

ISSUE 18 | AUGUST

THE MINISON PROJECT
PRESENTS

the
minison
zine

MYTHOLOGICAL
MINISON

VOLUME III



COVER ART BY
DARKRECONSTRUCTION

the minison zine

The Minison Project

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Mythological Minisons

Calypso unloves

Myths be eternal

Eurydice is dead

Atabey had 2 sons

Down goes Icarus

Hummingbird boy

Narcissus stays

Goddess calling

Fleece is golden

Túatha Dé Danann

Annoy Aphrodite

pagan creation myth in the multiverse

Liam Strong

no story is ever empty. never singular. because we can't leave the bonfire alone.

the sacred feminine as portrayed by Olivia Rodrigo

non-myth, but a myth. everything we love, even him, our lover, is a goddess.

Mourning

Alisa Lindfield-Pratt

I lost her to marriage. Devastated, prey for the beautiful river siren. Orgasmic death.

Arise

Bloody loss. I'll rise from ashen grief like a Phoenix reborn. With second child.

Icarus

Amelie Simon

The sun is a lover
that he dared to
approach. The sea
is his mother, her
arms full of hope.
Falling is a sort
of desire, all his
fake feathers, he
sees as waxy keys
to a new envelope
planet he must've
dreamed up. 'Cause
his world is open,
to burn is enough.



Siren Song

West Ambrose

The counterfeit moon lies in lake's repose
Yet stolen rays shine just as bright, my love
Thou liest too, and the scrivened lines you chose
Are disfurnish'd in light, to proof or prove.
When I row to thine borrow'd face, and see
My hand disturb thy light, guess at thine depths
I will push thine falseness from thee
And have thee decipher'd -- for tenderness.
If it contents thee, I will stop thy hand
Thy course be pent like this unmeaning pen
The gulf 'tween love's thoughts and words duly spanned
Thy dour task lifted, freely given
Give me thine scrolls blank, give me thine eyes full
Give me no poems, but let me be thy Will.

Psyche (as in soul, not as in myth)

Amelie Simon

Psyche's docs are
splinters stuck
in the floor, onyx.
she's sharp edges,
cropped corners,
shaved sides. She
dances as a boxer,
Aphrodite would
have killed to be
her, still might, a
pillar, 'cause the
mother of joy is a
butch, joy is what
worlds we make up.



sin & retribution

Julie Allyn Johnson

heathen flock to amber gates cast in lime
unraveled pathways pulled toward landlocked hearts
deception, Satan's reason steeped in rhyme
devil maneuvers, malevolent arts
tears and blood and sweat flow from guilty brows
Poseidon's brass fork rules the churning seas
wretched justice deforms once spritely boughs
the spring of man chained in sorrowed unease
but for the mirth of ungodly Old Scratch
steadfast human toil in pursuit of good
come due temptation, evil runs unmatched
angel's pleas for mercy misunderstood
the sins of man, his rage, his discordance
frailties' weak, unyielding self-importance

Raising Anchors

Alison Bainbridge

Go back to the sea:
to the white-tip
tides you swam in.
Wrap in your furs
the shoulder you
let me cry on. Turn
away, follow your
heart down to the
shore. You grieve
to stay on land; it
carves into your
soul. Don't deny it.
I was never meant
to be your anchor.

The Selkie's Husband

Halina Stone

A man, younger than dashes of salt in his pepper-black hair suggest, carries a lunch box and strides across the rocks to the water's edge. He's kept warm by his green raincoat and the sweater beneath it, but his ears are exposed to the wind thanks to the gaps between the stitches of his hat (a precious gift, his husband's first knitting project).

Stopping on the rock furthest from shore, the man lays his raincoat out like a picnic blanket, sits down, and opens the lunch box, setting it to the side. He plucks an apple from its depths and patiently uses his pocket knife to cut the apple into slices as he sings. The lyrics rumbling past his lips don't sound as pretty as they do when his husband sings them, but he doesn't stop. His eyes flicker from his task to the cresting waves as a familiar shape, dark and moving swiftly beneath the water, stops short of the rocks and pops its head above the surface.

