was moving fast. As I gained a solid distance, I looked back and saw the hands standing, arms akimbo. They were letting me go. I began to panic. I had lived my whole life on this farm and didn't know anywhere or anything else.

Where would I flee? How would I eat? Who would I be if I wasn't a breeder?

I started to turn around, to surrender myself to the fate of having someone else answer these existential questions. I was not my own. I was chattel. Property. I have always known my place, and that has been my peace of mind.

Before I could stop myself, just give up and give in, the fence stopped me. My snout slipped through the links as if it had been measured for it. Instantly, my jaw went slack, and I panicked as a shaking numbness raced from my head to my hooves. Profoundly dazed, I buckled to the ground, all 240 pounds of me heaped on my side and trembling.

The farmhands approached me with slow but purposeful strides commending the effectiveness of the new fencing. In my electric stupor, I watched myself get tagged, lifted, and carried between them onto the back of the truck of no return.

There were three other goats in the truck: A nearly expired nanny expanding and contracting with sleep, a three-legged buckling leaning against the wall of the truck to peer out the window, an angora that was foaming at the mouth, and me. I didn't ask them where we might be going, and they didn't volunteer any guesses. Respectively making peace with our impending doom, we ignored each other.

For more than an hour we rode. Stopping. Starting. More animals coming on. Some animals being taken off. And then it was my turn.

The door opened. A cacophony of noises assaulted my ears. Wheezing buses. Squeaking sneakers. Human laughter. Raised voices. And an accent I recognized:

*"Eighty-tree! Eighty-tree! Eighty-tree! Q4!"*

Jamaica.

A hand, disembodied by the sunlight, reached into the truck, looped a rope around my neck, and yanked me down. Because I didn't resist as he expected, we both tumbled to the ground from the force.

I averted my eyes from my fellow captives, as I waited for the hand to regain his footing and take me away. I could see the judgment in their narrowed gazes. *Goats resist*; that is our supposed nature. But what could I be, but me?

The hand was grabbing hold of my rope as I watched a woman shout, *"Eighty-three?"* The driver

of the passenger van across the street was nodding confirmation and starting his engine when the ancient doe that had slept the whole ride leapt to life.

Fast as any horse, she galloped into the incoming traffic. The van shrieked to a stop, as she disappeared into the black void of a pedestrian tunnel. I heard Jamaica, Trinidad, Haiti, and America in the expletives that flew. *"Rattid!" "Mudda!" "Koulangyet!" "Fuck outta here—you saw that goat!"*

As the hand scrambled after her, the other goats seized their chance. The truck driver alighted, trying to help wrangle the escapees. He caught one, but the angora didn't make it across the street. I had to look away from the blood curdling his curls.

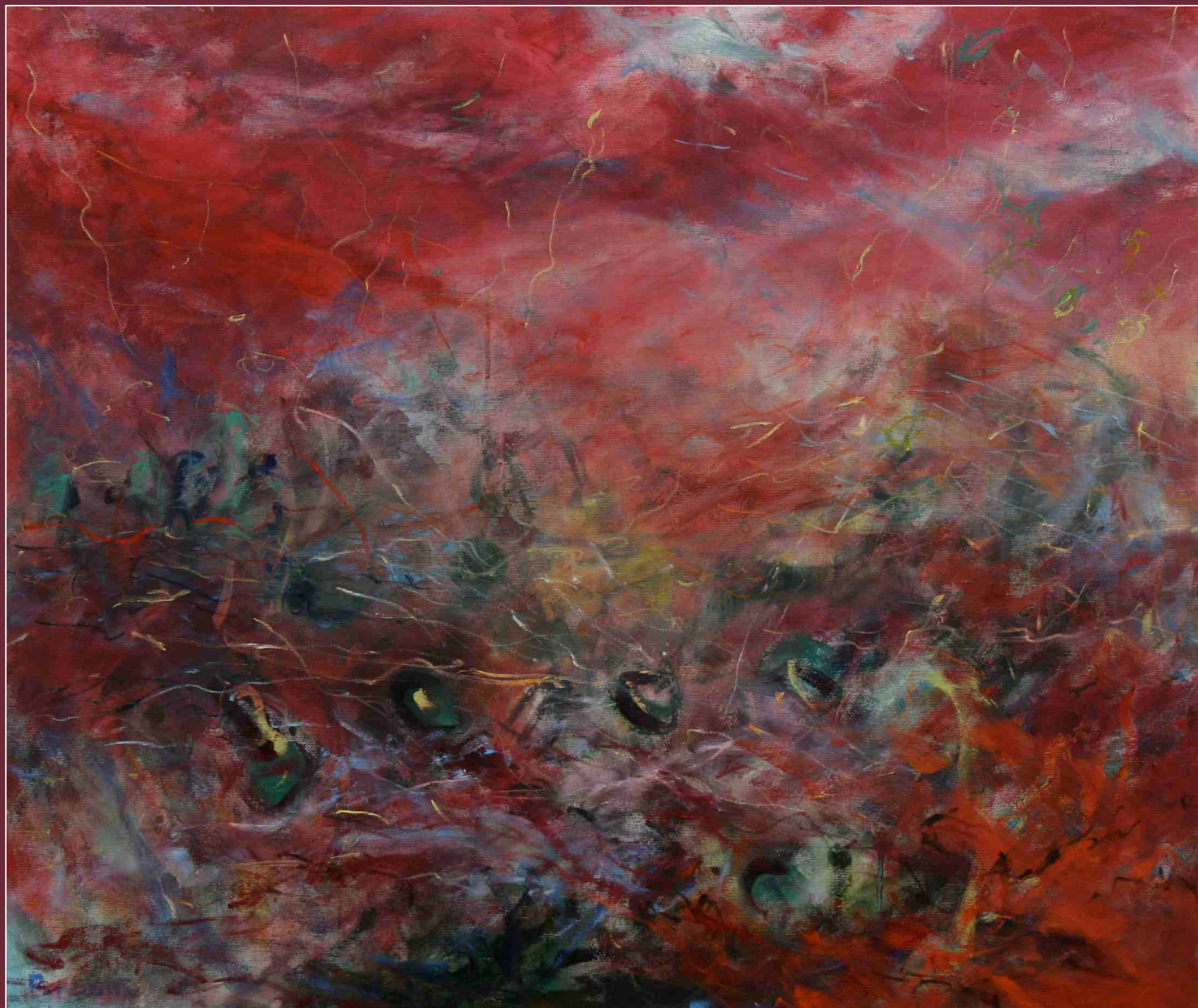
The intersection was utter chaos. Cars were honking. People were cursing. Sirens were deafening. The driver now stood guard over me zealously, loosely handling the other one. I was almost 250 pounds at last weigh-in; at two to five dollars a pound, I would fetch a nice price. I took pride in that.

