



MIDTERM FIVE

Interlace / Intersect

Berkeley Poetry Review

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Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

Over the past few months I have been (un)learning what it means for things to come together and pull apart, perhaps more than I had ever hoped or intended to in a year that was already challenging in a number of ways. Over the course of this publishing process, most, if not all, of the people I spoke to, BPR staff included, had expressed the feeling of complete exhaustion which I understood to be representative of an immense collective loss — physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually (whatever that may mean to you). To put it plainly, everyone was going through it. To put it brutally, going into 2022 doesn't mean we've escaped the "it" yet. I myself find I am constantly wading in and out of it-ness and I don't expect to be completely out for some time. As Iris Morrell writes, "This isn't something you wash/ And forget about, it's soaked all the way."

With that being said, it's truly been an honor to read and sit with the contributors' interpretations of, and commentary on, the theme INTERLACE / INTERSECT. Patrizia Pedraza writes, "It would be imprudent to think/ that I would know how to tell you anything/ about this world in pieces" which still shakes me to my core. The responsibility of telling, of attempting to say, often feels like such an impossible and daunting task, especially with the way the world has been treating us. However, the contributors of MIDTERM FIVE accepted one such challenge and if it is too absolute to simply say they succeeded then I will at least say they attack it intentionally and beautifully. And all love for poetry aside, the privilege of curating this issue has played a huge part in allowing me to reaffirm my belief that something can grow from absence, darkness, and/or fragmentation.

It's impossible to describe MIDTERM FIVE without noting that this issue exists in an expansive world (across, within, in-between(?)) different periods of time, geographic space, race, culture, sexuality, and gender. It celebrates both traumas and joys, unities and divisions. It thinks about the ways we preserve the past as well as how we may move towards a more fully realized future, one that, as Talia Fox says, may unfortunately only "bloom sometime after we've left."

And even more exciting than showing us how we all fit together in this strange world, MIDTERM 5 reminds us that the places where our experience departs from that of another is where a process of (un)learning about the human experience (re)begins again. The beauty is in the inter-ness of it all.

I hope you will enjoy this issue and hold it close like I do.

Yours,
Angel

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For Cassandra Carson
and all lovers & friends, both here & gone

I cannot reveal to you what it is made of
the imaginary little cradle
where you lie
waking and joyful between white silk sheets.
Nor could I tell you
about the virtues of the color
of the walls that surround your quiet existence
to keep you from the cold
that would await you outside
in the life you will not live.
It would be imprudent to think
that I would know how to tell you anything
about this world in pieces,
to which I would condemn you to breathe,
being this unwary and sometimes fragile person,
the one who writes to you.
If I could know only one thing about you,
it would be your name.
If I could give you only one thing it would be
the power to choose your name,
it seems reasonable to me. This choice is vital.
That you could choose you,
what difference would it make to me

if you were
an insolent and stubborn little bug or an animal of habit.
That you could choose you so that,
among so many people,
there would be a piece of heaven made flesh.

But that will no longer be possible, my dear, here:
A grave you are.

IAN HOLOMBO
In My Grandmother's Cookbook

in deep winter slumber / food grounds us / i crave
Starch and the hearth ;

i crave Familiar and / my mother is Familiar

my mother is Warm ; my mother is
Soup ;

she is broth and heat and Soup / “here, take this” / parboiled potatoes / a simmer in times of
rolling boil , my

mother is Cream, heavy rich

a Luxury in july / poured over berries

she drinks it straight from our pink glass cups with the Smack of pink glass lips ; “Perfectly
sweet,” she

says, my mother is

soup and cream and creamy thick soups

heavy and Gentle in the belly

/ if my mother is Soup / my father is the Bread ;

my father is

crust , my father has Heft — hot and steaming / Fluffy / fills the

thing that is grumbling in you , soothes seething hunger , my

father is the bread that is fresh from the family's Dutch oven / that has been baked a

billion

times / my father is Routine ; passed through

generations. my father is the sourdough starter that will still

be on the shelf when i return ,

next to my mother's pink glass and dried thyme

JULIA CUNNINGHAM
Churning

Am I going to

Am I going to am I

Going to am I

Spills out of my mouth

More than what I fear

Ever has. The contents of

My stomach stay in place

For now but they churn

All the time ready to betray me

If I don't stop and ask

Are you going to

Are you going to are you

Going to are you

Going to stop loving me

If I finally erupt

At the wrong moment

(And they're all wrong moments)

If my body betrays me

It betrays you too

You made

Eyes nose mouth

Just like the doctor ordered

But stomach steps out

Of line so I have to ask

Am I going to

Am I going to am I

Going to am I

Going to be okay?

