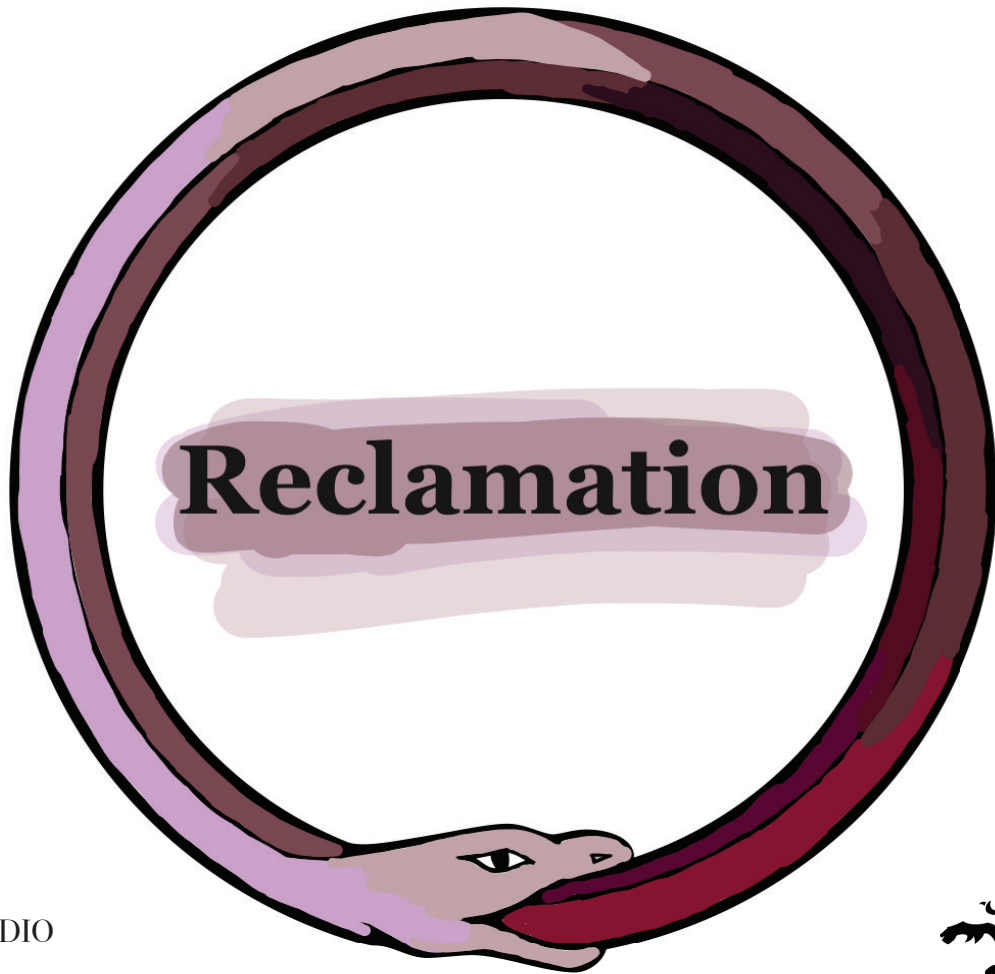


RDBNPNG

relatively dark blue neither purple nor green



WYBC YALE RADIO
RDBNPNG 29
RECLAMATION
FALL 2021/FALL 2022



Where you have left, you cannot return to

I.

This is not where you were born, but it is where we have begged for you to return to.

Little girl, we have reached our fingers into the sky and dirt for you.

II.

We climbed one thousand stone steps until we reached Heaven. My mother and I, we did a good job pretending we did not hear my uncle's labored breathing or his knees wailing in the sun. We carried paper bags and unopened bottles of iced tea. There were two photographs on the tombstone this time.

He uncapped the bottles. The liquid, warm by then, frothed and overflowed, sliding down the plastic sides, making the earth hiss.

They stuffed the paper bags with gold paper boats. The glitter



rubbed off easily, the flakes wedged in the ridges of my fingers.

There were four bags in total, fat and swollen. Then the ceremony was over and the paper boats tumbled out of the gashes, sputtering smoke and ash.

When it was my turn, I placed my palms flat on the ground, careful.

I pressed my forehead to the grass and listened to the gurgling underbelly of the earth. Little girl, you have returned, but you are too late.

I dug my fingernails in the dirt and left streaks crumbling down my face.

by Emily Xu

III.

