

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Karen Paul Holmes: Two Poems

Karen Paul Holmes · Thursday, February 2nd, 2023

They Say We Are Not the Body

And they're probably right, but
when I broke through the railing,
then fell eight feet off the deck,
it sure felt like my body. The snap
of humerus. The bruises coloring
my right hip like a world map.

The heart injured from falling
out of marriage
is not an out-of-order heart.
It still beats the slow meter of grief
or anger's adrenalin drum.

Once I heard a guru discuss
out-of-body episodes.
Floating, he didn't even want
to be that boring thing below.
He told of those
under anesthesia who'd watched
their own surgeries,
then recounted details only
a doctor would know.

And what about the body asleep
in Mother's hospice bed?

I sensed she was already
in the green room, stepping
into a turquoise dress,
fluffing her hair,
blotting her new lipstick,
Fire Engine Red.

*

Macedonian Wedding, Flint, Michigan

I wanted to marry a Macedonian
but the guys *right-off-the-boat*—deodorant illiterate,
greased hair, pointy black shoes—grossed out
my sisters and me.

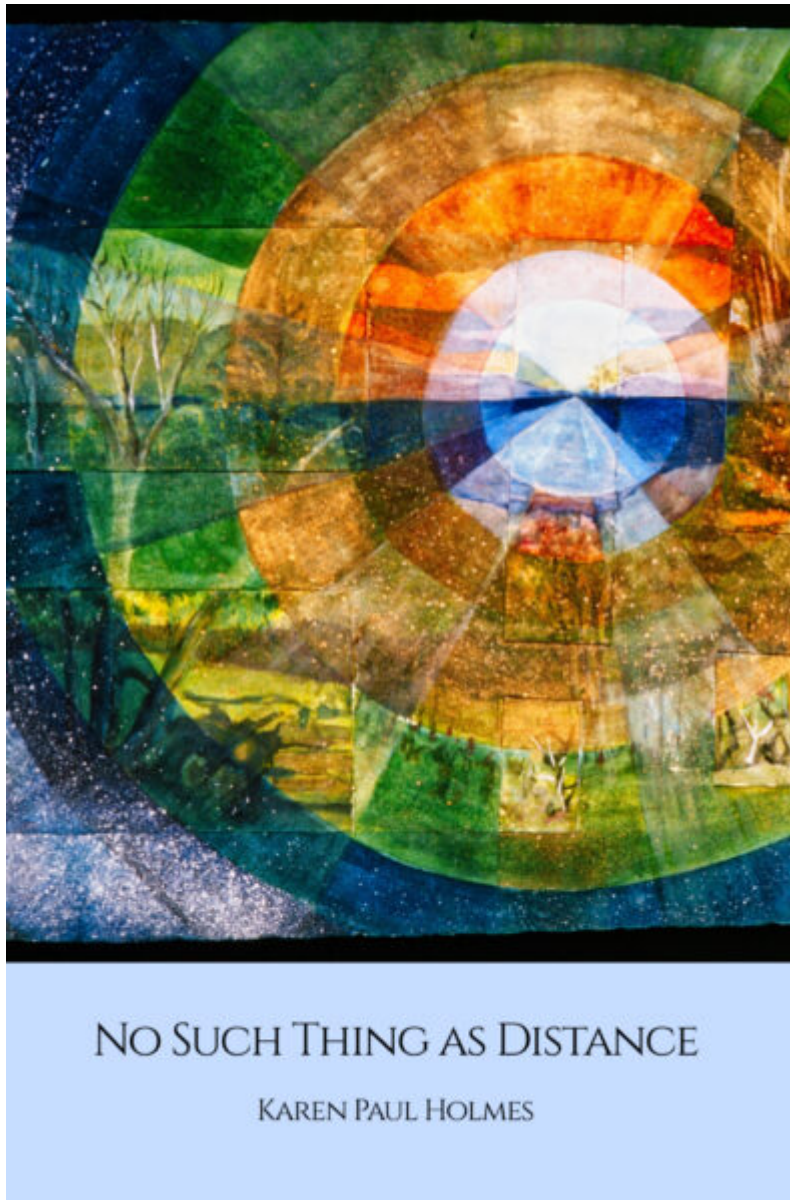
At our church *vecherinkas*, they lined up
at the long bar, staring over their whiskeys
making hissing/mating noises as our backs danced by—
part of the line snaking around the room.
We knew they were dying to pinch our behinds.
When these young men approached Dad about us,
he told them, *Go to college first*.