Two dark round eyes stare up at him from the water as he asks the seal, "How's the sea today, love?"

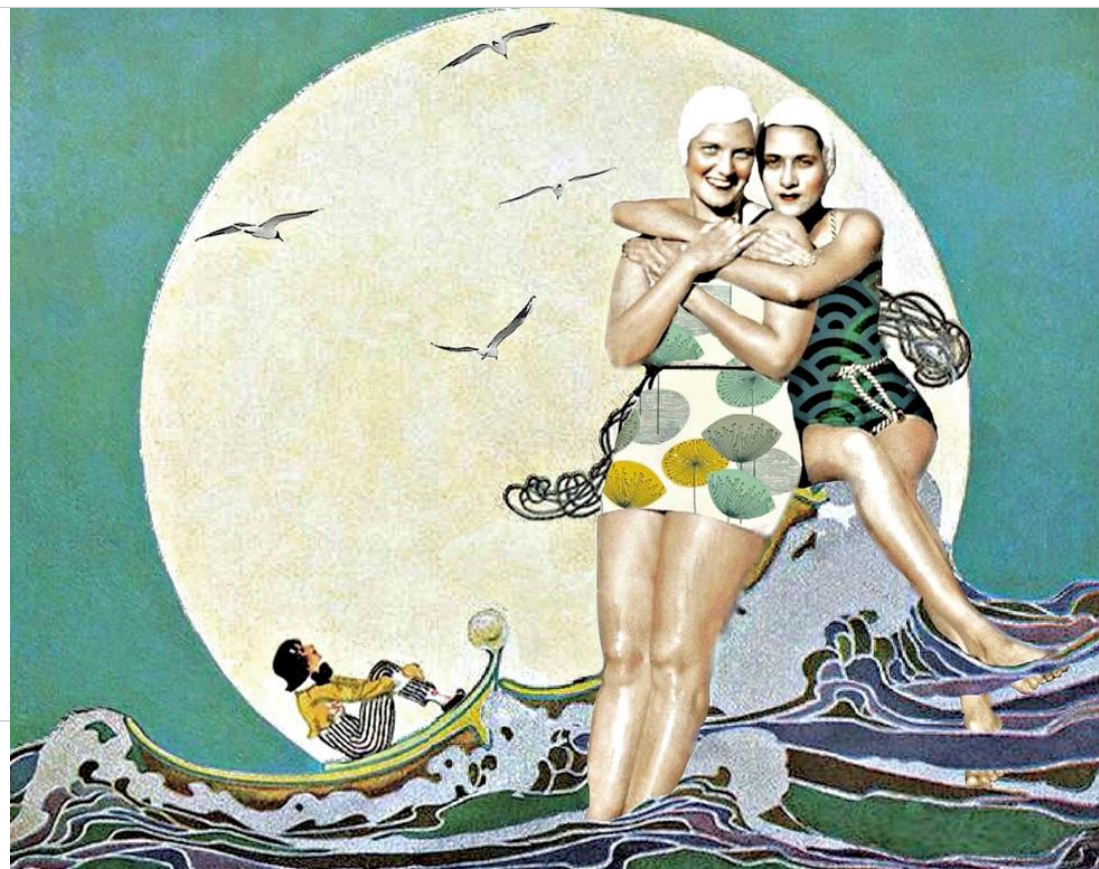
The seal hauls itself out of the water, sniffing at the slices of apple piled carefully next to the lunch box, and, as it turns to look at him, the man blinks. In the second it takes to blink, the seal disappears and, in its place, sits his smiling husband, whose freckled face is framed by a selkie coat, the seal skin slick from the sea.

