

THE PAJARITO PLATEAU
ARTS AND LITERARY JOURNAL

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On the Cover:

Jennie Richardson, "Mask," paper pulp, plaster, feathers

On the Back Cover:

Edzena Arevalo, "Celestial," ceramic

Elizabeth Portillos, "Deer," ceramic (raku)

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MASK

JENNIE RICHARDSON
paper pulp, plaster, feathers



UNTITLED
JANE CLEMENTS
ceramic (horse hair-raku)

“WHO ARE YOU?” SAID THE CATERPILLAR.¹

KEVIN JENKINS

In the Indigenous, Tewa culture, it is believed that there are several planes of existence that the spirit crosses through. When a child is born into the Earth Plane, they borrow a name, until the spirit moves on to the next level of being. This name is not chosen by the parents, but like baptism it is chosen by a spiritual leader.

There are several pueblos in Northern New Mexico that speak the Tewa language. They are: Kha’ Po Owingeh (Santa Clara), Ohkay Owingeh (San Juan) and Po Woh Geh Owingeh (San Ildefonso). Although each pueblo speaks Tewa, there are slight differences in the pronunciation of some words. I grew up in Santa Clara Pueblo, but my name comes from San Ildefonso.

My dad, John Jenkins, remembers the events leading up to my naming ceremony. He recalls the arguments he and my mother had, trying to decide whom they would get to name me. He says that his family had several people in mind and my mom’s family had their own set of people in mind. My mother, Rachel Begay, remembers more clearly that her family had two uncles and one of my aunts on her side of the family that they had wanted. After several months of deliberation, it was decided that my Aunt Julia from San Ildefonso would perform the ceremony.

Julia Martinez, still alive, is a specific type of blessed woman from San Ildefonso Pueblo. There are different clans of leaders that the people of the villages go to for their spiritual guidance. My aunt is well respected and had been practicing her craft for quite a while when they approached her.

It was near my first birthday in November, cold and frosty. The naming ceremony takes place early in the morning, so my mom and grandma bundled me up in American style clothing. Maternal parents, always caring and loving, didn't want me to get pneumonia at such a young age. They would soon get a shock of their own once the ceremony started.

My dad remembers being tired, because he had worked an extra long shift the day before. He was awakened by his own mother and father knocking at our door. My mom laughs, because she remembers them scolding him for not being ready. It was still dark outside and the chill in the air was extremely noticeable. My dad remembers donning his favorite boots and cowboy hat, while my mom wore her biggest coat.

My parents, my maternal grandmother, and my paternal grandparents all caravanned from Santa Clara to San Ildefonso at 4:30 am. When they arrived at my aunt's house, she was waiting for them with hot coffee brewing. At the behest of my spiritual aunt, I was taken to her back room and undressed. Neither of my parents remember much of what happened during this part. Some things, only special people are allowed to see and perform. Some things, I'm not allowed to put in this tale.

She brought me out wrapped in a small Pendleton blanket, which I still have. My dad remembers my head being shiny with something, but he couldn't tell what it was. My mom's only memory of that moment is the horror she felt when she saw that I was completely nude, except for the blanket.

The sun began to rise, so the entire family congregated outside. My dad believes that Julia may have had some help, but he's not sure. He said that it was possibly another one of her clanswomen that she was training, or somebody who was training her.

My mom vividly details how my Aunt Julia took me in her arms. Julia stepped away from the group and faced the east. She began to pray in Tewa. She told me how the entire group of people reached into their own satchels and took the sacred offering of corn meal in their hands. Each of them bowed their head and began to say their own prayers.

My mom prayed to The Creator, thanking him for blessing her

with such a healthy baby boy. She thanked Him for bringing us to this day. She asked Him to help me grow up to become a strong man. Then, she thanked all the spirits that happened to be with us that morning for their protection. It's hard to tell what evil lurks in the recesses of the human world. She asked their permission for her son to borrow a name in this life. Finally, she prayed to the Sun, thanking Him for rising on us that day. Then, she breathed her life into the corn meal in her palm and sprinkled it at her feet.

My dad heard the sacred women praying. He couldn't hear everything they were saying, but he remembers them in deep concentration. He says that a sudden wave of emotion overcame his entire body. He felt happy, as if a new cycle of life had suddenly enveloped him.

The sun's rays covered the whole pueblo when the blessed women turned around. You could see the daylight reflection on just about every surface that was covered in the morning frost. The cold was biting, but my dad says I was quiet and calm. He, on the other hand, couldn't wait to get inside and sip some of the hot coffee.