At 25, I met a guy with an MBA who could pass
as one of us—olive skin, wavy black hair,
a taste for *piroshky*, *baklava*, and our music.
We set the date for when
Boris & The Blue Tones could come from Toronto,
then married in front of the painted iconostasis
at St. Nicholas. A satin *platno* draping
our shoulders *to bind us*, we circled the altar three times
wearing crowns: *first steps as sovereigns of our own household*.

The church women had baked the *koluk*, a sweet,
two-foot round bread, blessed by Father Raphael.
Nunka, my Godmother, held the good luck loaf
over each guest as we all danced the *ora*, me leading,
dressed in virginal white, whirling Auntie Vera's lace hanky.

Two hundred holding hands circled the hall
that doubled as a basketball court.
Step step step to the right, kick kick. A walking pace,
then growing more and more furious, the footwork fancy.
The drunker the older men, the lower they squatted,
thrusting feet, jumping, spinning—red-faced dervishes
(aortas about to burst), the band urging,
surging to a tornado pace.

My sister had made a silk drawstring bag to collect cash
tucked into my hand as guests kissed us goodbye.
Lucky for me, no one demanded
bed sheets next day for proof of my purity.
But this was Flint, and it was, after all, 1979.



No Such Thing as Distance by Karen Paul Holmes

Purchase *No Such Thing as Distance* by Karen Paul Holmes

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Engagement Party Etiquette: How To Support The Happy Couple

Our Friends · Thursday, February 2nd, 2023

When a couple finally announces their engagement, it's always a joyous occasion not only for the couple but for all of their friends, family, neighbours, and colleagues. Everyone will naturally want to celebrate the big occasion which can often put a lot of pressure on the newly engaged couple to put on a great party for everyone. However, with a little support from friends and family, the task becomes significantly more straightforward and easy to manage. As the old adage goes "many hands make light work" and when it comes to organising an engagement party, your help can make

a huge difference.

Of course, when you're attending an engagement party, you will need to bring a thoughtful gift for the bride and groom-to-be. You could even put together a registry of gifts and send the details to the attendees to help the happy couple out. There are some amazing websites online that offer a wide variety of different engagement gifts for you to choose from. With your gift ordered and on the way, you can focus on helping the happy couple to start putting plans in place for their dream engagement party.

Let's take a look at just a few ways that you can help support the newly engaged couple in planning the perfect party.

Volunteer For Planner Duties

Getting married means the couple has a lot of to-do items on their plate already. If organisation and planning are some of your personality traits, why not volunteer your services and help the couple reach out to their inner circle in announcing the party date, time, and location? Gather guest list names and emails from the couple and draft a formal engagement letter or social media announcement. Tailor it to the couple's unique personality traits to ensure those closest to the couple won't want to miss this celebration.

For added fun, you can cloak the announcement in partial secrecy by announcing a "party" of some type like a picnic at the park, a beach barbeque or a pool party. Then once everyone is gathered, you can officially unveil the news, creating a special memory not only for the engaged couple but also for all their friends and family in attendance

Pick An Official Photographer

Paramount to weddings and parties is the goal of capturing those special memories. But why pay an outsider to take photos when we all know someone in our network who loves to take pictures and videos? Appoint someone with a laid-back, fun personality to capture all of these once-in-a-lifetime memories at the party. It can be [as informal or as scripted](#) as you'd like. If you feel up to the task or you have some photography experience, you could even volunteer your own services to the newly engaged couple.

Whatever route you take, make sure that you use the personalities of the couple to decide how in-depth the camera operation should be, but be sure to include a group shot where everyone at the party is included and shots with just the happy couple toasting the beginning of their new life together.

Choose The Right Setting

Choosing the right space is essential. Ideally, you want an inviting, relaxing space with plenty of space for the guests to wander around, mingle and get to know one another. If you're going to take on the responsibility of organising the venue, make sure that you finalise the dates with the happy couple before making any concrete reservations. Having an idea of the number of expected guests will also help you to fine-tune your search and hone in on venues [that meet your requirements](#).

Traditionally, the bride's parents are the hosts of the initial announcement and celebration, but ultimately the decision lies with the couple. Extroverted couples may even want to hold multiple engagement parties, one for close family and perhaps one or two for business and University acquaintances. Some couples may want to hold one party for adults and one more family-friendly event to include children. Be sure to take the wishes of the couple into consideration when making your plans.