Finally, the farmhand emerged from the tunnel, angrily dragging the fugitive goat across the road. We were marched into a grim warehouse. Chickens squawked bitterness and gossip from the tightly packed wire cages that covered the walls, and cows, sheep, and goats bleated greetings, obscenities, and misery at us from their pens. I nearly slipped on the blood, but I maintained my composure as we passed buckets full of dripping heads. Just as I ate, I told myself, I would be eaten. This is life.

Once again, the hand used unnecessary force to push me into the pen I would share with a phalanx of wethered bucks. I had put up no resistance, but as a buck that had once been the alpha on the farm, I understood his need to assert his power given that he had lost the nanny and angora.

As he entered the pen, the goats parted in panic. When he left, I took my spot in a corner. I could smell the musk of another buck in my new resting place, but I was the biggest of the lot and no goat would dare tell me to move. His place was now mine.

I closed my eyes, as concurrent recitations of the Tasmiya and Shahda rose in the distance. Bangladesh was in the house, as was Trinidad, Ecuador, and Brooklyn. This is where the accents had been last season and this one; and where the accents went, I now knew, we had no choice but to follow. This was the way of meat.



*Red World by Andrew Purchin*

## WHAT TOOK US TO WAR

Every so often, you find  
a piece of furniture, an old head wrap  
or something like a skirt  
held together by a rusty pin.  
Our years, spilled all over the ruggedness  
of this war-torn place,  
our years, wasted like grains of rice.

Relics of your past, left for you,  
in case you returned accidentally  
or intentionally, in case you did not  
perish with everyone else.  
Something hanging onto thread,  
holding onto the years  
to be picked up, after locusts  
and termites have had their say,  
the graciousness of looters,

the graciousness of termites  
and temporary owners of a home  
you built during your youth,  
during the Samuel Doe years  
when finding food was your life goal.  
How gracious, the war years,  
how gracious, the warlords,  
their fiery tongues and missiles.

All the massacres we denied,  
and here we are today, coming upon  
a woodwork of pieces of decayed  
people that are not really pieces  
of woodwork at all.  
This should be an antique, a piece  
of the past that refused to die.

Wood does not easily rot, but here,  
termites have taken over Congo Town  
the way Charles Taylor claimed the place,  
the way Charles Taylor claimed  
our land and the hearts of hurting people,  
the way the Atlantic in its wild roaming  
has eaten its way into town  
even as we roamed, in search of refuge,

the way whole buildings have crumbled  
into the sea, the way the years  
have collapsed upon years.

What took us to war has again begun,  
and what took us to war  
has opened its wide mouth  
again to confuse us.

What took us to war, oh, my people!

