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To our treasured audience,

The Interpretations Editorial Board presents a special edition of the Interpretations Creative Journal. This year has been a difficult one for many of us, but we have chosen to display the silver lining behind the clouds. Creative individuals spent their time during the COVID-19 lockdown learning new skills, building on past experience, and producing unique works that deserve to catch the spotlight. The 2020 edition of the Interpretations Creative Journal is a mega-issue, including the works submitted before the Spring COVID-19 lockdown, and the submissions received in the Fall, one of the strangest university semesters yet. We intend to highlight the creative endeavors accomplished during these uncertain times by presenting the Interpretations 2020 edition.

Sincerely,
Samantha Brey
Senior Editor
雨滴

Raindrops

雨滴融入湖水
没有波澜、合而为一
希望社区与个体
正是如此

On the land and under the heaven
I wish two nations are two rivers
Merged into one at intersection
Holding each other, even when departed

祈祷这个以美丽命名的国度
强大、宽广、深厚，如大洋一般
所有的河流在这里交汇
所有的雨滴在这里繁荣、休憩

I pray the nation named Beautiful
Strong, wide, and deep like the ocean
Where all rivers go
Where all raindrops thrive and rest

"Painting" by Louise Lillpopp II "Raindrops" by Hong Zhou
DAUGHTER OF IMMIGRANTS
Mariam Abdi

“They are illegal and taking jobs away from us. No attempt is being made to speak the language of this country: English. Higher crime rates, and a lack of assimilation are a few other reasons why our country needs to tighten its immigration laws,” spouted Ryan.

“I would steer clear from blanket statements such as yours because they lack credibility. I want to see statistics the next time you say something like that. Furthermore, immigrants are what made this country! The Statue of Liberty famously states: ‘give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free. The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.’ Welcoming immigrants is embedded in the very fabric of this country. And the anti-immigration rhetoric sweeping the nation is a smoke screen.
for something else: right wing politics that are bordering on fascism,” I countered.

A flurry of hands began to clap together and from the corner of my eye, I saw my teacher get up. Arms spread out wide, Mrs. Brooks squeezed me into a bear hug.

“This debate team is going all the way to the state championship!” said Mrs. Brooks. “I can feel it in my bones. Ryan, your acting is impeccable- you took this prompt to heart,” she added.

It’s not acting- he means it, I thought to myself.

“And, Daniela, you are poised and so eloquent when you speak. I am so glad you agreed to be co-captain this year,” she said.

“Thank you, Mrs. Brooks, how could I turn down this opportunity?” I replied.

How could I? It wasn’t much of a choice. This is my third captaincy of a club already and it’s another thing to add on to my college applications. It makes me look like a leader.

“Alright, folks, I will see you tomorrow for our next practice,” said Mrs. Brooks.

I picked up my backpack and books and walked out of class. I dug into the pockets of my blazer and grabbed my headphones. I plugged it into my phone and played the next song.

Yo por ti, tú por mi, quién lo diría? Eres única, mamacita Rosalía...

I felt a tap on my right shoulder. Slightly irritated, I pulled my headphones out of my ear and turned around to find Ryan standing in front of me.
“Vargas,” he said, pronouncing each syllable.

“It’s not Var-Gas, it’s Vargas, Varrrrgas. This is your third year of Spanish and you still can’t roll your r’s, Ry-An,” I said sarcastically.

His eyes burrowed into a deep frown. “Listen, Var-Gas. If you’re going to quote all this stuff on liberty, I’m going to quote our dear President on some of his policies for the next debate,” he said.

“I see, Make America Hate Again,” I said.

“No more blanket statements, right?” he replied sarcastically.

I rolled my eyes, put my headphones back in, and walked away from Ry-An.

I sighed deeply as I stepped into my school bus because my commute home was not the average commute of a seventeen-year-old. I sat in my usual seat next to the window and saw all my classmates hop into their Porsches, Hummers, BMWs, and Audis.

_Caríña, they drive nice cars, but don’t know how to drive it_. I chuckled to myself as I heard my father’s voice in my head.