Toasts And Speeches

Finally, most engagement parties will include several toasts throughout the afternoon or evening. Traditionally, the father of the bride will first address the gathering and announce his approval by leading a toast to the happy couple. To keep things running smoothly, step in as MC to support the couple through what can often be a nerve-wracking experience for a lot of people.

Take the time to introduce each person who steps up to speak and make sure that you give them the time to say their piece without making them feel rushed. This is an important role in any engagement party and if you can keep things moving along relatively smoothly, you can be sure that the happy couple will thank you.

Give All The Support You Can To The Newly Engaged Couple

Following the tips outlined above, you can ensure that the happy couple have all of the support they need so they can relax and enjoy [their engagement party](#) to the fullest. Whatever responsibilities you take on to provide support, you can be sure that it will be appreciated and you will help to make the day even more special and enjoyable.

Photo by [michael negrete](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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But What's In Between?

Ann Haskins · Wednesday, February 1st, 2023

Immersive performance returns to Westwood, a wedding fandango downtown, contemporary dance in West LA, two eclectic shows in Venice, a Canadian cirque makes three SoCal stops, an important post-modern recreation downtown, a peek at next week, and more SoCal dance this week.

Live This Week

Darkness disconnecting

Week 4 of *Odyssey Dance Festival* brings a highly anticipated evening length creation from **Jessie Lee Thorne's Poets in Motion** with multi-media contributions from collaborators as well as the dancers. *Topia: The Something in Between* employs film from Anna Tse and text from Laja Field to explore the darkness of disconnection and the comfort from community. Odyssey Theatre

Ensemble, 2055 S. Sepulveda Blvd., West LA; Fri.-Sat., Feb. 3-4, 8 pm, \$25, \$15 student. Complete list of festival performances and tickets at [Odyssey Theatre](#).



Jessie Lee Thorne's Poets in Motion. Photo by David Orr

What's on the card?

The Obie award-winning duo Abigail Browde and Michael Silverstone aka **600 Highwaymen** bring the final two weekends of immersive performance under the distinctively unwieldy title *A Thousand Ways (Part Three): An Assembly*. Described as experimental theater creations, each roughly one hour event draws on elements of dance, performance, and civic engagement as each audience of 16 people read from assigned cards before being drawn in further, becoming part of each singular performance. UCLA Royce Hall Rehearsal Room, Royce Hall, Sat.-Sun., Feb. 4-5 & 11-12, noon, 1:30, 3pm, 4:30, 6 & 7:30pm. \$29.97. [CAP UCLA](#).



600 Highwaymen. Photo courtesy of the artists

Flipping for cirque

Canada certainly has spawned its share of “cirque” companies and one, **Cirque FLIP Fabrique** continues its SoCal tour with its distinctive brand of athletic entertainment. Haugh Performing Arts Center, 1000 W. Foothill Blvd., Glendora; Fri., Feb. 3, 7:30 pm, \$23-\$46. [Haugh PAC](#). Also at Carpenter Performing Arts Center, Cal State University Long Beach, 6200 Atherton St., Long Beach; Sat., Feb. 4, 8 pm, \$40. [Carpenter Performing Arts Center Tix](#). Also at Granada Theatre, 1214 State St., Santa Barbara; Sun., Feb., 5, 7 pm, \$20-\$61. [Granada Theatre](#).



Cirque FLIP Fabrique. Photo by Stephane Bourgeois

Figaro Fandango

In Act III, when the singers finally work out the plot's antics to get to the actual *Marriage of Figaro*, choreographer Kitty McNamee unleashes the dancers for a wedding *fandango* and a flower dance. Often **LA Opera**'s go-to choreographer, including several of this season's operas, MacNamee recruited dancers Raymond Ejiofora, Katherine Highstrete, Jessica Gadzinski, and Nicholas Sipes to the stage for the six performances of *Figaro* over the next few weeks. Music Center, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 135. N. Grand Ave., downtown; Sat., Feb. 4 & 11, 7:30 pm, Thurs., Feb. 16 & 23, 7:30 p.m., Sun., Feb. 19 & 26, 2 p.m. \$39 to \$399. [LA Opera](#).



Dahlak Brathwaite. Photo by Daniel Alcazar

Dancing the rehab

Toran X. Moore contributed choreography to **Dahlak Brathwaite: Try/Step/Trip**, a spoken word musical that follows a individual's experience in a court-ordered drug rehab program. Brathwaite is joined by Jasmine T.R. Gatewood, Freddy Ramsey, Jr., and Max Udell, with special guest performer: Isaiah Lucas. Wallis. Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills; Thurs.-Sat., Feb. 2-4, 8 pm, Sun., Feb. 5, 2:30 pm, \$40-\$50. [The Wallis](#).