*~ Patricia Jabbeh Wesley*

## QUARTER TO WAR

A land slumbers under a blanket of coffeeed weeds  
With lashings of withered wreaths numb on gravestones  
A broken fence, a lone gatekeeper, a shroud of trees  
Keep the memoir of ghosts who can only sleep  
When relatives insist on visiting, bringing new flowers  
Which they then water with tears and dress in silence

The broken branches which are gathered under trees  
The faded epitaphs speaking to the sun about memory  
The dried leaves cracking with the reticence of rainfall  
The shade from the high weeds crowded into themselves  
The people crouching to straighten fallen headstones  
On their beloveds' graves, then murmur their departure

The footfalls fading from the streets  
The trees departing from the avenues  
The sweat evaporating from the skin  
Remote traffic sounding like gossip

A lone gatekeeper standing by the gate  
Adding up thoughts of differences and loss.

*~ Jumoke Verissimo*



*He She and Golden Apples by Iyrina Lialko*

## THE SCORE

By Hawa Jande Golakai

The LG flatscreen sounded a tiny ‘zooop’ as it went off, fading to black over the ‘Harpo Studios’ emblem, trademark of Oprah Winfrey’s empire. Heavy-hearted, Zintle Msengwana sighed to her feet. The queen of talk was serious; she was really going off primetime for good.

“Pushing the lamp aside, she knelt beside the bundle on the floor, pulling back the duvet. She jerked and uttered a tiny whimper.”

Zintle couldn’t believe it. Not much made her days cleaning up other people’s mess easier to stomach. If the halls were empty and the work hadn’t piled up, relaxing in front of talk shows and soapies was the one treat she allowed herself before she started her routine. Management in some lodges was strict, and allowed only good clients to book rooms. At The Grotto, class and wallet size equalled one and the same, and judging from the nonsense Zintle had had to clean out of some of the rooms, that equation told a sad, disgusting story. At some establishments, they were more lenient, allowing longer breaks if the day was slow, or generous, handing out barely used or expired stock to staff that wanted it. No such luck at The Grotto.

Zintle sprayed the shag-pile rug in the ensuite sitting room with carpet cleaner and started on the bathroom while it dried to powder. She sighed again, shaking her head as she removed a half-full wine glass rimmed with lipstick from near the bathtub. The bathroom smelled vaguely of alcohol. Ms Greenwood was a good woman but she drank too much. It was an open secret amongst the staff and management, who’d turned a blind eye and tolerated it for years, but now the stakes were higher. The lodge had stepped its game up in the bid for three-star status, and if Ms Greenwood wasn’t careful her job would be on the line. It would be terrible to lose her over something so shameful.

Deciding to leave the scrubbing of tiles, which

she hated, for last, Zintle moved on to stripping the bed. She yanked the corner of the duvet spilling down the side of the mattress. Cursing when it didn’t budge, she inched over to the other end of the bed, pulling harder. It gave under her force, releasing a heavy weight that rolled against and buckled her legs. Zintle yelped, stumbled and fell against a side table near the window, overturning a lamp.

“*Hhayi mhani*. Jesus.” Pushing the lamp aside, she knelt beside the bundle on the floor, pulling back the duvet. She jerked and uttered a tiny whimper. Underneath lay Rhonda Greenwood, face down and back turned, head barely visible beneath the rumpled folds.

“Ma’am.” Zintle put a hand on her shoulder and shook gently. “Ms Greenwood.” No answer. “Ms Greenwood. Are you awake?”

She had no idea why she was whispering, only suddenly she felt scared. She shook harder, and watched Rhonda Greenwood’s pudgy, prostrate form jiggle back and forth under her hand with no will of its own. Gulping, Zintle heaved, dragging the edges of the duvet and Greenwood closer. The woman pitched and rolled, coming to rest on her side. Through the blonde strands falling across her face oozed a dried mess of thick, creamy-looking fluid inside and around her mouth. A dark red lump stood out behind her ear.

Zintle shrieked and scrambled on all fours towards the door.

Aay my pipo, what kinda trouble dis now? Vee thought.

The person on the floor was unmistakably dead. It looked like a woman; she couldn’t be sure yet. The barely-there ‘dead smell’ punched a greeting up her nostrils right in the doorway, forcing her to make an about-face as she fought her gag reflex. It was nowhere near an exact science, but all it took was a whiff of that imperceptibly rank odour and she had enough to make a strong guestimate. Fresh: half a day, maybe a few hours on that, but not much longer. She couldn’t explain how she knew exactly but she did. The wondrously incalculable side effects of war... her mind could be tricked into forgetting, but her hyper-excitabile nose was rewired for eternal stubbornness.

“Whose room is this?” she asked.

“Ms Greenwood. Rhonda Greenwood. She’s the deputy manager,” said the girl from housekeeping. She’d run smack into Vee, screaming blue murder and begging for help. The maid, who’d

whispered the name Zintle, stayed wedged in the doorway linking the small lounge to the bedroom, intent on not moving an inch closer to the action. Mouth-breathing as much as possible, Vee knelt over the body. Rhonda’s cheeks and nose sported a dull, ruddy hue. She examined the bruising behind her ear, near the back of her head, and shuddered.