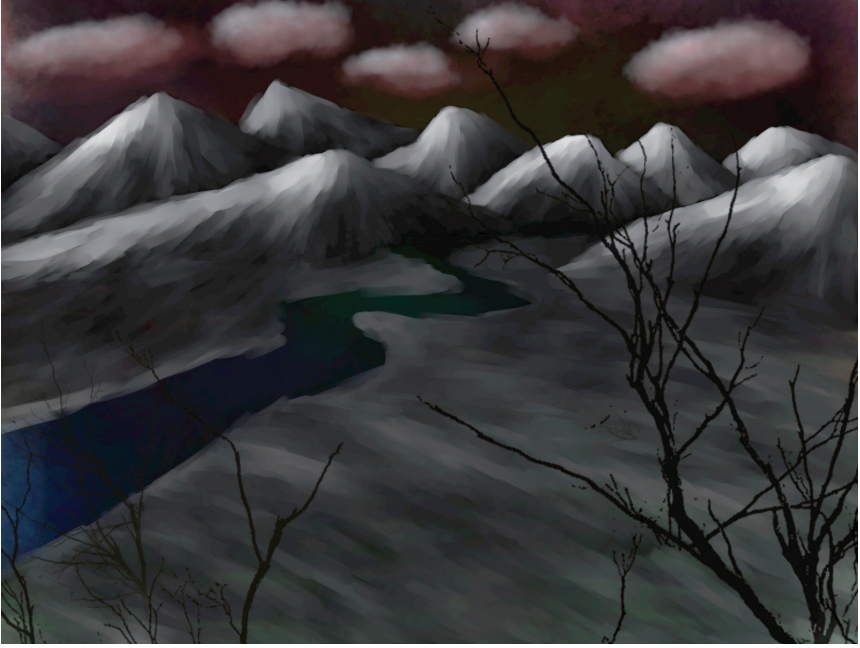
My aunt placed me gently into my mother's loving arms. She said a short prayer to the crowd before announcing my name. O-yeghi Thamoh Tsah, pronounced in the San Ildefonso style of Tewa. From that moment on, I have been known to this world as "White Frost in the Early Morning."

My father was happy and proud. My mother was filled with joy and began to shed tears, as the cold wind blew into her face. The spirits had spoken to her, telling her that they had accepted me.

After that, the whole family went back inside and had breakfast together. They told stories of their own names and how the person who named them had chosen it. It was a spiritual day, a blessed day, and a day of celebration.

As soon as everybody had warmed up, my dad says, was when I began to cry.

1. Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.



NATURE, SURREAL SUNSET

EMILY JONES

digital art



CELESTIAL
EDZENA AREVALO
ceramic



UNTITLED
NATHANE SALAZAR
ceramic

PRECIPICE

LAUREN MARCUS

I stand on the edge of something beautiful.

A change that scares me.

Yet it is the greatest gift.

To be free of a weight that's been with me for too long.

To be able to walk forward.

With one less thing

Holding me back.



DEER
ELIZABETH PORTILLOS
ceramic (raku)



VENETIAN SNOW QUEEN

MADDY PETERSON

ceramic



BURNT SKY
CODY STARR
ceramic (raku)

A CONVERSATION WITH DEPRESSION

RIQUE FERNANDEZ

My depression calls.

I ask, "Why did you come back? I thought I got rid of you this time."

Depression answers, "You could never get rid of me. You belong to me."

"I have a lot of stuff to do today," I say.

"Come back to bed."

"But I am not tired."

"Come."

Three hours pass.

"Can't I go now?"

Depression answers, "No, it's time to sleep."

"You can't keep me here forever, you know."

"Maybe not, but for now, you're mine."

Three days have passed, and I don't have motivation to get ready to go out. My mind contradicts itself. "We need to go. We can stay in today and do everything tomorrow."

Usually Depression wins this argument.

Depression tells me I need to cry. I say I have no reason to, but Depression says I do.

“Your world, your life is not worthy.”

“But I have all these people who love me.”

“They never loved you. They don’t care. They aren’t there for you. But me? I will always be here to comfort you.”

“I don’t need you,” I reply, but Depression doesn’t take no for an answer.

I wallow in self-pity. I do not know why. I cry for a few minutes, sometimes it’s hours. Everyone around me asks what’s wrong. I say depression. They go on to ask why I am depressed, as if it’s a particular thing I can dissect for them. Maybe it’s everything. Maybe it’s nothing.

Now when they ask what’s wrong, I say I am fine. I lie to my family, but worse, I lie to myself. Thoughts of self-harm approach once again. I convince myself not to self-harm. I look at my three-inch scar. Feelings of no one understanding comes again.