My mother's childhood friends took me to a restaurant by the sea and told me tales of the old Shanghai. He set aside his glasses and rubbed his eyes. She gazed at me steadily over her cup and spoke in a drawl. Times were hard. Everyone wanted to leave for America. But then things changed. If your mother had waited a few years, she would have experienced China's remarkable recovery, too.

What was not said:

We see through your mother's
fried hair and hot pink Michael Kors handbag.
We see her drapes of flesh, all that weight
pulling her down to the dirt. We have views of the
Huangpu River from our bathrooms, we fuck
in beds softer than Lady Liberty's robes.

I swallowed the sweet plum juice eroding my teeth and smiled.

IV.

Well, I came home. It was still August.
The air crackled around my neck
as my father sawed his pork chops with the fruit knife.



THE SISTERS
CLEO MALONEY



August

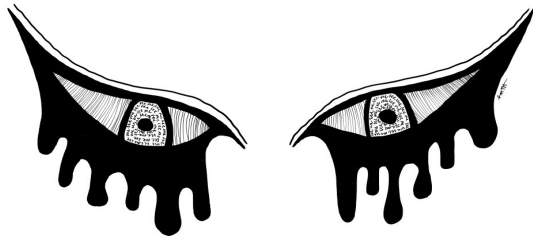
My father goes under the knife. I cut into an egg and the yolk gushes out. In this movie, the trees all are dying fabulous deaths. I am jealous of the way they sway before fainting, propped up by the air. I stole some metal with my brother to wrap around our fingers. We didn't know we were marking ourselves for something terrible. He went into work the next day and I brushed my teeth. The worst thing was that nothing happened: I paid to be entertained and could barely pay attention and he bought a drink at the corner-store. We swallowed the great sadness of getting away with it.

August Too

My hair is staining the pillow and my teeth have shifted from their previous stations. All day I lie around and read about great journeys. Here is my journey to the kitchen, to collect some cashews in my fist. Here is my journey in too-small shoes, toes pressing towards pavement like some anxious weed. Here is my journey to buy a tape measure, a bottle of ginger tea. In the park a man says *Advancement is hard in every field, at least I think. I hope.* Here is the advancement you hoped for. Here is lightning striking the park trashcan. In bowling we call that a strike, a birdie. A slam dunk. A score. A home-run is when you explode with it.

By Maya Siegel

By Faith Pena



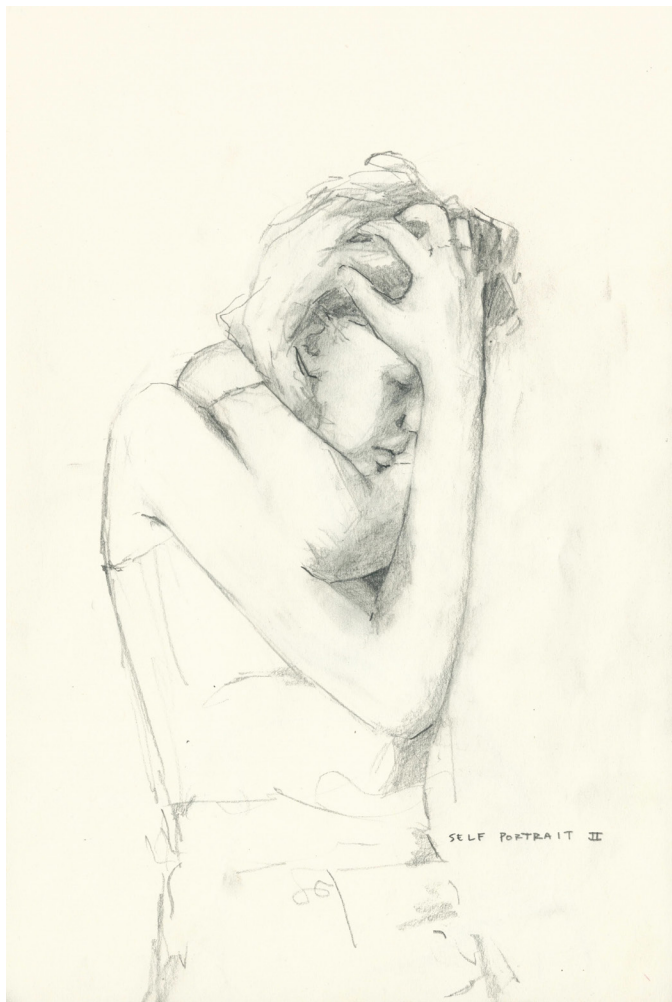
why don't you see me?