“How long she been lying here?”

Met with silence, Vee turned. Zintle looked horribly affronted, as if stupid was anyone who thought a dead person sprawled in a room under her charge was something she’d keep quiet for any length of time. “No, I mean how often are these rooms cleaned? When last did anybody see her? Last night?”

Zintle nodded. “Yes. Most of the managers work late, especially now when it’s busy. But sometimes...she comes to bed early. But not too many times. She works hard.”

Vee studied her, eyes narrowing when Zintle aimed a guilty look at the wall.

She turned back to the body. She licked her finger and brought it close to the woman’s nose. No breath. Greenwood was definitely dead. She patted the pockets of her cargo pants for her phone. The screen registered four missed calls. She cursed quietly, pressed ‘exit’ and switched to camera mode.

“She’s staying here by herself?” She held her breath and snapped the first couple, one close-up and one wide-shot, of the body propped on its side against the lower bedframe.

“Yes. All the senior guys have rooms but their partners don’t stay here with them. It’s not allowed. I mean, they stay the night sometimes but not usually. Especially not during peak season.”

“Hhmm.” Vee snapped another close-up of Greenwood’s face, lungs starting to ache as she leaned close to get the blotchy nose and raw lump behind her ear in the frame. Behind her, she heard Zintle’s gasp at her audacity. *Trust me, I don’t want to be doing this either*. Then why was she? She clicked on, capturing the protruding tongue and thick foam in and around the woman’s mouth. When she finally had to inhale, the strong, gassy hit of booze made her gag.

“So you’re telling me all the senior staff here got their own chalets?”

“No, no. They can have a room now and then if they want it, especially if they work late. It’s like that in the business.” The sound of Zintle’s voice had shifted from the doorway to what sounded like a spot directly behind her. “Only Ms Greenwood and Ms Motaung, the general manager, have chalets. They practically live here.” Over the click of the phone’s electronic shutter, Vee heard a dull clink and thunk on the floor behind her, much like the sound of glass

against wood.

“They aren’t married. I doubt they even have men,” Zintle said.

Vee ignored the disapproving tone, staring at the body with sympathy. Don’t mind her yaah, she’s young and naïve, she thought. She had enough experience with age to know when you got to Rhonda’s, likely twice what Zintle was, you weren’t thrilled about blossoming into an overweight, unmarried, workaholic lush. Bet you never imagined ending up here either, Vee mused as she photographed the swipe of lumpy vomit on the carpet.

“Did you see her last night, before you went home?”

“I’m not doing nights this week. I went home at eight, when the new shift starts. There’s a bus that takes us into Oudtshoorn but it was running behind so I got a lift.”

Vee frowned, peering in at Greenwood’s hands. Shaking her head, she squatted, zoomed, snapped, and examined the shot at length. Something was off about the fingernails... Puzzled by the sudden silence, she lowered the cell and peeped over the expanse of queen-sized mattress into the adjoining bathroom, in time to see Zintle working the neck of a bulging black garbage bag into a knot. At the sound of gurgling, Vee popped to her feet and dashed over.

“Nawww,” she groaned as water swirled down the bathtub’s drain.

“*Yintoni?* What?” Zintle looked panicky. “I only let the water out. I shouldn’t do that?”

“No, I don’t think you’re supposed to do that. Maybe there was evidence in it.”

Zintle’s apprehension switched to disgusted disbelief. “*Ngumphambano lowo*,” she said, then blinked, as if suddenly remembering Vee didn’t speak Xhosa. “That’s crazy. Like what, urine?”

Vee giggled into her hand. Zintle cracked a smile. “Yeah, maybe urine. I don’t know.” She gave Zintle a comforting pat on the shoulder. “I’m sure it doesn’t matter.”

Nonetheless she captured all angles of the bathroom and flicked through her efforts, Zintle craning her neck over her shoulder. When she reached the end, Zintle wrinkled her forehead and made a mouth-shrug. The gesture pretty much summed up the entire gallery: meaningless. Vee started to put the phone away.

“Must everything be correct?” Zintle asked. At Vee’s quizzical frown, she continued: “Do you want photos of the room exactly how it was? Before I found her?”

“Yes, but... you moved anything?”

“*Lo glass*.” Zintle pointed to a wine glass



on a side table in the bedroom. “*Lo glass ibime pha ngase’bhafini.*” She clicked in irritation and repeated, “That glass was by the bathtub.” Her face clouded. “*Ndiyicholile.* I touched it. I picked it up with my fingers.”

Vee chewed her lip. Finally she said, “Okay, bring it back where it was. It’s fine, you can hold it,” she cajoled. “Long as you’re the only person who touched it.” Nothing suspicious about a maid’s fingerprints all over a room she regularly cleaned. That’s if anyone cared to check, like the police. If this was a police matter at all, come to think of it.