My bus was the special bus. It bused in some of the brightest students from Woodson Hills also known as the Woodson Hood to some of my Bartley Academy classmates. The scenery quickly changed from manicured lush green lawns to three story family houses with bodegas in every corner. Even the air changed, which I noticed when I began to attend Bartley Academy. Woodson was urban and industrious...
as compared to the suburban metropolis of St. Adams.

Three bus changes and a quick twenty-minute walk home later, I finally arrived at my house. Before I could even open the door, it flew open.

“Ay, Dani, you are finally home. Carriña, I put some chicken in the oven, take it out in about fifteen minutes and the rice is done. Feed Carlos and Gabby, make sure they do their homework, and put them to bed too. I’m gonna be late, besos, mi amor,” said my mother in a rushed tone as she kissed both of my cheeks.

Being the eldest sucked. Mom worked the night shift while dad worked second shift. So, the afterschool responsibilities fell on me.

“Carlito, Gabby! Come eat, dinner is ready!” I said.

While they ate, I laid my biology book on the table and read the chapter about the cell body. Ribosomes, mitochondria, and th-

“Dani, I’m done!” my five-year-old brother shouted.

“Me too!” yelled Gabby.

I grabbed their plates and quickly washed them with the rest of the dishes. I sat with them for about an hour doing their assigned homework on the alphabet and then I got them ready for bed. Once the twins were fast asleep, I began to do my own homework in the kitchen. While studying I heard keys jingle in the front door and recognized the heavy stomp. Dad was finally home from work.

“Carriña, its almost 1:00 am, you have school tomorrow too. Go get some sleep,”
"I know, but Papi, it's junior year. I'm taking four APs. I think it's going be like this until the AP exams in May. I want to get into Brown, Papi, thirty more minutes of AP U.S. History and I'll be in bed, promise," I said.

"Okay, goodnight, mi vida," my father said as he kissed me on the forehead.

I looked at the clock hanging on the wall. 2:00 am, it read. I rubbed my eyes and suppressed a yawn. The words on my textbook began to blur. I should call it a night, I thought to myself. I'd been reading the same paragraph for the last fifteen minutes and could not get past the Battle of the Alamo. I closed my AP U.S. History textbook and put my notes into my backpack and walked to my room. I shared a room with the twins and carefully tiptoed around, hoping not to wake them. I quietly climbed into my bed and let out a heavy sigh. I felt the day's stress in my body, feeling achy all over. The clock on my nightstand read 2:15 am. I'd be up in four hours. Late nights and even longer days, I thought to myself. I remembered what my best friend Mina said to me the other day: 'Dani, you're always at a hundred.'

I must be, my parents sacrificed everything for us. And I don't intend on losing sight of that, I reminded myself.

~

"This is Immigration and Custom Enforcement, OPEN THIS DOOR! I REPEAT: OPEN THIS DOOR!" Boom. The glass shattered.

Like lightening I jumped out of my bed. The twins began to cry hysterically. I carried Carlito in my arm and held Gabby with my other. This must be a nightmare.

"You! Right here!" he pointed to the empty spot next to my father. He shone
“You! Right here!” he pointed to the empty spot next to my father. He shone his bright LED flashlight on my face, momentarily blinding me.

“Name!” he yelled.

“Dani-Daniela Vargas,” I stuttered.

I crouched down in bewilderment. What was happening? My father was on his knees, hands handcuffed, and an odd look on his face.

“What are their names?” he pointed to the twins in my arms.

Carlito and Gabby buried their faces into my shoulder, both shaking and crying. I felt my heart drop into the pit of my stomach.

“NAMES! I NEED NAMES!” he shouted.

I blinked rapidly, suddenly realizing this was not a nightmare, but reality. “Carlito—I mean Carlos and Gabriela...uh Vargas,” I mumbled.

I closed my eyes and felt hot tears roll down my face. My hands started to shake uncontrollably as I stared at the carpet. Abuela sent this from Mexico, cariña. It’s Aztec-inspired; I recalled my father saying this so proudly to me last summer.

