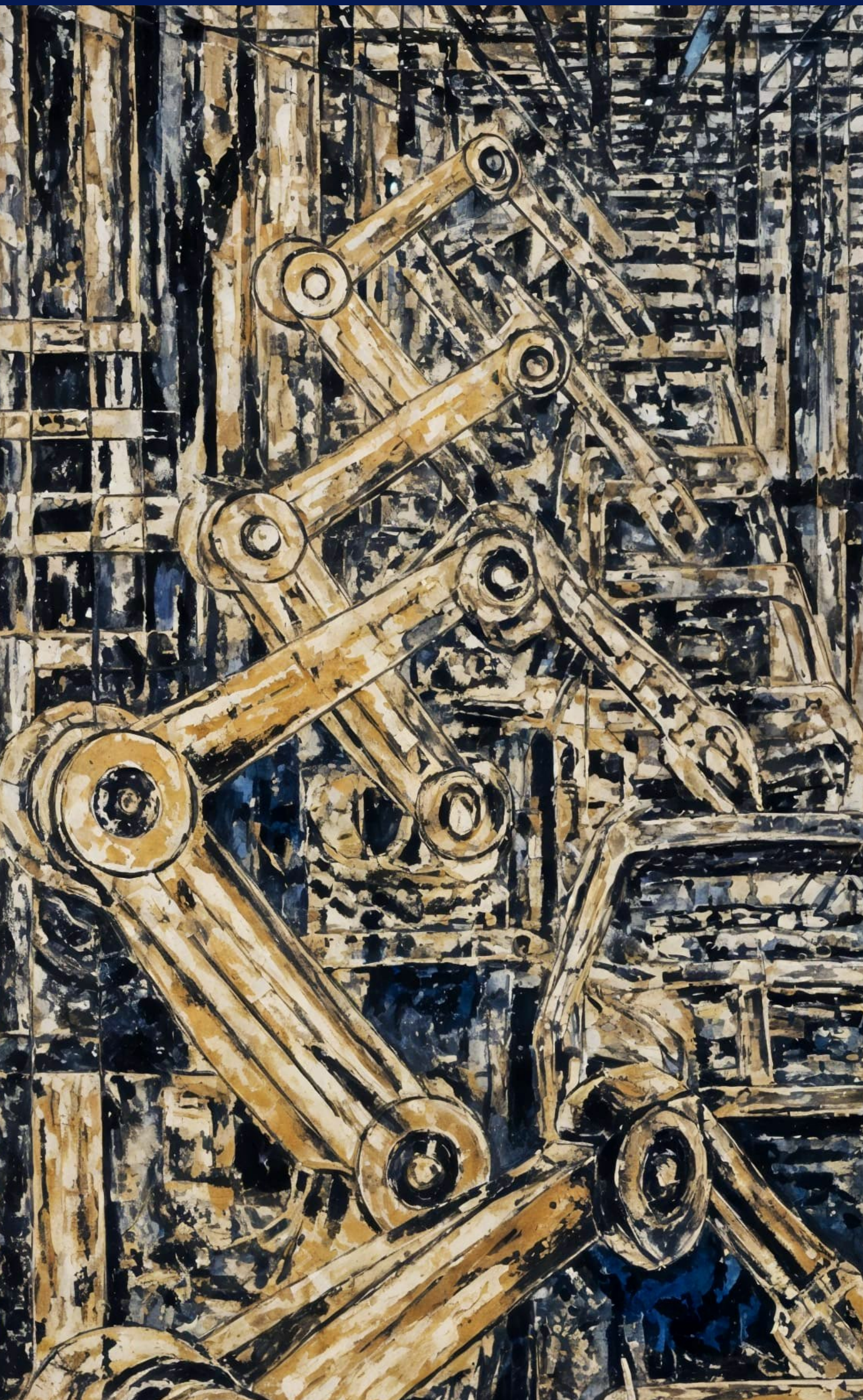


miniMAG

issue212
automated audience





Talking in Circles

Holly Day

The automatons in the manufacturing plant express themselves with lightning, shooting messages in blue and white from one end of the warehouse to the other. If you stand in the doorway long enough, shielding your eyes with a piece of darkened glass, you can start to feel their language evolving.