Post-Modern History, Live

Several of the notable figures who emerged from the Post Modern dance era centered at New York City's Judson Church in the 1960's left and came to SoCal. Rudy Perez and Simone Forti are among those NY transfers who became forces on the LA dance scene and now have *éminence grise* status here. Forti's oeuvre and the materials that fueled them are the focus of **Simone Forti**, the first museum exhibit to survey what she produced. The three-month exhibit includes live performances of *Dance Constructions*, one of her landmark works from 1961. Sarah Swenson, a known LA choreographer and long-time associate of Forti, acted as Performance Coordinator for this project and Forti's *Dance Constructions* presented throughout the exhibition, were staged by Carmela Hermann Dietrich. Hermann Dietrich and Forti have a relationship dating back to 1989 that includes improvised duets, the most recent of which, in 2017, was at Highways Performance Space. The exhibit also includes Forti's sculptures, videos, drawings, and notebooks. *Dance Constructions* at MOCA Grand Avenue (Museum of Contemporary Art), 250 S. Grand Ave., downtown; Exhibit runs Sun., Jan. 15 to Sun., April 2. Performances of *Dance Constructions* performed Thurs., 3:30, 4:45, 6:00, & 7:15 pm, Sat. & Sun., 12:30, 1:45, 3:00, & 4:15 pm, throughout the exhibit run, free with timed museum admission. [MOCA](#).



Simone Forti. Photo courtesy of the artist

All electric

Timed to coincide with *First Friday* events on nearby Abott Kinney Boulevard, **High Voltage** offers an eclectic, ever-changing line-up of performers, often including dance and movement performers. Electric Lodge, 1416 Electric Ave., Venice; Fri., Feb. 3, 8 pm, \$10. [Eventbrite](#).



Max 10. Photo courtesy of the artists

Ten for ten

The mostly monthly program **Max 10** gives ten performers ten minutes each onstage. Hosted by venue director Joel Shapiro and curated by the staff, the line up of performances often includes dance. A post-show reception offers a chance to chat with the artists. Electric Lodge, Scott Kelman Theater, 1416 Electric Ave., Venice; Mon., Feb. 6, 7:30 pm, \$10. [Electric Lodge](#).

A Peek at Next Week

Dancing Through Prison Walls — *DATA or 7 ways to dance a dance through prison walls*. At Odyssey Dance Festival (Week 5) Odyssey Theatre Ensemble, 2055 S. Sepulveda Blvd., West LA; Fri. Feb. 10, 8 pm, Sat. Feb. 11, 2 & 8 pm., \$25, \$15 student. [Odyssey Theatre Ensemble](#). Complete list of festival performances at [Odyssey Theatre](#).



DATA or 7 ways to dance a dance through prison walls. Photo by [Ciro Hurtado](#)

Nancy Evans Dance Theatre — *Imprint* at Norton Simon Museum, 411 W. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena; Sat., Feb. 11, 5 pm, free w/registration and museum admission, tickets available at 4 pm. [Norton Simon Museum](#).

Kyle Abraham/A.I.M. — *An Untitled Love*. At USC Bovard Auditorium, 3551 Trousdale Parkway, University Park; Wed., Feb. 15, 7:30 pm, free w/reservation at [Visions and Voices USC](#).

Suarez Dance Theater — *Mother. Father.* At Los Angeles LGBT Center, 118 N. McCadden Pl., Hollywood; Tues., Feb. 14, 1 pm, free. [Suarez Dance Theater](#).



Suarez Dance Theater. Photo courtesy of the artists

American Contemporary Ballet — *Astaire Dances*. At ACB Studios, Two California Plaza, 350 S. Grand Ave., 28th Flr., downtown; Fri., Feb 10, 17 & 24 8pm, Sat., Feb. 11, 18 & 25, 5 & 8 pm, Sun., 12, 19 & 26, 2 & 5pm, Tues., Feb. 14, 8 pm, \$60-\$130. [American Contemporary Ballet](#).

SoCal Dance Notes

The ecology of dance

Sponsored by the Jerome Robbins Dance Division, this year's annual **Dance Symposium NY** offers a free, online reprise of the day-long, live event at NY's Library for the Performing Arts where dance scholars and artists shared research on the theme of dance and ecology. Online event, Fri., Feb. 3, 7 am to 2 pm PST, free with reservation at [Eventbrite](#).