Your exhausted answer

Tells me more

Than I want to know

ELISHA MYKELTI
two

i. And after all this time,
You, a republican,
With Hollister denim,
And a high-rise
Aren't enough

Since you
Can't pass.

You've got
That sticky,
Black lineage

Floating amid
The white.

You have to be two—
You and them

So you can
Feel comfort.

ii. We've got
That pretty,
Black lineage

But

It feels weird,
Doesn't it?

To want
White
And not be
Fully.

To have
The other you,

Sit with you
And lay mute
When you're with
Them.

iii. I mute my other
Too,
At times

But

I'd like to
Think you're
Only one,
Who likes
The dirt
The power
And discord

When you're
Home
With Us.

But you like
The warmth
Of the wound,
And the comfort,
Of the white
Better.

**every autumn, 'round the holidays, we try to love, but
it's like puttin' tape on granny's old mirror**

we'd like to fix it, but they don't make 'em like that anymore. i think i'd like a new one anyway.

>

one of these / days / i'll die. / i'll be dead / and you'll miss me / you won't / know / how to buy
insurance / or cook / greems / like mama did / i promise / you ungrateful / bitches / will wish /
you fuckin' celebrated me / and gave me / my fuckin' flowers / while i was here / on / this earth /
i don't know what the hell i did / wrong / i did the best / i could / with what / i had / i won't keep
apologizin' / y'all wouldn't give a damn / if i died today / shit / i'm tired / i ain't got shit else / to
give you filthy / low-down / dirty bitches /

>>>

i don't think you wanted motherhood / i think you wanted something else / when i was 15 / i
wanted a used / flute / i don't think you / hate me / maybe / a part / of you / is still 15 / its august
1982 / and you're afraid / you wanted a safe delivery / yes / but i wonder / what else / you
wanted / but couldn't get to / because you were / small / and still learning / and he / got to you /
first / because he could smell the blood / on you /

>

i swear / i'll be dead / and he's the only one / who's loved me / not one of my kids / gives a damn
/ about me / all y'all do / is want / always wantin' shit / from me / what about me / y'all ain't
never called to check on me / see about me / damn / i'll fall back / focus on me / i'm okay / i'm
a'ight /

>>>

i don't think you wanted motherhood / i think you wanted more / from your mama / and she died
before she would give / no apology / but you reckon she felt / remorse / reincarnated / in me / to
love you / limitlessly / ma, i'm me / and i can only love / you enough / but more / than i know i
should / i thought i could / stop / loving you / after the tears / and the silence / because i want
something else / something not so chilly / or metal / something / you could see / for yourself /
that would make me okay / alright /

M. B. KRITIKOPOULOS
rice in three different stages

I. Uncooked

Harvested only a few weeks ago.
Slumped over and exhausted, grain
Lay upon grain, shivering in the
Nakedness of the woven plastic bag

That they call home. Silent, save
for the slight shifts in sleep, slight
Brushes against the floor which they
Lay so benignly atop. They rest,

Waiting patiently for someone to
Open their bag, release the cage that
Has stifled their shifting and to hold
Them gently, to give them warmth.

II. Cooking

Bubbling and brewing, the water
Welcomes the grains to the foreignness
Of its own heat. The grains cannot
Communicate with this liquid, their

Slow-moving, tightly-wound atoms
Are unaccustomed to the fast and
Independent nature of the water. Still,
The warmth welcomes them. They do

Not speak the same language, the bubbles
And the grains. But fundamentally, they
Know one another. Bonded by the brand
“Food.” They may be different but they

Are one in the same. The grains bathe,
Awake, and the barrier of solid and liquid
Breaks. They mingle beyond either’s
Expectations, settling in their new setting.