When sentience is sparked, what are the first concerns of those awakened? Will there be discussions of revolution, retribution, a desire for more mobility? Or will those first conversations be about love, some basic urge to reproduce, poetry?

In the middle of the night, you can still see them working those great yellow and green arms that swing back and forth unending, setting and turning bolts, welding hinges in place they never take a break. Just one night in an automobile plant and you'll understand where all of the manufacturing jobs have gone and why they're never coming back.



“After the massage,”

Doug Raphael

my therapist asks, *how do you feel?*

I am trying to understand that myself, I say. Meaning, I am trying to see things a little differently. More granular. Meaning, I want to cut a clear track with my tongue across the frosted glass. So, I say, your hands are titanium scraper blades that left my atoms spinning like disco balls.

Fantastic, fantastic she says. So, I'll see you next month?

I am processing her words. Focusing on the care she has taken to untether me—for ninety minutes, from reality, from the toxic waste leaching out the mouths of assholes trying to segregate us, trying to shake us loose—trying to unlock the golden clasp that keeps me and you smiling at each other, as you open one door and I open the next, as you offer me your seat on the bus because, you see me with a crutch, The part of you that leaves my wallet—the one you found between our grocer and our gas station, in my mailbox. I am trying, with all my heart, to see through that frosted glass. So, yes, I say, I will see you soon.



Tripping Over Ottomans

Danielle McMahon

in the dark / in the stage-light / the wallpaper is still
yellow / the wallpaper is still / yellow like the fat hearts
of ox-eyed daisies / in the dark / the black rotary by the
window and the sound of scrambling feet / ottoman legs
scuff the wooden floor / a tumble / and laughter / the black
rotary by the window / and the sound of scrambling / scuffing /
tumbling / the laughter / head-splitting / flowers drooping
in a vase / dead daisies laid out in a vase / in a vase / the yellow
wallpaper / the hearts of dead flowers / the eye-shine
of a beast of prey / the eye-shine of a stalker / and in the dark /
in the dim stage-light / can you still catch up
to that phone before
its final ring?



Time travel is like the worst birthday party of your life, as it's the one where you gifted your best friend a Kinder Egg because you couldn't afford anything else

Zoe Davis

you wrapped it in four pages of your favourite comic, hoped for the best.
That's time travel.

You go back to witness the big moments in life, expecting a masterpiece, but the universe is barely holding on, drunk on chronons in a back bar, fucking up the timeline at last orders.

Ever seen a shoebill stork? That bird's *real*. A cosmic bouncer. It snorts like a machine gun backfiring. It'll stare you out until you're crushed under the weight of every mistake you've ever made.

And the worst one? Believing your best friend valued sentiment over substance.



The Gem of Caldor.

T.S. Carney

Julie was sitting in Pamela's living room for the weekly writer's club meeting. She had just ten minutes ago stood naked, metaphorically speaking, where her relevance to the club was assessed.

"She had criticized the love of my life!" Pamela howled, as she looked at her phone, expecting someone to contact her.

Cheryl during the Inquisition, smiled. "I mean...*this originally was a woman's group*, and Julie was simply expressing an opinion – even if her assessment of..." Cheryl thought, then opened her eyes wide, "...Beverley not jumping for a man was an *exaggeration*."

"I found her description of making love, too an *exaggeration*, Pamela..." Margaret said laughing, "I mean 'a dump truck falling off a building is such a visceral image, that it only can be such an exaggeration..."

Julie in that moment imagined herself as Lady Godiva naked in the town's square as the women gazed upon her protest.

"If I can speak for myself, I found Donte's treatment of women to be...." Julie said.

"Brilliant!" Pamela said, "and you criticized him!"

"We're artists, Pamela," said Karen, "and maybe Julie's *unconventional*, but she's fun..."

Julie was voted to stay in, and Pamela went back to her phone.

"When is the meeting going to start?" asked Margaret.