Max the access

A new Music Center program, *Dance Extension (DANCEx)*, offers dance students discounted tickets to Music Center dance performances, invitations to dress rehearsals, and talks with dance professionals. Details at [Music Center](#).

Jazz hands?

The documentary *Uprooted: The Journey of Jazz Dance* gets a screening and chance to chat with the director Khadifa Wong and USC Kaufman professors Moncell Durden and Saleemah E Knight, two dance experts in the film. USC School of Cinematic Arts, Ray Stark Family Theatre, 900 W. 34th St., #108, University Park. Wed., Feb. 8, 7 pm, free with reservation at [Visions and Voices USC](#).

Posted in [Music](#), [Streaming](#), [Dance](#) | [No Comments](#) »

Zuko Nonxuba Says The Differences Between International Commercial Arbitration and Mediation

Our Friends · Wednesday, February 1st, 2023

In today's globalized economy, international commercial disputes are becoming increasingly common. When two parties from different countries enter a contract, they must decide which dispute resolution method they will use should a disagreement arise. Two popular dispute resolution methods are international commercial arbitration and mediation. Expert **Zuko Nonxuba** in Johannesburg, South Africa, says both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages, so it is essential to understand their differences before making a decision.

What Is International Commercial Arbitration?

Zuko Nonxuba says [international commercial arbitration](#) is a form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in which an impartial third-party arbitrator hears both sides of the dispute and renders an enforceable decision on how the parties should proceed. This ADR is often used when the parties cannot agree on terms or when one party believes the other has breached the contract. It can be used in arrangements between companies in different countries, such as sales or licensing agreements. In most cases, international commercial arbitration proceedings take place outside of court, allowing them to move more quickly than traditional court proceedings.

The primary advantage of international commercial arbitration is its efficiency; because this process takes place outside of court, it typically takes less time for the arbitrator to render a decision than it would for a judge or jury in a court proceeding. This can be especially beneficial if the case involves complex legal issues that require extensive research and analysis. Additionally, depending upon the rules governing the arbitration process, this approach can provide more privacy than traditional litigation since all documents related to an arbitration case are typically kept confidential unless otherwise ordered by a court.

What Is Mediation?

Mediation is another form of ADR that involves both parties coming together with an impartial third-party mediator who helps them reach an agreement without going through formal litigation proceedings. This ADR is often used in cases where both parties wish to remain amicable, such as divorce or child custody disputes. Unlike arbitration, mediation does not include legal arguments or decisions—it simply provides a forum for both sides to come together and attempt to reach an agreement without going through costly litigation proceedings. The mediator's role is to facilitate discussion between both parties and ensure everyone understands what is being discussed to reach an acceptable solution for all involved.

Zuko Nonxuba says the [primary advantage of mediation](#) over other forms of ADR, such as litigation or arbitration, is its flexibility; since there are no set rules governing how the negotiations must proceed, both parties have much more leeway when it comes to finding solutions that work best for their particular situation. Additionally, since this type of negotiation tends to take place outside of court, it allows both sides more privacy than they would have if they opted for litigation

proceedings instead. Finally, because this negotiation requires less time and money than other forms of ADR, such as international commercial arbitration or litigation proceedings, it can be a desirable option to resolve complex disputes quickly and efficiently without spending too much money.

How To Decide Between Arbitration and Mediation

When deciding between international commercial arbitration and mediation, the best way to do so is by considering the specifics of your situation. Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages, so it is essential to understand their differences before deciding. You should also consider how quickly you need to resolve the dispute and the level of privacy you prefer.

Additionally, international commercial arbitration may be better than mediation if your case involves complex legal issues or a dispute that could lead to a lengthy trial. Ultimately, it is essential to take the time to research both approaches before making your decision to ensure that you make an informed and confident decision on the best course of action for your case.

Hiring A Professional ADR Attorney

Hiring a qualified attorney specializing in alternative dispute resolution is essential if you are [considering using arbitration or mediation](#) as an alternative to litigation. A skilled lawyer can help ensure that your rights and interests are fully protected throughout the process and provide valuable insight into each approach's pros and cons. Additionally, they can help you craft contracts and agreements to ensure your arrangement is legally binding and enforceable.

Finally, **Zuko Nonxuba** says an experienced lawyer can help you through the entire process, from filing the necessary paperwork to attending hearings or mediations. They can also provide invaluable advice on presenting your case best to maximize your chances of a favorable outcome.