“Juan Vargas, you and your children will be taken into ICE custody for being illegals,” the officer said matter-of-factly.

I looked to my father and saw a broken man. Tears streaked his face as he said,
“Officer, I’m legal, I promise. I work an honest job; my wife and I pay taxes too—"

“Your wife is the only legal member of this household. You can discuss this with your lawyer,” he said tersely.

I counted a total of eight officers, clad in all back. The back of their windbreakers read ICE.

The ICE? The one all over the news? I frantically thought to myself.

“Officer, are you a father? Do you have children? Please, I can contact my immigration lawyer. We have the necessary docum—"

“You and your children are ILLEGAL ALIENS!” he screamed. “If you did it the right way, I would not be standing here at four o-clock in the morning.”

“Did your ancestors do it ‘the right way’?” I snapped back.

His eyes bulged and his pale skin started to turn blotchy red. He walked towards me and squatted until he was eye-level with me. If looks could kill.

“What did you say?” he demanded.

I looked at his badge, Officer Thomas O’Brien

“You’re originally Irish,” I said it more as a statement than a question. “Your people are no different than mine. Same story, same struggle too. The only difference between you and me are generational. Your people assimilated while mine are in the process.”
“¡Callete tu boca, Daniela!” my father shouted.

“GET UP! AND STAND IN A SINGLE FILE LINE AT THE DOOR!” Officer O’Brien shouted at my face.

We all shuffled outside into the van parked in the driveway. Shackled at our ankles and wrists, we sat close together and tried to use our bodies’ heat for warmth. The only thing we managed to put on were our shoes. No time for jackets, I remembered the officer yelling.

“It’s going to be okay, cariños, I promise,” my father said as he stared blankly into the distance.

“I want Mommy!” cried Carlito and Gabby in unison.

“I want her too,” my father whispered quietly.

“We will get through this,” I said. We must.

I looked up and stared past the windshield, I noticed the sun rising, its warm glow coloring the dark skies.

They separated us according to age and gender. Papi with the adult males, Carlito with the boys his age, and Gabby and I were the only ones grouped together. It looked more like an abandoned warehouse than a detention center. Fences separated us into our designated quarters, and everyone slept on foam mattress toppers. Far from a proper bed- it was no different than sleeping on concrete. The pillows were raggedy, the sheets were paper thin, and it was so cold at night. The officers said the
heat stopped working and offered us extra sheets. The babies seemed to cry harder at night too—there were some nursing mothers on my side. I remember seeing one young mother take all her sheets and swaddle her six-month-old baby to keep her warm, rocking her back and forth until she fell asleep.

There were no windows; I’d lost track of time too. Four days. Or six days? How long have I been here? When do I get to see my father and brother?

“Daniela Vargas? Daniela Vargas, please step forward,” said the officer.

I moved forward to the front of the fence and waited for the officers to unlock it.

“You have visitors, follow me,” she said.

I marched behind her and felt the stares of the detainees as I walked by them. Some had vacant eyes like they had lost all hope. A little child about the same age as Carlito clung to the fence and turned to his mother and said, “Do we get to leave too?”

My heart lurched inside. I wish that were the case for us all, I thought wistfully.

The officer on the other side of the door buzzed us in, and I stepped into the visiting center. In the back of the room I saw my mom and my teacher Mrs. Brooks sitting expectantly.

Mom! I sprinted and, with open arms, my mother grabbed me into the longest hug. I tightened my arms around her and began to cry. I felt a deep sorrow, but I also felt relief because, for the first time, I felt safe in her arms.
“Mija, estás bien?” my mother asked with worry.

“Estoy bien, pero estoy cansada,” I answered. Why did I say I’m tired? I’m going to make her more worried.

My mother had aged and no longer looked the same to me. Her youthful glow was no more: dark sunken eyes, hollowed cheeks, and new lines that seem to have grown overnight had appeared around her eyes.

“Mija, Mrs. Brooks and I are trying to get you, Papi, and the twins out of here. We contacted the local news, spoke to our local senator, even the governor! There’s a march starting tomorrow at town hall and we created a petition too,” she rattled off.