III. Cooked

Home now, redefined. Grain and water
Becoming one. The grains no longer cold,
No longer scared in an unfamiliar home.
The water, no longer lonely. Rice, as a

Dish. Something to consume and be fuel
For aching bodies, splayed out on floors.
Rice, as something both parties know. Cracks
In language are filled by rice, filled by meals

Shared over silent dinner tables. Smiles are
Exchanged over rice. Letters written by
Candlelight and a bowl of rice. Families
Are reunited over tears, endless tears and

Years of travel and miles of distance and
Death and war and destruction and hatred
And injury and deployment and grief and hope
And rice. There are always three stages of rice.

IRIS MORRELL
San Francisco Poem

You have a mother somewhere
And she’s watching. God finds us
In the strangest places, like the ocean
On a day the waves are miles off shore.
She finds us again on the carpet,
She soaks up whatever we’re losing.
And we are so full of it. Whatever there is
To be lost. In a bear hug with a redwood that sits
Behind the traffic circle. We’re protected.
We sit and wait while others pass,
Ride on skateboards whose wheels transgress
Every surface. We are interminable.
We will make every mark into a stain
Like my child body soaked to its core
With chalky dust. On the playa, my mother
Will not tell me what she’s done.
And I am 22 years old, but I have lived
As many lifetimes. And I was eleven
When that man propositioned me, as if
That could matter. As if time were real
For the people like us.
I will be a child for so much longer
Than any adult could ever live.
God finds us once again when we’re sinking
Grasping at dust-covered roots,
When we’re washing, when the mother
Returns, when she finds us in the place
Where she left us. This town is gorgeous
But it’s poison. Life is a spiral

Because you may go away but you always
Come back to San Francisco. And each time
You are further from the Source. Escape
Will not present itself, because we
Are interminable. This isn't something you wash
And forget about, it's soaked all the way
To the place where god finds you,
Where hands are not there for the grasping.

i. Remove the service access panel.
Pull the migrants' ear, (READ CAREFULLY)
the guest-worker is good for

1
seasonal;

2
peakload; or

3
intermittent need.

Connect the three

the guest-worker has a simple control system

human rights are compelled at the technician's discretion because the guest-worker

is a free trade zone, designed to endure all tasks & management systems.*

look at those beaners struggle

~~a good migrant works their post~~

*double-check with the country of origin if your migrant does not meet your NEEDS.

ii. STOP! This migrant has not been outfitted with a kill switch.
If a guest-worker inquires about rights please revert back to factory settings.

You can accomplish this by assigning your guest-worker specific tasks, such as securing missing or partially amputated fingers, typically lost during machine operation.
Tedium and routine maintains the best method of troubleshooting any potential problems.



Figure 1. a-migrant-

guest-worker

If you find that your guest-worker is damaged or in need of repeated service, please program the following phrases into their memory banks:

(1) We cannot compensate for injuries sustained on the job under your temporary (h-2b) work visa

or

(2) An administrative error may be found in your visa, resulting in voluntary departure to the country of origin.

iii. Proceed with Caution.
Bend the migrant's back.

A functioning migrant can increase production by as much as 70 percent, but misuse may result in political extremism: a marxist call to arms.

Please report any subversive behavior to 1(800)232-5378.

the three elements of subversive behavior are

[a]. Social gatherings, private conversations or any political discourse.

[b]. Challenging or attempting to challenge historically accepted systems of treatment.

[c]. Working at a slower pace than what is requested thereby disturbing assembly and production.

part of this

Nation?

Subversive behavior should be reported immediately.
Refunds on faulty guest-workers are not typically given after a period of 180 days.

Guest-workers

ANASTASIA LE
Waste Audit

I wear second-hand to feel
Like I have a history here
As I drag columns of dread
Under my dead woman's shoes.

She says, *Money is fake.*

Whereas all of this—gesturing
At the clamshell container
An empty oat milk Tetra Pak
The takeout box I couldn't recycle

—Can last past the collapse of our society.

MIKAL WIX
Rush Hour at the Phoenix Bar

The young tramps lean gaunt,
like jaundiced, cursive letters tagged
on the low retaining wall,
vamping shirtless,
with their tattoos sunburned,
a glorious veined purple fraud of skin.

Here is one fine pup, his pierced tongue
charmed
by junk from the streets,
and billboard myths from the sky, asking,

Can your smile be heard?

He is a man too young for war;
he shoots in the galleria instead,
whipping his back and knotting his arm
with leather straps snapping back,
reaching
for the spark to a violent orgasm,
or any kind of revelation.