Conclusion

Ultimately, deciding whether international commercial arbitration or mediation is suitable for your particular situation depends on your individual needs and preferences;. At the same time, some people may prefer having an independent third-party make binding decisions about their dispute (as with international commercial arbitration). In contrast, others may find it preferable to negotiate directly with each other (as with mediation). No matter which option you choose, ensure you fully understand how each works before making your final decision. That way, you can ensure you get the desired result without spending too much time or money.

Photo by [Scott Graham](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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Alicia Elkort: Four Poems

Alicia Elkort · Tuesday, January 31st, 2023

After An Exhaustive Study of the Girdle of Venus*

1. The whiskey all sour went down sweet
2. on the tongue, his lips across my thighs
3. I name Eden, garden of bridge & gospel
4. & esteem for my parts—breasts, skin &
5. spit & the way he grazes, savoring groan
6. & delight, kindling the palms of his hands
7. I follow, eyes closed & the warmth of fire
8. as we coalesce, two oceans against tide.
9. I praise this love. I think heaven but propose
10. sex & revelry, ten enraptured fingers
11. across his brawny back. I bless my hands,
12. the lines across my palms & the absent Girdle—
13. my Venus birthing meadow & thorny brush
14. heeding the urgency of bramble.

*The Girdle of Venus is a line on the palm of a hand, the presence of which was, at one time, interpreted to indicate licentiousness & debauchery in women.

*

On driving all night to find the shaman who will help me &

then I breathe, draughts of air in my lungs,
a \$30 white t-shirt

wet with dew, I bought from a store with a blue
awning, down the street

from where I live by the ocean, I am far from there
now; the awning gray-blue

like any sky at dawn, & now it snows & snows,
a hand in the air

conjures a different scent, sweet like juniper & cold
like rosemary, but today

clouds clamp the trees in a silver wrap with no loose ends,
here in the mountains

where sweat evaporates from my neck, I've come to heal,
my mind is split—

there's the me & the child me who is screaming &
terror rides us both

into a numb frenzy, the shaman holds my head in her arms,
There now, I got you.

Sage burns. *Let it out, she says, terror must have its day,*
& by that she means

repressed terror, & by that she means for me to take up more
space than I ever have before

while coyotes wild against the stars, wet fur & fangs—we are all
howling together,

& now a clearing, a quiet so dark the black sky lays out the cosmos
as if I belonged

to something majestic, instead of twisted on the floor remembering
what I never wanted

to forget, the child by the door, it never should have happened,
when he stole her light.

*

I should have been a cheetah or a drum roll.

~ after Diane Seuss

I should have climbed the splintered fence and curried favor with termites.

I should have praised the bramble and cherished burnt rice.

I should have smoked a joint and slept with Scot.

And not held back.

I should have never held back, except when my father died.

If I had cried a little less, I might have remembered more of what he said.

Memory is unreliable, so I'll make it up.

On hospice, he said *my bed is always warm, but the pillows are too soft.*

Or maybe he said *my bed is always soft, but the pillows are too warm.*

Either way, I have played it safe.

I'm not alone in that.

Have you never done something you regret?

Like shooting fish in a barrel?

That's a metaphor.

I've got a barrel of regrets.

I don't get angry enough.

I let things slide.

I'll grant a second chance, but, no baby, not a third.

I know who I am—

a half moon swinging a starlit sky aching for a full moon. I'm galaxies and tequila shots.
Pass the salt, and I'll tell you more.

*

Triptych in a Minor Key

i.

I remember yellow
tulips in the blue glass

vase when Jodi's
father entered

her bedroom
his bony legs &

silver rings, the grip
on her ear

the blood
on her white carpet

as he dragged
her away

his bathrobe
hanging open

his penis
in full view

the screech of her
begging for mercy

forgive me father
her voice a chalkboard—

laced hieroglyphics
of contrition,

but no mercy
was shown that night

her skin red,
stinging, seven

birthday candles
lighting her face.

ii.

My sister's face—
morning's glory

at the kitchen
table, golden hues

down her back,
she asked father

for cash
to buy a new bra

& he pulled
bills out of his wallet,

so I asked for money
to buy band-aids

& mother snorted
coffee out of her nose

cuz my breasts
were tiny—

I meant to have fun
but father said

*don't ever demean
yourself again—*

he never knew
about “uncle,” his hands

across my thighs
at the family picnic

or the boys in school
who rubbed my ass—

I swallowed it all
until I was starving.

iii.