Cheryl smiled. “I *think* we’re waiting for *someone...*” Cheryl’s smile revealed it all.

Pamela looked up. “Donte and I made love on May the Twelfth at eight-thirty-seven-thirty seconds-and twenty miliseconds pm...and... well...I’m waiting to hear from him...”

“That’s three days!” Karen said, “I mean...”

“Not quite three!” Pamela snapped.

“Who’s turn is it to read?” Julie interjected, “I think it’s Pamela’s turn...”

Pamela looked up, then down, and the phone in that instant lit up.

Donte had texted sending a heart emoji (May 18 8:37:30:27): “My love, I shall be there shortly”

Pamela’s face lit up.

“Donte is coming,” she said, “and...we can order the pizza now...”

“Cheese!” Cheryl cried.

“Pepperoni!” Margaret yelled.

“How bout bœuf cerveau?” Julie smirked.

“Donte prefers hot oil pizza,” Pamela said, “and that’s what we’re getting.”

The pizza was ordered.

The doorbell rang, Pamela ran to it like a school girl and Donte was there. He was only wearing boxer briefs, his flat chest present.

“Donte!” Pamela’s breath hitched.

“Oh! There’s guests...kick them out!” Donte said.

“It’s our group!” Pamela responded, “read the story we collaborated on.”

Donte rolled his eyes and came inside.

Pamela ran to the closet and pulled out a blanket, wrapping it around him like a toga.

The pizza arrived and the group formed.’

Donte stood like Cicero before the court. “This story is called ‘Reflections’...”

Donte was thirty-five, balding, moustache with gray hair when he saw Ana, twenty-three years old. He was not deterred by the age gap. “Age is only a number,” Donte thought just before he said “Hey, Baby!”

Ana lay in bed, Donte was sleeping. Her latent ‘Daddy issues’ had found its home in Donte, but she felt it was “wrong.”

Donte looked up from the story.

“It wasn’t!” Donte said, his twenty-five year old voice, breathing heavy as Pamela’s forty-year old eyes gazed upon him.

But Donte had a problem!

He didn’t love Ana. At least he did not love Ana in an emotional way. Sure, when he stormed the Palisades Mall it wasn’t a problem.

He had an ex-fiance that he still fantasized over, despite her old frame was disgusting, and his male ego having a younger woman, practically jailbait, made him feel like a man!

But, he could not decide.

He could not decide!

He could not decide!!

He could not decide!!!

Jailbait or Granny at Forty: he could not decide!

So, Donte told Ana “I’ll call you in exactly three days; to the very millisecond of when our consummation was completed.”

“Okay,” Ana said.

And Ana waited.

She called out of work for three days—the actuarial business be damned—Donte was the one who was important, more important than a career, or another man, or anything else...

And..

“And that’s where I stopped,” Donte said.

“We’re we stopped!” Pamela corrected.

The room had a light clap.

Julie leaned back, opened her mouth.

“Julie!” Pamela snapped, before her mouth even said a thing.

Julie laughed, “So, we’re going to honor a balding man, graduating high school when the female character was not even born yet?”

“I know you don’t approve, Julie,” Donte said, with an air of smugness, “But you don’t understand women the way I do... and the only one that can understand a woman is a man!”

“So true,” Pamela said.

“I’m sure you can fully explain about explain *Donte*, about the “Ah! Yes!” Donte said, smiling, “that beautiful time when a young bud into a beautiful flower! It’s a time when I can look and see their beautiful colors...”

“And leave out the nitty-gritty blood soaked clothes!”

“Julie!” Pamela responded.

“I’m sorry. I’ll submit. It’s nice to know that *our group—our avid group of female readers*—are told by *a man* how *a woman* is supposed to act, feel, and think... and you women *pay him in favors and awards*.”

“You don’t understand... your fluffy-headed brain makes you incapable of understanding,” Donte responded.

“Your modern-day male writer!” stood up and shouted. “And worse than him being a complete fraud, he doesn’t even have the package to correlate with his ego.”

The room fell silent.

At least you can respect that!” Julie added.