Pinching it by the stem, Zintle set the glass on the peach-and-cream tiles at the foot of the tub, twisting and turning it around several times. Finally satisfied it was in place, she nodded gravely at Vee, who aimed and snapped.

“That all? Did you move anything else?”

Zintle’s immediate, involuntary nod faltered fast into a shake of the head. Vee narrowed her eyes. Avoiding her gaze, the maid quickly stuffed both lips into her mouth and covered it with a hand, head shaking in emphatic denial.

Then Vee recalled how she’d met Rhonda Greenwood, alive and well, a mere day ago.

“We’ve met before, haven’t we?”

She had turned and looked down, quite a ways, into the bright brown irises of a plump woman, clipboard tamped against her chest by a pair of well-manicured hands. Her face was round, almost unnaturally spherical, and crowned with fine, artificially lightened hair, teased – tortured really – into a bun on top of her head. Her smile could’ve fracked the entire Karoo for free.

Vee smiled back politely. She and Chlöe were fresh off the N1 highway, barely unpacked and sorely disappointed to find they weren’t guests at the main lodge. Boot camp inmates reported at check-in to pick up ‘the drill’, a list of gruelling weekend activities they were expected to jump right into once their bags hit the floor. As she lounged expectantly outside the office, she noticed the woman had looked her over once or twice before speaking up. Her approach was so certain and friendly, Vee twinged for not recalling who she was.

“Hang on a minute...” The woman’s face blanked out, her head taking up a curious bobbing motion, akin to a beach ball on a gentle tide.

“Ummm...” Vee interjected, concern budding after several moments.

The woman’s eyes lit up. “Johnson,” she chirped. “First name was a letter in the alphabet. Bee. Bea for Beatrice? No. Vee. Vee Johnson. You’re a journalist.” Her smile turned on full blast. Her head kept bobbing. “Didn’t comprehend our colonially obsessive tea-drinking, shortbread meant

something entirely different in your country. Hated PowerPoint presentations with needless animations. And loved the ocean. Loved it, loved it.”

Vee blinked. “Whoa.”

The nodding and jaw-breaking beam kept going. “People get such a jolt when I do that, but who wouldn’t love that reaction.” Her laugh was tinkly yet full and broad-spirited, much like herself. “I did this course a few years ago, you know, the ones that improve your memory by tapping into alpha waves to increase how much of your brain you use. *I know,*” she held up a hand, “sounds like utter rubbish but it actually worked. Well, for the most part anyway. When you’re in hospitality you can’t afford to forget names and faces.”

Vee extended her hand with a polite smile, provoking the woman to bright, open laughter as she shook it. “Oh, of course I’m being silly, you don’t know who I am! Rhonda Greenwood, deputy general manager. I know you from that thing last year...”

*Please don’t say the Paulsen trial,* Vee thought.

“...the conference centre at Portswood. The Portswood Hotel at the V&A Waterfront. You were there for some journalism training group as was I, well for a management refresher in my case. A couple of our tea breaks coincided and that’s when we chatted. About shortbread, the silliest of things.”

“Oh yees!” Vee sighed into a grin. “That was ages ago, early last year. You gave me your grandmother’s recipe for genuine Scottish shortbread, and I gave you my mother’s one for Liberian shortbread.”

Up and down bobbed Rhonda’s head, in agreement, and also because it now appeared to be a tic she had no control over. “Which is more like a muffin isn’t it, and truly scrumptious. How long are you staying with us?”

Vee blinked her way back into the room, the memory of an effervescent Greenwood fading as she looked down at the crumple of human being near her feet. This woman had died with two – possibly more, who knew – great shortbread recipes in her head. This woman, whose alpha-enhanced brain was rotting away along with her everything else, was giving off more and more of That Dead Smell with every passing minute. She gagged, rushing for the door.

“What do we tell the police?” Zintle pressed, scurrying her short, plump legs to keep up. Refreshed by clean air, Vee stopped outside back entrance of the lodge’s kitchen and shielded her eyes against the sun, face stern.

“Zintle, you can’t tell the police I was in there with you. Please, okay, no...you really can’t.” Zintle folded her arms. “It won’t be good for me, it won’t be good for you either. I’m a guest. They’ll ask why you



Swing by Weldon Sandusky

told me about it.” *And there’s the small matter of those pictures I took.*

“But I needed help. You were the only person around.”

“They won’t see it that way.” Vee squeezed Zintle’s arm. “I beg you, don’t. Tell your housekeeping manager or whoever that you just found her, which is true. And if they ask you about moving things, be truthful. You won’t get into any trouble.”

“Where are you going?”

“Back.” Vee pointed in the direction of the wall and made a swooping motion with her hands.

Zintle put her fists on her hips. “You jumped from the other side, the bootcamp? Yoh, sisi, are you mad? You guys aren’t supposed to come to the lodge.” She paused for a moment, then motioned Vee to wait before heading into the kitchen. She came back a few minutes later with two frosty, unopened soft drinks and sandwiches wrapped in foil. “There’s a party tonight because the conference

is ending. There’s a lot of food. They won’t notice.” She smiled as she handed them over. “Thank you.”