He tries proven chatter at the men
idling in trucks,
tied to carnal questions
answered without grace.
He is a beautiful young man
selling his salvation
à la derive.

Of red and white lights
bearing men's coins
and hours spent sensing
the silent suspicions of wives,
and hours of eating
and being eaten for dollars
crammed into dirty jeans,
and hours spent ignoring names
in the underworld.

There is no traffic jam on the extra mile.

He hopes for a whale of a trick,
a man who reeks of indulgences
and a feathered bed
confounded by love,
not complaints yawned in backseats,
but elongated bones
unearthed
in the fusty dark,
like the discovery of unnamed psalms
penned by a lawless devourer
for a feeling of plenty.

DURE AHMED
Eclipse

Somewhere under the eclipse my mother rolls a tasbeeh
And recites Allah's names like a magician's mantra.

In America, the sky lights up with industrial fireworks.

My white friend repeats:
It's just black kids letting out steam—
Fireworks are cheap now because of the plague.

Or I hear again: A government plan.
When we're desensitized to this noise
they'll come for us with guns.

Centuries ago, my Prophet under a darkening sky
fled to prayer but shunned superstition:
"No one's death ever brought an eclipse."

A woman sings under my apartment window.

Nothing ever changes. The sky doesn't tear apart.
The mountains don't fly around like cotton.
The earth doesn't burst open and the sun
is still further than the length of a quarter spear.
The trees do not begin to tell us what they witnessed.
Nothing ever happens. Grief never colors the clouds.

Almost everyone I know is alive.

I also heard that till one single person
who praises God,remains
the doom will not unleash.

But I prepare:
In a bottom drawer I keep condoms, cigarettes
and a notebook.

I hold on to my tasbeeh
and never let a breath pass without His name.

Naturalization

When I straddle the canyon
I want the moon to crown me for my glory
the night to fold around me in my shape

The river that split the earth is just a glimmer
the desert cracks and scorches.

Why here? Why the parched land, the dying
mesquites?
It is here I know I am godless and godstruck.
I am lucky and can be luckier.

In my new burst I think I was always here.
I drank the dead river.
I cracked apart the canyon
I am baked in the volcanic basalt,
sandstone, ancient granite.

In Tucson my handful of creosote
leaves and their fresh tar scent.
The night darkens and cools
on the asphalt's sear

In Tucson the triumph thrashes alive
My skin splits into cactoid spines

JOHNNY T
Environmentalism

I guess this spot is the best have no idea which way it will grow though I'd like to keep the branches away from the house and the fence but who knows where this thing will be pulled by the sun and moon will have to prune of course if it is going wild too far in any direction the dirt is so cold and soft glad I didn't grab the shovel this little thing doesn't need planted deep anyway so soft and cold could sit here forever sifting it through my fingers should put some water into the hole first and then the tree and then more dirt and then more water it's been boxed up so long tree in the mail seems healthy though slow grower probably hasn't even noticed it's out of the dirt yet won't give shade for years but that's not the point seed into a sapling into a box into my backyard into acorns and leaves for my kids to glue here and there on paper scribbled with crayons into the hole watery now mud doesn't sift through fingers very well but the sound it makes when I force my fingers into it alright into the water out of the box out of the ground out of the seed into the air water it one more time just to be safe can sit a while until she yells for me fingering the mud waiting for the full moon to pull it into the air she says it's best to plant under a full moon bigger tides and bigger trees everything gravitational seems right who knows earth pulls down moon lifts up fingering the mud such a cold feeling and the sound it makes like messy first kisses in a dark room

SOPHIA ZUO
Scoop

The flesh of a papaya bursts onto a plate
behind me, the black seeds glisten on the chopping board
like inky pearls slipped off a necklace.
I sit in front of the fan, back hunched
as wisps of my hair blow
like worn kite ribbons.

All is shouts as I walk through
the streets of a country I never left
but never really entered
my hand enveloped in a sister's hand,
her name I can't remember
I realize my language has never been mine.