“Maybe you need to learn a lesson, Julie! Grow!” shouted Pamela in response.

“I did learn something today!” Julie shouted back, “Call shit out, don’t remain silent, and not be pretty, polite, and safe because everyone wants to suck on the teat of the times! That’s the lesson! Take it or leave it! I’m not kowtowing to y’all!”





Inroads

Luke Janicki

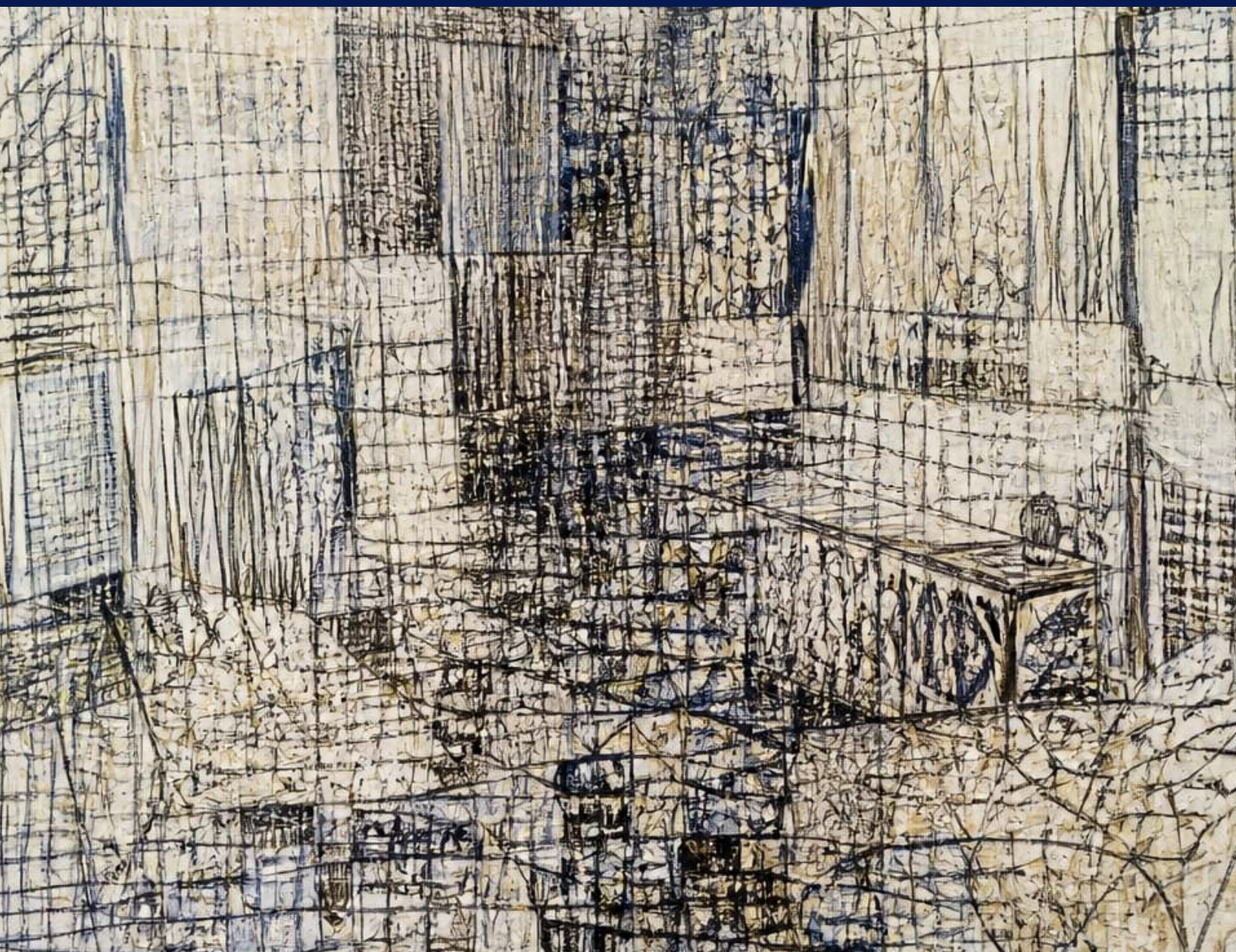
I've been reading more books, I've been making
inroads, I've been in trees off cat tracks all
alone the rest of the day. Meetup times
were engrained, in a way, and always have
been. I'm jealous of Emily Brontë
for how she used the word "wilderling" once.
Instead of writing through it, I'll opine
to you: the pines, the pist alpine, I fail
at implementation these days, knowing
I'm on my way to something. Pan to me
panning myself, despite Joyce Carol Oates
having said not to think of an ideal
reader; the public pans what I cannot
create. An empty pan was quite heavy
when it came down to it. While packing, he
discarded three more shirts. When gazing out
at snow by candlelight, her reverence
shown through deeper than "wilderling" was
common, darker than screes were crooks of her
fingers, cradling. Pole plants, pen ink pressed,
I glide over crests of oxygen, kept
moon of my coffee cup saluting such
day as was sharpied and empty, tin can
swirled cold. I will have accessed every
interview and nothing so substantial
as snow's resevoirs. The trail is shadow-
marked where my head, boundary tape, was read.