“And bless *you*,” Vee breathed in gratitude.

“Where the bloody hell have you been? I had to fake some serious period pains to get out of today’s nightmare, and you just decide not to pitch up. Guess it beats having to lie.” Chlöe, flushed and cranky, plonked down on the grass next to her. “And what’s our Sunday afternoon viewing like?”

“‘Sisterhood of the Travelling Skanks’. I was hoping to catch the rerun of the next episode of *Jacob’s Cross*, but clearly Porno Guy doesn’t appreciate how crazy this power struggle’s getting between Jacob and Bola.” Vee handed her one of the sandwiches.

“Is this how pathetic our professional lives have become? Right now we could be chilling in a proper office, having a proper lunch and working on the real assignments we have. But noooo. Because we have the privilege of being the paper’s misfits of

choice, nature is our office.” Chlöe waved her hand to indicate the surrounds, making a face so sour on the word ‘nature’ that Vee had to choke down a laugh. “We get to eat tasteless sandwiches on top of a hill and watch racist porn through someone’s window because we have no other entertainment.” She bit into the sandwich and grimaced. “Thank you so much for bringing me here.”

The embankment overlooked a gorgeous expanse of open road, koppie formations and grassland that lay outside the lodge’s enclosure. Within the grounds though, the vantage point was purely strategic, affording an unobstructed view of a flatscreen TV in one guest’s room. They had never been able to see who the occupant was, but the viewing content had certainly proved illuminating.

“Come on, quit being such a buzzkill,” Vee said. “We both know it’s Nico’s doing that we’re stuck at that pupu-platoon bootcamp; he had to flex his muscle after our palaver last week. So let’s just suck it up lil’ bit longer and we’ll be out.” Vee nudged Chlöe with her shoulder and barely got a smile in return. “And Porno Guy here seems to be the only person who cares about us. He keeps his TV on all day and his window open, and at least his choices are imaginative. He deserves *some* credit for that.”

“How do you know it’s a ‘he’? Could be a very liberal, oversexed woman.” Chlöe stretched her legs and leaned back, craning her neck at an awkward angle to follow the exertions of the four nude actors on-screen. “On second thought, definitely a man. That’s way too much admin for any woman to find it remotely sexy.”

Vee handed her the Fanta, her favourite, watching in mildly repulsed fascination as she guzzled it, mat of hair thrown back, a trickle of orange sliding down her chin and staining her frowzy T-shirt. “Damn, Bishop. Not even two days and you’ve turned into a creature raised by wolves. Don’t ever turn poor for real ‘cause you’d die on the spot.”

“*Now* you get it? What’s that saying of yours? Black people don’t camp because they have villages. Well, spoilt white people don’t camp because they have hired help.”

“You shame your Afrikaner heritage. Those pioneers trekked across –”

“Fuck that. This place is a *dorp* and it sucks ass. It’s literally making my skin crawl.” Chlöe scratched her scalp furiously. “I’m counting the hours till we hit the road. Please tell me we’re leaving at the crack of dawn tomorrow, because for once I won’t mind.” She squinted down the grassy verge, past the easternmost cluster of chalets nearest the kitchen. An animated group of staff were gathered, talking and pointing. Vee made out Zintle in their midst, looking quietly confused. “What’s up over there?” Chlöe asked.

“I’ll fill you in later. Meanwhile, I just found out there’s some *plehjay* and merry-making going on tonight, some conference is ending. How you feel about being my date to a gate-crashing?”

Chlöe did a little jig of joy. “Yaaay! At least it’s something to break up the bloody monotony. God, that’s why I hate being in the boonies. Nothing *ever* happens.”

Vee watched a short man and stately woman, both civvies-clad and reeking of seniority, break from the uniformed gaggle and stride towards the chalet at the outermost fringe. The head of housekeeping and the general manger, had to be. A cluster of pink-with-grey-trim uniformed maids tiptoed behind them, Zintle in the rear, hem of her uniform pressed over her mouth.

“Stay tuned,” Vee mumbled.

*Editor’s note: This excerpt is taken from ‘The Score’, and is republished here with permission from the author.*

“ Her face was round, almost unnaturally spherical, and crowned with fine, artificially lightened hair, teased – tortured really – into a bun on top of her head. ”



*Artwork by Andrew Purchin*

## SOMETIMES, I CLOSE MY EYES

Sometimes I see the world, scattered  
in small brick shacks along the hillsides  
far away in Colombia,

where it is only the poor, at the peak  
of the mountains. Medellín, holding on  
so the city can find rest.

Sometimes, I see the poor in my Bai,  
shoeless and old, his teeth threatening  
to leave him if he continued on,

and walking on barefoot, he looks ahead,  
his eyes, not betraying the future, where  
the children he's populated

the globe with, will cradle him beneath  
the soil, where we all go, poor or rich,  
where we all go, if we believe in the grave.