But it did not make a difference to me. My old life felt like a distant memory.

“Daniela, you will get out of here, all of you,” she said more for herself than me.

“Your classmates and the debate team are protesting too. It starts tomorrow and some teachers and I are joining in,” added Mrs. Brooks.

All this support for my family. My heavy heart began to lighten.

“Five more minutes!” the officer shouted.

“Mija, do you remember what Abuela used to say?” my mother asked me.

“No, I don’t remember. What was is it?” I said curiously.
Her eyes began to well with tears. She cradled my face and said with a warm smile, "Aquel que hoy se cae, se levantará mañana."

_He who falls today may rise tomorrow._

_-Mexican proverb_
Late Blooming Love

Deep in the earth
There was a notion of light,
Where roots grew further down,
Imperceptibly, with the sun.
It took a long time.
This was before we met,
And it was spring, and the earth - and your heart
- was just beginning to fathom
The new bend of light and ensuing shift of shadow.
Leagues of seeds were aligning with the pull
Of many bees, patient cardinals, other creatures.

You said to me, seasons later: To think, all these birds
Have always been here - All the years I didn’t see!
Just today, you observed, there were five different kinds
Of warblers, just in one morning’s walk - but you’d only noticed
When the crocuses were already waning.

But what about the honeysuckle, I said, sweeter
With the waxing heat? What about zinnias,
Tiger lilies and ruby throated hummingbirds?
Wait for it: the bend of light will change again
and roots will take hold
Whether or not perceived.
The Six

During lockdown I made six Spotify playlists. Quarantine, online school, shattered expectations, uncertainties shaped like boulders... I held it all together with the Six. It didn’t take long to make them; you can only play Subway Surfers on the couch for so long before you get an idea.

The first three playlists took me back in time. High school songs, high school songs except it’s just musical theater, and then one for all the Obama-era pop songs I heard on the radio when I was ten. The last three were for characters that lived in my head. I got busy creating during all those high school theater rehearsals, giving a name and
personality to every part I played. A couple ensemble characters from Holiday Inn got their playlists, and the last was for Stage Manager from Our Town, who I’ve decided has an affinity for Billy Joel. I took the Six and fled outside, to warm evenings and a setting sun that would never ask me to join a Zoom call in order to see it. Armed with earbuds and a halfway charged iPhone, I wandered up and down the same streets, except each time was new. Music videos exploded into my head in vivid detail, each song chronicling one scene from my life or my characters’ lives.

Fade in: we hear "Exploration" from the Coraline movie score. A young woman traipses slowly around a darkened stage. She toys with the ropes hanging down from the curtains, and she stares up at the ceiling. A small movement catches her eye every now and then, but she is the only one on stage. Cut to her discovery of a black dress sitting on a rack in the wings. She slides it on and sizes herself up, then pulls her hair into a bun. She doesn’t take the dress off.

Fade in: we hear "Polaroid" by Imagine Dragons. We follow a radio announcer in the 1940s. She sees the girl again, the girl she can never be close to. At the chorus we cut back and forth between a rainy NYC street and a dark, empty sound booth. She pours her heart out to the rain and the little room. Every now and then she looks over her shoulder at an old photo. A polaroid, if you will.

Lights up on Jenny and several of her friends. We hear "One Thing Right" by Marshmello and Kane Brown. The friends run a mic check before a show. We see flashes of costumes illuminated by spotlights. Some of them find a radio prop and are delighted to find that it works. In between checking their mics, they dance around backstage like idiots. It’s the last time they will be able to do this.

I made a little splotch of light and color for myself, complemented by the new spring emerging from winter. I went back to it when things got too dark, or too colorless. In
addition to the Six, I listened to playlists I made before quarantine, pouring them into me to soothe all the little empty spots. My mind reached into the vibrant colors and sounds of the past rather than gaze into a shapeless future filled with white noise. I spent my lockdown replacing this white noise with song and memory.