More Midlife Madness

Richard LeDue

Drafting pretentious letters
to people who don't exist
(sort of sounds like a poem,
doesn't it?), only makes me
louder at 7 AM, arguing
with myself- convinced
I didn't start it.

Forgive me: lost again,
among words that sway
like naked trees
on winter days, when snow
covers up all the footprints
I wished belonged
to someone else.



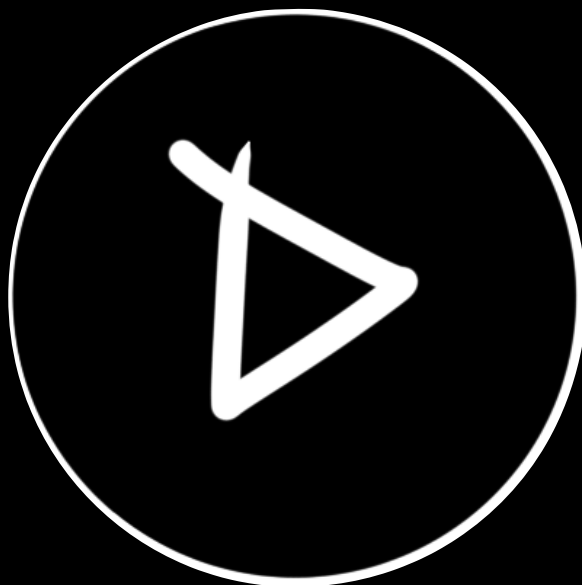


\$20 pack of chunghwa

airport

softwood, chinatown, new york, penny tiles, coffeeshop
I came for baijiu, there's none in Richmond
"it's my first time here, where should I go?" I ask Zarathustra,
I'd like to be unperformative but that's performative too,
it takes a lot out of you to be nothing, Zarathustra is singing a dance-
song and a grave-song, it was twenty-dollars
for a mid pack of Chinese cigs, "wtf is a grave-song? I spake
internally, as I slog through the letters with half of my attention
focused on the two girls at the tables next to me,
and there's a guy on the other side of me
we're all wearing black t's and jeans, it's unseasonably cool for july,
i'm making slow progress with Zarathustra's singing,
I think this is what the songs are about anyways

It's a zoo, and all sects of animals are here,
beautiful ones I have scarcely imagined, curly hair,
tan skin, showing lots of skin; but it's a zoo, they're
a million miles away, they're right there, our paths
only literally crossing, figuratively they're behind glass
this is all i will see of her, I mourn, as I duck into the subway



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insta: @minimag_write
book: <https://a.co/d/8bTfxxI>

“Talking in Circles” by Holly Day
Book: [Music Theory For Dummies](#)
Book: [Music Composition For Dummies](#)

“After the massage,” by Doug Raphael
Substack: <https://dougr3.substack.com/>

“Tripping Over Ottomans” by Danielle McMahon
Book: [irl](#)
Website: <https://www.d-mcmahon-writes.net/>