I starved my young body,
disappearing

female signifiers
beneath the rice-paper

lamp, its ochre light
across the keys

as I practiced a piano sonata
in C minor

ivory under my fingers—

I stopped playing

lost in reverie, wondering
why I was born a girl

when it was clear
that boys

had the advantage,
so I begged God

to make me happy
instead of smart

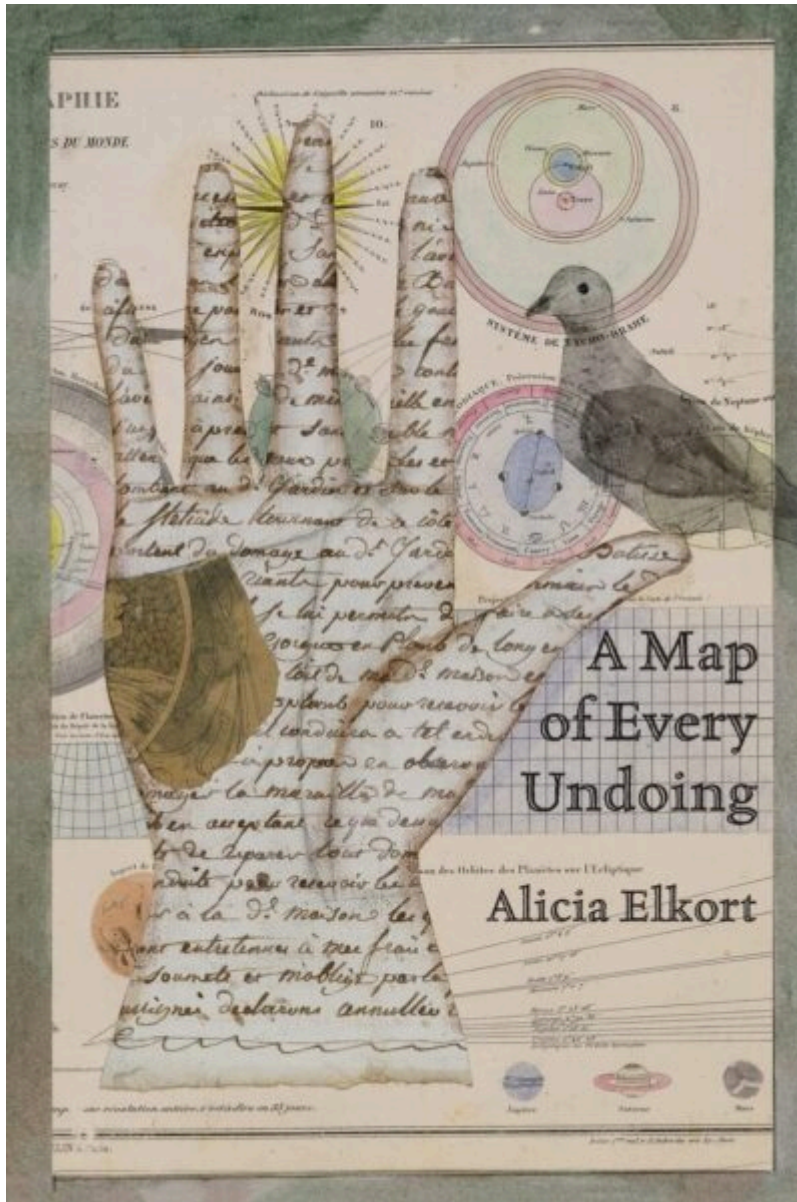
but I was wrong then,
the bargain was not

smart or happy, male
or female,

the bargain
was really a prayer—

show me O father
a simple sweetness,

grant me the dignity
of respect.



A Map of Everything by Alicia Elkort

Purchase *A Map of Everything* by Alicia Elkort

Posted in Poetry | No Comments »

Chad Grant: Truth Is Beauty

Chad Grant · Monday, January 30th, 2023

Truth Is Beauty: Ode to a Friend

...and the silence
becomes a part of us.
We've fed each other
out of a desperation to
be heard,

through a series of
 back and forth
 expletives said over
 the phone.
 Filling in the blanks
 left us impaired.
 ...and the silence came
 from a lack of words
 for those things
 our shortcomings destroyed.
 Music is that thing
 when one or more sounds
 find the timing of the soul,
 filling in the hollowness
 like a Grecian urn.