I cry myself to sleep. I tell myself to stay strong.

Another day has passed. I am alive. I am breathing. I am worthy.

I have purpose.



UNTITLED
JADEN MEDINA-TORRES
ceramic



CLOWN
EMILY JONES
digital art



MOTHERLAND JAR

RACHEL ORTIZ

ceramic



FACE PALM
CAROL FURCHNER
ceramic

LITERARY ANALYSIS: DICKINSON AND DONNE

STEVANNAH MARQUEZ

Two poems, “Because I Could Not Stop for Death,” by Emily Dickinson, and “Death Be Not Proud,” by John Donne, present different perspectives on death. Donne describes “death” as a prideful character who only makes you fall asleep, while Dickinson describes “death” as a humble character who guides you into the next world.

Dickinson explains death as a guide for people who are going to their afterlife, and death is not in a rush. She explains that death picked her up in a carriage of immortality, and now that he is here she must leave behind all her labor and leisure (her life). When death picks you up you get to see the stages of your life when you were a child, middle-aged, and elderly. I think Dickinson wanted her readers to understand that all life must come to an end. She wants her readers to understand that death isn’t a scary, dark soul who takes you against your will. Death shows you how your life was, and allows you to say goodbye to everything that you did while alive. Death gives you time to reflect and come to sense what is happening. Although you are dead, you must leave behind everything you did in your life, which can be terrifying. But Dickinson explains death as someone who understands that what is happening to you is scary. Death allows you to reflect on your life, understand what is happening before you are swept away into your eternal life. Dickinson doesn’t want you to be intimidated by death, rather to see it as something peaceful, and something everyone must go through. We come to a day where we must leave behind what we lived for and move to the next stage.

Donne sees death as prideful, and shouldn't be proud for taking lives. Donne seems like a person who thinks that death is unable to get him, that death isn't real. Death isn't something that will ever kill him, that he will just one day fall asleep and not wake up. That other charms such as poppy can make people fall asleep just as death does. Death should not feel so special about what he does since other charms can do the same thing. Once he is asleep for eternity and death is unable to get him, Donne thinks that he has finally beaten death. He seems as a person who is intimidated by death, so he tried to make it seem like something else. Death is a made up character to make people quiver in fear, while in actuality you are just asleep forever. You aren't shown how your life was while growing up, death doesn't pick you up and take you to eternity; you just sleep forever.

Donne and Dickinson both have two very different perspectives on death. Dickinson sees death as a soul who guides you from your life to another. While Donne sees death as unrealistic, a character made up to scare you, but in all reality you just fall asleep and never wake up. Although both writers have different perspectives on death, both poems end with the same lesson. Death isn't something that you should be afraid of. Dickinson makes the point that death is real and something that will catch up to all of us. While Donne makes it seem as if we don't really die, we are just asleep. In my opinion, I like how Dickinson represented death in her poem better than Donne. Dickinson gives readers the idea that death isn't someone who picks you up and takes you to exile. Death is more like a peaceful guide leading you to your afterlife.



REACH
OLHA OLIN
ceramic



UNTITLED
JANE CLEMENTS
ceramic (horse hair-raku)



UNTITLED
ANDREW FORD
ceramic



MOTHERLAND PLATTER

RACHEL ORTIZ

ceramic

THE LETTER

JIM O'DONNELL

She banged on the door. I hadn't expected my mother to drive over this quickly. I had only called her ten minutes ago and didn't even have time to put my leg on. I grabbed my crutches and hobbled to the front door.

When I opened the door, I could see she was fighting back the tears, but her eyes were already red and puffy.

"Where is it?"

"It's on the kitchen table. I'm going to put my leg on."

After all these years, my leg still felt like it was still there. I wanted to scratch it when it itched. I wanted to rub it when it ached. There was nothing to rub.

My brother and I both joined after 9/11. We were young and full of testosterone and national pride. We wanted to get back at those sons of bitches who took the towers down. We wanted revenge, justice, or whatever you want to call it. It didn't matter. We were going to Iraq to kick some ass and take some names.

We went in with the first wave and were in Baghdad when Saddam's statue came down. We all cheered and then cheered again when President Bush declared the war over from the deck of that aircraft carrier. We were badasses. That is, until my brother and I went out on patrol, one black night near Fallujah. There were sixteen of us in four Humvees. We sped down that death road, sometimes trading places in the column. I wasn't sure anymore, in which Humvee my brother rode. I'd hoped he was ahead of me because that's the way it's always been. He led, I followed.