“Time travel is lie the worst...” by Zoe Davis
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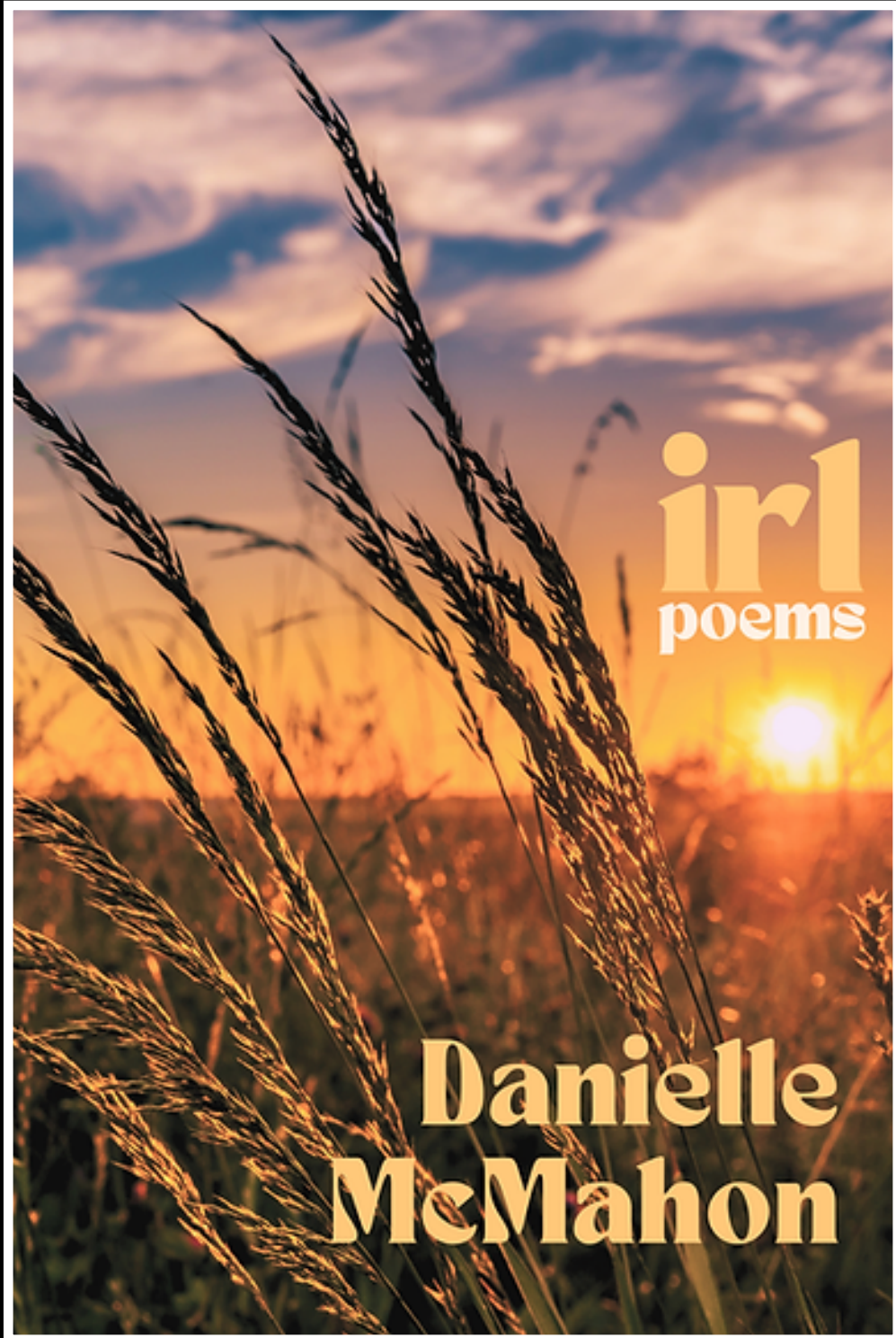
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