dear mom,

i forgive you ♡

- FAITH

Self-Portraits II and III



Uriel Teague

SUNDAY

CLARA YUSTE-GOLOB

Ren loved Sundays. This was the time they took for themselves, after a long week of working in the dead letter office across town. Their wallet and keys, refillable train card, and boots all stayed in place atop the dresser by the front door, and Ren made it a point to stay inside all day. Over the years, they had come up with special Sunday projects— making soup to freeze for the following week, painting a mural on one wall of their studio before painting over it in white at midnight— to avoid the dreaded boredom that would leave them itching to leave if they let it. They hadn't seen relatives in years, but they were decidedly safer here, in this world that consisted of an apartment above the light rail and its four white walls.

Of course, you had no way of knowing any of this. You were just a child when Ren lived upstairs, and none of us even knew their name, either. Don't listen to any of the others, though— the language barrier could only account for so much. The neighbors all thought they were odd, and Ren probably thought we were odd, too. I wish I could say that we lent them sugar once, or that they watered our plants when we left for the summer, but no; they learned to do without that extra cup, and we with returning each September to a house full of dead plants. I know you never considered any of this when you were younger, but the fact that we could leave for those months to drive to the shore was a luxury few of our neighbors could afford.

The world was bleak during those years, and every time Ren saw you among the other children playing in the alleyway, they would silently apologize that you had to spend your childhood in such want of sunlight, of love, of the things they remembered. Some desires are so loud that people like Ren could hear them. Not only hear, but struggle to forget. They rode the commuter train each weekday, bombarded with the cravings of the whole train car crawling up their spine, humming to themselves to drown it all out. Other passengers would sometimes move away from them, leaving them with a whole half of the row to lay their head on their briefcase on rainy days, when it was louder than usual. They weren't a danger to anyone but themselves, but how were we supposed to know that, let alone our ailing guardians?

I know I never told you why we left, but you must have connected the dots by now.

Ren loved Sundays, and so did you. Without ever having met them, you unknowingly replicated their lifestyle, sleeping past noon on the last day of each week, refusing to leave the house until you absolutely had to. You'd build forts around your bare mattress, stacking the kitchen chairs and draping them with dirty sheets while you waited for me to wash them. Laundry day was for soapy dishwater and starting everything all over, hanging all the color in our home out to dry by the train tracks. You were becoming more and more reluctant in everything you did as you grew, and as worried as our uncle was for you, he could never bear to push you onto the street on your favorite day of the week.

Ren came from far away, that much was clear. They always filled the stairway with strange scents, cooking and reheating stews filled with root vegetables and meat that slid right off the bone. In the summertime, while we were gone, they'd open the windows wide and enjoy the static that replaced our noise, not quite silent but numbing in the way the ceiling fan's white noise would put you to sleep when you were a baby.

Sometimes, silence was loud.

the feeling (aka: the world i once knew)

madelyn dawson

*there was a girl./blood poured from her ears every saturday at 3:45 pm./
she would collect the drops with her hands and drink them./during the
middle ages they did that to cure epilepsy./she never had a seizure./she
crushed rose petals and painted her skin red./she she had a friend who
was crazy./but she was completely sane./she burned a hole in the front
of her head with the discarded incense sticks on her floor./mango butter
scented do-it-yourself lobotomy./she said she needed it./too much blood in
her head./she thought she was narcissus so she went to a lake./she could
not see her face so she broke all her mirrors./35 (more) years of bad luck?*

//but she could just turn it off./like the lights./right?/

Instructions I left for the burglar in my kitchen

Alan Lin

Midnight marauder,
take
my loaf of egg bread
soaked in sweet cream
free it from foil
wait for the sun to eclipse
summits far away
lay it in dew
where it can rest
sticky like regret
for the flies to suckle and sing
drunk songs
to a Dionysian death
to a dawn not unlike this
where they can open their
honeycombed eyes
to fly mothers and fathers
and fly friends
all abuzz



rejoicing swatterless
all the shit in the world
cliffs and dunes of dung
stinking blissfully
like the sweat of my beloved
who waits
out there
too softly
as I scrape and tumble
and hold words in my mouth like
chocolate in the sun in my hand
and questions never asked
can never exist again
like closed car doors
or your residual warmth under this palm
the shadow of ur absence
it is okay to let go
Let go.