My brother John was the first-born. From then on, he was the first at everything. He was taller, stronger, and always captain of something. Some said, “He’s the best looking boy I’ve ever seen,” and apparently the girls thought so too. My parents would always try to treat us equally at birthdays and Christmas, but I knew deep down, he was their favorite. Finally, in our late teens, I came to terms with it. I just kind of fell in behind him and was okay with it. I looked up to him. I was proud of him. When he joined the army, so did I.

That macabre night near Fallujah, Jasper, still a teenager, was our driver. He had one hand on the wheel and the other was gesturing as he talked about his girl back home. Her photo was stuck to the dashboard. She seemed to be smiling at Jasper as the headlights from behind illuminated it.

Only seven of us came back that night and my brother wasn’t with us. When the IED (Improvised Explosive Device) blew, so did my world. I never imagined it would be like that for us—after all, we were Rangers. The burning flesh, the carnage and confusion on that dark night under the same stars back home, didn’t make sense. One of the Humvees was virtually disintegrated and the other was on its roof, burning. The screams were muffled because both of my eardrums were blown out, but I could still hear them. I still hear them now—every day.

I remember pulling myself out of the twisted, mangled, Humvee. I had managed somehow to get my headlamp turned on. I glanced over at Jasper—his eyes were at half-mast. His upper torso looked fine, but the lower part was gone. His girl was still smiling at him, but now she had a spot of blood on her cheek, and there next to him, was the lower part of my leg. Still holding onto the door of the Humvee, I looked down. I was standing on one leg, my other was spurting black blood on the dry, desert floor. That was the last thing I remember until I woke two days later in the field hospital. That was five years ago and the last time I saw my brother. He was MIA.

* * * *

I pulled out a chair from the kitchen table and sat down across from my mother and we both stared at the letter.

She pushed the letter to me. I pushed it back. It just sat there in the

middle of the table, inanimate, but somehow alive. It spoke to us, beckoned us. The return address was in Arabic and it was addressed to mom.

“I held out hope for so many years, and then I finally came to terms with his death. I’ve moved on, as much as possible, and now this.” When she said this, her long, brown hair, now streaked with gray, fell over her face, and she sobbed.

“Mom, you gotta open it.”

“No, I don’t.”

“Well, you might say that, but sooner or later, you’re going to open it.”

“Later then.”

“Then I’ll open it.”

“You will not... It’s addressed to me.”

“If dad were still alive, he would open it.”

“Not unless I let him.”

We just sat there for what seemed an eternity. My dad’s old grandfather clock stood tall, just across the kitchen. Tick-tock, tick-tock....

The letter looked as though it had been on a journey. It was stained and dirty and looked as though it had been caught in some sort of postal machine. One corner was ripped open and if you looked closely, you could make out a letter or two. I bent over and looked closely at those letters to see if they meant anything to me. They were our alphabet, but that’s all I could make out. I picked it up and worried at the hole with my finger.

“Stop that...”

I sat back down and looked at mom. She was full-on crying now. Her beautiful face was puffy and red. She pulled her hair back over one ear and said, “Where are your matches?”

“Why?”

“I’m gonna burn it.”

I reached over and took her hands. They were much older than the rest of her. After my father died, she took over the Deli, making sausages, lasagna, hand-made pasta, and all things Italian. She worked too much, to forget....

My father had died suddenly. I’m sure the loss of my brother is what took him.

“I don’t have any matches, I gave up smoking, remember? Anyways, you can’t burn it before we read it.”

“The hell I can’t. I’ve already made peace with God. That took a long time and I’m not going to live that again. Then there was the letter from the Army: ‘Your son died with honor, in the line of duty...’ and all that horse shit they send every mother. My friend Betsy got the same damned letter, verbatim.”

She snatched up the letter and headed for the stove. I got up, hobbling as fast as I could and managed to grab her wrist before she could get the stove lit. She fought me as only a grieving mother can. I teetered on one leg and went down hard, hitting my head.

I must have been out for a couple of minutes because when I woke, she was sitting on the floor next to me with a damp washcloth on my head and the opened letter on her lap.

“He’s alive.”



UNTITLED
NATHANE SALAZAR
pottery



STEAM PUNK SIGHT

EDZENA AREVALO

ceramic

FACES OF THE MIND

LAUREN MARCUS

A mother.

A father.

A guiding light in the dark

Whatever you name them

They remain

What we strive for

What we achieve

In our own time

How we reach behind the veil

And see what can't be

Find what isn't real

Each time striving

As a child does when new

As we do each day

Growing as a whole

Each to learn

Each to share

One day we will know

The face of our mind

That which we do not see

We knew it once

but no more

We must learn it again



FIREWORK
EMILY JONES
digital art