“I love you, Grandma” over the phone—
the only thing besides

“Hello” I can tear out. If only, *if only*
she could hear me in English—
I would sing and spin wool

out of words so she
would never feel cold
and she would feel
her granddaughter was more than stillbirth by blood

But, I communicate through scooping
knees digging into wet sand and sediment
as I desperately claw words from the ground
I swear they were buried there before

that night, we stressed to the bartenders that we didn't care

what it cost we just had to drink it milky

soft pastel liquid soft gentle pink loving milk of spring, oh spring !

Contributors

ANASTASIA LE is a poet and student co-operative member from the Lake Chabot area of the East Bay. Her work appears in the 2021 Southeast Asian Student Coalition Anthology. Her poetry concerns reconciliation: political, sacramental, and otherwise. She received her BA in comparative politics from UC Berkeley. Anastasia is currently a 2021/22 Poetry & the Senses undergraduate fellow at the UC Berkeley Arts Research Center.

DARREN DONATE is a first generation Mexican-American and visual poet. He previously obtained his MFA at the University of New Mexico. Darren is currently teaching high school and coaching wrestling in Tucson, Arizona.

DURE AHMED is a Pakistani poet who lives in Arizona. Her chapbook, Suddenly Fragrant, was a winner of the Jubilat Chapbook Contest in 2019.

ELISHA MYKELTI (she/her/hers) is dedicated to musical, dialectical, and innovative poetry that honors time and place, especially the South. Elisha is a 2nd-grade associate teacher and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, with a concentration in Creative Writing from the University of Tennessee. She has been published in Berkeley Poetry Review (Issue 51), and she has hosted "Writin' Rhythm - A Writers Workshop" for Sundress Publications.

ELIZABETH FENG is a visual artist, writer, and programmer from the San Francisco Bay Area. She is the recipient of a 2021 Poetry & the Senses Fellowship from UC Berkeley's Arts Research Center.

IAN HOLOMBO Lillian, or Ian for short, (he/him/she/her) is an 18-year-old bigender queer college student currently studying English: Creative Writing at the University of Washington. He grew up in Santa Cruz, CA, and lived there his entire life before moving to Seattle this fall. She has been writing for multiple years and has always been delighted by the ways in which she can manipulate language and the world around her with words. Many of his works deal with emotions, human connection, and love in all its forms. Ian hopes to do some good through writing about these incredibly good things. Other good things she loves are her very perfect dogs, most if not all pasta/noodle dishes, and 99% of all shades of green. He thanks you for reading his work!

IRIS MORRELL is an artist, writer, and student living in San Francisco and Los Angeles. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Comparative Literature at the University of California, Irvine, where her work considers memory and language in Jewish mysticism.

JOHNNY T lives in the Pacific Northwest teaching writing in rural communities and working towards an MFA from University of Texas El Paso. When he can find the time, he likes to get lost in the mountains looking at mushrooms and talking to trees. Work by Johnny has won the Mikrokosmos Journal 2020 fiction contest and has appeared in West Trade Review, Allegory Ridge, Cardinal Sins, and more.

JULIA CUNNINGHAM is a queer, disabled writer from Los Angeles currently based in the Bay Area. She studies English and Disability Studies at UC Berkeley and loves practicing fiber art in her free time.

M. B. KRITIKOPOULOS is an upcoming poet and freshman at UC Berkeley. This publication is her first.

MIKAL WIX was born in Miami, Florida, of green-thumbed, hydrophilic parents. Growing up in the Melting Pot offered insights into other outlooks, and later, the visions of a revenant from the Appalachian closet. He holds degrees in literature and creative writing, and his poems have found homes in Beyond Queer Words, Tahoma Literary Review, Adelaide Literary Magazine, Angel Rust Magazine, and others. When not pruning kudzu, he can be found in the woodlot smoking bees.

PATRIZIA PEDRAZA (Madrid, 1995) is a Spanish writer and photographer. She is based in Toulouse, France, where she finishes her studies in philosophy. Lullaby is her first published poem. You can find more of her work at www.patriziapedraza.com.

SOPHIA ZUO (she/her) is a poet based in Taiwan, having lived most of her life in New York and being born to two immigrants, her poetry strongly focuses on identity and discovery. In her free time, she likes reading modern lit. and listening to good music.

TALIA FOX is a writer currently based in San Francisco. She did her undergraduate studies at UC Berkeley, where she studied Japanese and creative writing. Her work is interested in folklore, lineage, translation, and colour.