*

making it

The soft flutter of lisped winks
 bound by a morning ray
 Lips whispering
 “I love you’s” behind curtains
 As lovers lie together
 tongue tied
 practicing French

Beauty is a narcissism
 of minor differences
 ... as the conclusion is reconciled.

Posted in [Poetry](#) | [No Comments »](#)

Elena Ferrante on Film & TV

Elisa Leonelli · Monday, January 30th, 2023

I had read the latest novel by [Elena Ferrante](#) *La vita bugiarda degli adulti* in Italian when it was published in 2019, then I binge-watched the 6 part TV series *The Lying Life of Adults* when it became available on Netflix January 4, 2023. [Click here](#) for trailer.



Valeria Golino, Giordana Marengo (c) Eduardo Castaldo/Netflix

It's about the coming of age of a teenage girl, Giovanna (Giordana Marengo), her relationship with her aunt Vittoria (Valeria Golino), her parents and friends. Set in Naples in the mid 1990s, the dialogue is spoken in two distinct Neapolitan dialects, that are difficult to understand for Italians from other regions, but mercifully there are English subtitles.

I won't spoil the story for you, as you should experience it yourself, preferably after reading the novel, but I will mention a sequence that made a strong impression on me. The two families of long-time friends meet up at a [Festa de l'Unità](#) in 1996, a yearly fair organized by the Communist Party, that started in 1945 right after World War II and continues until today. The leftist intellectual parents, who raised their children as atheists, and a young Catholic professor get into a debate about Jesus. I had endless discussions with my Catholic father when I told him at 16 that I did not believe in God. My dad had fought in the Resistance during World War II, after our town, Modena, like the rest of Northern Italy, was occupied by the Germans in 1943. The powerful words of a legendary [partisan song](#) resonate through those scenes at the fair. Here they are: "Fischia il vento, urla la bufera, scarpe rotte eppur bisogna andar, a conquistare la rossa primavera, dove sorge il sol dell'avvenir." English translation: "The wind blows, the storm screams, Broken shoes and yet we have to go, To conquer the red spring, Where the sun of tomorrow rises."



Giordana Marengo, Valeria Golino (c) Eduardo Castaldo/Netflix

In 2018 I watched with great empathy the first season of *My Brilliant Friend* on HBO, from Ferrante's 2011 novel *L'amica geniale*, in 2020 *The Story of a New Name* from the 2012 novel *Storia di un nuovo cognome*. I interviewed the young stars, Margherita Mazzetta (Elena) and Gaia Girace (Lila), and wrote an article. [Click here](#) to read.



Margherita Mazzucco, Gaia Girace © HBO

In 2022 I watched *Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay* from the 2013 novel *Storia di chi fugge e di chi resta*, and I look forward to the TV adaption of *The Story of the Lost Child* from the fourth novel of the [Neapolitan Quartet](#), *Storia della bambina perduta* published in 2014. I read those novels in Italian in 2016, and I identified with the life of these girls of my generation, particularly with Elena, who attended university in Florence during the student movement of 1968. In my case I participated in that at the university of Bologna.



Anna Bonaiuto © Lucky Red

Two Italian movies were produced based on Ferrante's early novels. *L'amore molesto* (1995) was directed by Mario Martone from the 1992 novel, that was not translated into English until 2006, titled *Troubling Love*, and I have not read it yet, but it's next on my list. I did watch the movie on Amazon last week. I did not relate to Delia (Anna Bonaiuto), who had moved to Bologna from Naples, then she comes back for a few days after her mother's death.



Margherita Buy © Medusa

I giorni dell'abbandono (*The Days of Abandonment*, 2005) was directed by Roberto Faenza from the 2002 novel by Ferrante, and it's about the descent of Olga (Margherita Buy) into despair when her husband leaves her for a younger woman. I saw the movie years ago, but have not read the book. Some day I will.

In 2020 I read Ferrante's third novel, *La figlia oscura*, published in 2006, because I knew that a movie was in production. *The Lost Daughter* (2021) was directed by Maggie Gyllenhall and shot in Greece in English. For me it was disappointing not to hear that Neapolitan dialect, and felt no connection with the story of a woman (Olivia Colman) vacationing at the beach reflecting on her relationship with her two daughters.

I have a theory as to why the author chose to be known by the pseudonym Elena Ferrante and not her real name, which is viewed as an intriguing mystery in the literary world. It's probably because she does not wish to expose her ex-husband and daughters to the public eye, considering that her novels appear largely autobiographical. She stated: "I intend to keep anonymity in the name of privacy."

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