Sometimes, it is just these children who  
have emerged from a long war they never  
saw; children, left along

the sewage drains, the same people who  
brought on the war, now recapturing  
the land as if the land could be captured.

Sometimes, the world is hazy, as if fog  
were a thing for the artist's rough canvas.  
Sometimes, the world is Iyeeh's

shattered water gourd, the one Iyeeh told  
you not to drop, her world, shattered  
but sometimes, this is the way of the world,

the simple, ordinary world, where things are  
sometimes too ordinary to matter. Sometimes,  
I close my eyes, so I don't have to see the world.

*~ Patricia Jabbeh Wesley*

## CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

### Poetry

**Jumoke Verissimo** is a Nigerian poet and writer based in Lagos. She has read her work across Nigeria and internationally. She is the author of the award-winning 'I am memory' (Dada Books, 2008) and 'The Birth of illusion' (Fullpoint, 2015). Her poems have been published in several anthologies, including the 'Livre d'or de Struga' (Poètes du monde) and 'Migrations' (Afro-Italian, ed. Wole Soyinka). Her poetry has been translated into Italian, Chinese, French, Spanish, Arabic, Macedonian, Mongolian, Norwegian and Japanese. She is a recipient of the Chinua Achebe Centre Fellowship.

**Kadija Sesay** is an award-winning literary activist and cultural nomad. She's the publisher of SABLE LitMag, and edits anthologies of writers of African and Asian descent. Her poetry collection 'Irki' was shortlisted for the Glenna Luschei Prize (2014). Her forthcoming poetry collection is 'The Modern Pan Africanist's Journey' for which she has created an app. She is a scholarship PhD candidate at the University of Brighton, researching Independent Black Publishers in the UK.

**Patricia Jabbeh Wesley** is a poet, scholar, public speaker and human rights activist. Born in Monrovia, she is a survivor of the Liberian Civil War.

**Viola Allo** is a Cameroonian-born poet based in the United States. Her chapbook of poems, 'Bird From Africa', is included in the Eight New-Generation African Poets chapbook box set published in 2015 by Akashic Books and the African Poetry Book Fund. Viola writes at her blog, [Letters to Cameroon](#).

### Fiction

**Amma Darko** is one of the most significant contemporary Ghanaian writers. Her novels include 'Between Two Worlds' (Sub-Saharan, 2015), 'Not Without Flowers' (Sub-Saharan, 2007), 'Faceless' (Sub-Saharan, 2003), 'The Housemaid' (Heinemann, 1999), and 'Beyond the Horizon' (Heinemann, 1995).

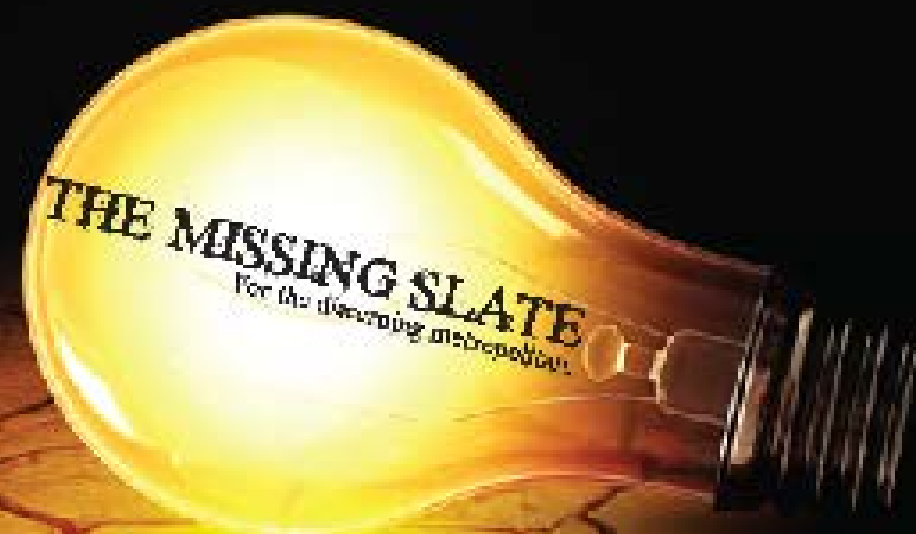
**Chika Unigwe** is the author of three novels, including 'On Black Sisters Street' (2009, 2011 Jonathan Cape, UK and Random House NY) and 'Night Dancer' (Jonathan Cape, 2012). Her short stories and essays have appeared in various journals. Her works have been translated into many languages including German, Japanese, Hebrew, Italian, Hungarian, Spanish and Dutch. A recipient of several awards, she lives and works in the USA.