Mabalaolao





Alan Lin

Stairs

I.

I left New York and ran into its brother.
The buildings here do not know privacy. They link their arms and refuse to let go.
If you look up, you can see ribbons of clothing lines, phone wires snarling up the sky,
Hungry fingers reaching to yank them all down.
My uncle lives on the fifth floor. The stairs are steep, and there are so many of them.

II.

In second grade, my class went on a field trip to the Brooklyn Bridge.
Once, a girl was walking on the handrails, but she tripped and cracked her head open.
I rolled my eyes, but later, as we sat at the base of the East Tower
And I unwrapped the deli-ham-and-WonderBread sandwich I had cried for,
I imagined the etiolated brain goop oozing out of the girl's skull,
The cars below that swerved as hair and whole chunks of matter rained down on them.
In Shanghai, the streets are narrow and uneven.
The women and men are impatient, but they are not careless.
They squeeze between cars as if they have been doing it their entire lives.

III.

I ask my mother what kind of neighborhood my uncle lives in.
I want to understand Shanghai in terms of SoHo, Sunset Park, Midtown, Williamsburg.
My mother furrows her brow. *Where low-income people live.*
Her tongue curls around the vowels, bewildered and in search of solace.

IV.

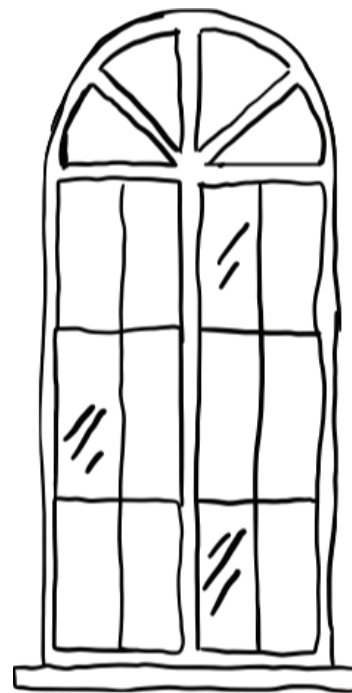
My uncle does not stop to catch his breath.
He rounds the corner and looks up at the storied gods.

A Devoir to Julie and Shu (or, perhaps, an Oral History)

My first mouth housed a flat tongue,
a hell-bent hellion, the only birthright my uncle could give me.
It christened beer bottles with contested names and
tricked street magicians into giving away their doves,
assembled an entire bloodline's worth of histories and
mended the chasm between my mother's two continents,
until it was conned into manufacturing other syllables.

In high school, they discover my flat tongue and coax me to sever it for good.
They do not tell me that their knives are already dripping,
have already rusted a thousand times over.
For three years, I dissect my voice on a medical table.
Afterwards, when they close their eyes, they cannot even tell a difference.
I am their perfect speaker. I am their star.
They tie stones around my first tongue, drown it in the ravines,
then build a shrine to my new mouth, display my new gilt trophies
glittering with the spit of the kin I massacred,
call it *confidence* and *Speech and Debate*, worthy of a being on a cake.
I am the only senior in Zhu Laoshi's Level One Mandarin class,
and my ancestors' hands on my shoulders are so, so heavy.
None of the other students' heads are bent as low as mine;
none of their necks bear ghost handprints.
I spend all my time mourning the calloused stem,
digging the stitches out,
and training the impostor to lie behind my teeth.

Uncle, there is nothing to praise.
Ivory ABC orator who bastardizes her own language.
I have made an entire livelihood out of this indignity;
they feed me with their snaps and murmurs,
shelter me with their mouthed repentances,
beg me to mollify the guilt and laugh with them—
Uncle, don't you hear it?
There is no shame more deafening than this one.



In this zine :

1. Where you have left, you cannot return to

Emily Xu

2. Sisters

Cleo Maloney

3. Augusts

Maia Siegel

4. Untitled #1 and #2

Faith Pena

5. Self-Portraits II and III

Uriel Teague

6. Sunday

Clara Yuste-Golob

7. the feeling (aka: the world i once knew)

Madelyn Dawson

8. Instructions I left for the burglar in my kitchen

Alan Lin

9. Mabalaolao

Alan Lin

10. Stairs

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11. A Devoir to Julie and Shu
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Emily Xu

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