Whenever uncertainty and worry grew louder that spring, I increased the volume of my own noise, until I could no longer drown it out. During moments where white noise overpowered music, all I could do was bend my head down and hold onto the Six, through tears and frustration and mistakes and worries, until finally the white noise went down. I looked up and found colors and sounds I actually enjoyed. The future was less uncertain, and it only grew clearer as spring turned to summer and then fall.
The Six are still there, but this time I immerse myself in other sounds, other colors. The same music videos dance through my head, but this time they have nothing to chase away. As fall begins and life slowly reopens, I see a clear future in front of me.

I sit with it for a while. And I make a seventh playlist.
These Hills, This Mountain Laurel
An Excerpt from a Talk by Dennis Barone on the American Poet Wallace Stevens

“Time will stand still for a few weeks as the weather itself stands still in August before it removes to Charleston, where it will stand still a little longer before it removes to some place in South America like Cartagena, which is, I suppose, its permanent abode - the place where all the catbirds go, not to speak of the other birds which live in our garden for a while”
- from a letter by Wallace Stevens.

Stevens wrote that letter at home in Hartford (July 27, 1949). You might have heard that in 2014 the Episcopal Church put the house at 118 Westerly Terrace up for sale. There was a realtor’s open house and many of us went that day to see the house once more, now empty of the Rev. Pendleton’s family’s furniture. The emptiness gave a different sense
of the house and this emptiness we paired with greetings to friends. Yes, I suppose so: friends of Wallace Stevens as well as friends of ours. Friends of poetry. Friends of language and how could it be otherwise? How can friendship be known and expressed outside of language? You’ll recall that a first offer for the house came from a group who thought they might change the residence into a historic house museum of sorts - an ambitious, courageous, and perhaps foolish plan, one conceived much too quickly and under the pressure of possibly losing the opportunity, the deal. Well, it did fall through and the house remains in private hands - perhaps as it should or so The Hartford Courant editorialized at the time. Once Jim Finnegan and I went to see the belongings of Stevens that are warehoused elsewhere in Connecticut. His bed was remarkably small, “penitent” as I say in a poem, small, especially for such a large fellow.

“The bed of old Wallace Stevens is less than you’d imagine...” -- so I begin my poem “House for Sale” (published in the Wallace Stevens Journal in 2015 and in my book Second Thoughts, 2017, page 6). I have been happy to host a few of the Bash events, the organization’s annual celebration in honor of Stevens at the Hartford Public Library, especially those that featured Susan Howe, Marjorie Perloff, and John Taggart as speaker; to have hosted the Rose Garden reading for a few years (where I did invite Nancy Kuhl to read). And I have been very glad to have founded and to organize each year the Wallace Stevens Scholarship, a program that has now awarded nineteen scholarships to college bound students from the city of Hartford. I am happy, too, to have published one other Stevens tribute poem, “An Ordinary Evening,” (the Wallace Stevens Journal 2007; the Visiting Wallace anthology, pages 7-8; and in my book Parallel Lines, 2011, pages 24-25). This poem recalls the poet as an elderly man and ends with poet “recalling / The hikes he took last spring.”

Recall the planned art exhibit? We did get to it though in a simplified
form. Contemporary Connecticut poets such as Sophie Cabot Black, Richard Deming, and Margaret Gibson mined the University of Saint Joseph Art Museum collection for artwork felt to be connected somehow to a Stevens poem. We were able to include in the exhibit the Pierre Tal Coat painting that Stevens owned and that inspired him to write the poem “Angel Surrounded by Paysans.” As we wrote in the exhibit description: “From Thomas Cole and William Cullen Bryant to Jasper Johns and John Yau, American artists and poets have inspired each other. Not only did Wallace Stevens write numerous poems inspired by works of art, his verse in turn has stimulated the creativity of many visual artists.” During the course of “‘The Tongue is an Eye’: Poetry, the Visual Arts, and Wallace Stevens,” Glen MacLeod presented a lecture on Stevens and art at the end of January and we had a group poetry reading at the beginning of March.

Yet the house is not built, not even begun.
This house in a cloud, this bliss of stars,
A princox of evening:
June evening, a green evening
Sighted as if young and without
Any scent of shade. This house
Is evening half-dissolved in another park.