**Hawa Jande Golakai** is the award-nominated crime and speculative fiction author of 'The Lazarus Effect' and 'The Score'. She is an honouree of the Africa39 Initiative to recognise the most promising contemporary talent. Her work has appeared in several African and international publications, including her piece 'Fugee', which appears in the 2016 Commonwealth non-fiction anthology. She is also a medical immunologist, and lives in Monrovia, Liberia.

**Nana Ekuia Brew-Hammond** is the author of *Powder Necklace*, which Publishers Weekly called "a winning debut". Named among 39 of the most promising African writers under 39, her short fiction was included in the anthology *Africa39: New Writing from Africa South of Sahara*. Most recently, she was shortlisted for a 2014 Miles Morland Writing Scholarship. In April 2015, she was the opening speaker at *TEDxAccra*. She is currently at work on a new novel.

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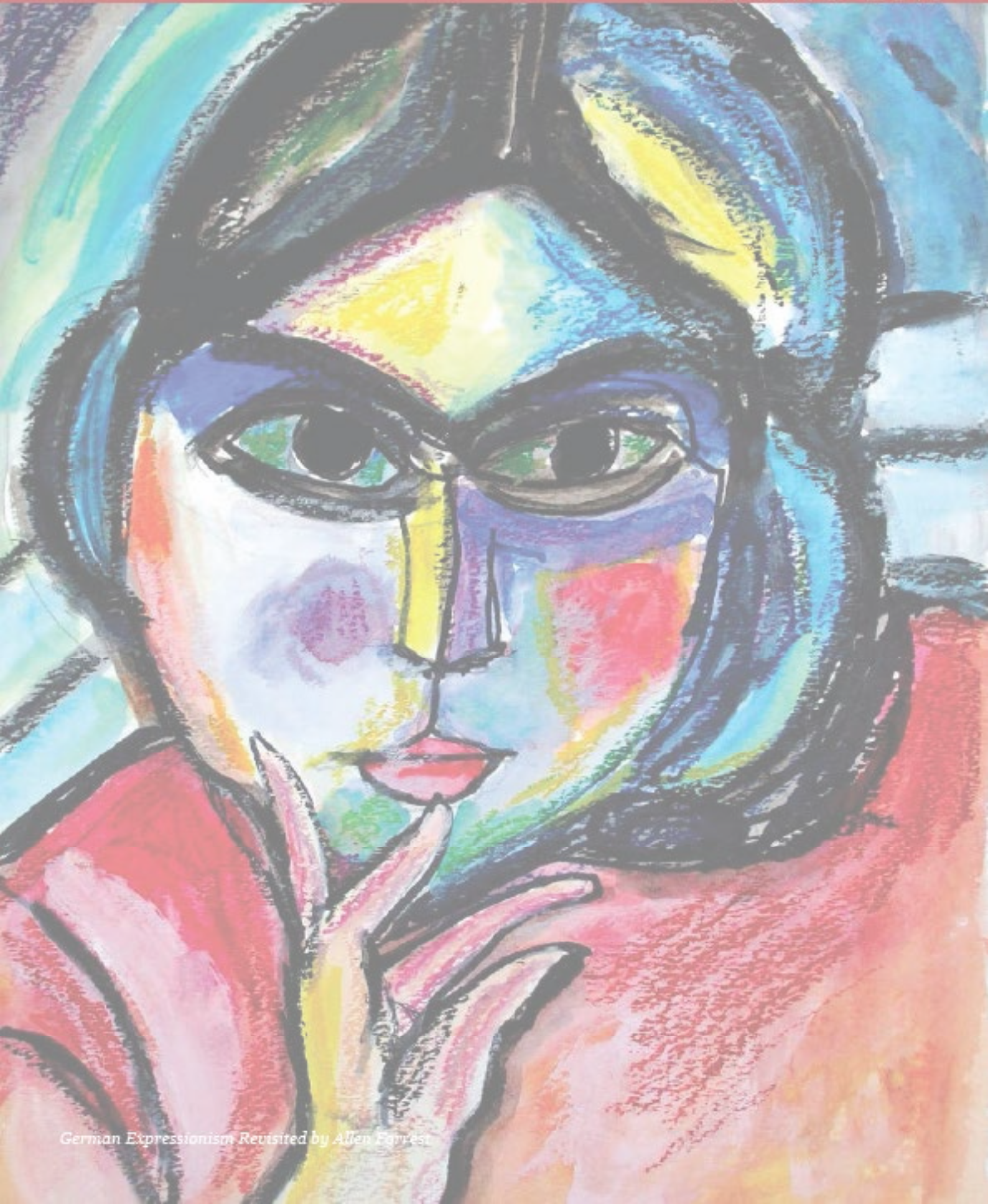
*Wild East West 2 by Andrew Purchin*

“ We do a great disservice to boys in how we raise them. We stifle the humanity of boys. We define masculinity in a very narrow way. Masculinity is a hard, small cage, and we put boys inside this cage.”

~ Chiamamanda Ngozie Adichie ”

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