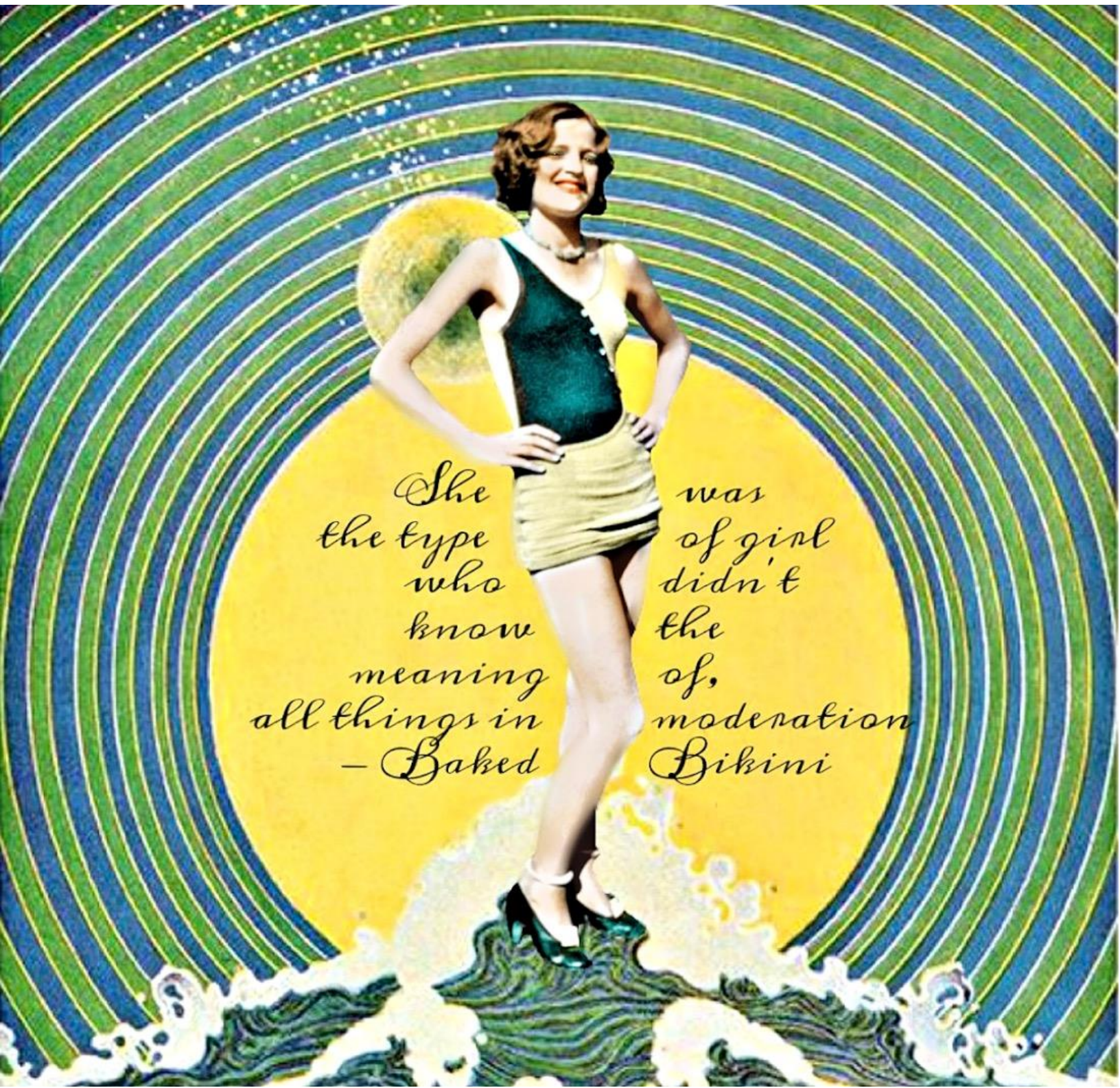
His husband says nothing but opens his mouth expectantly, and the man smiles and says, "Expect me to feed yourself?"

His husband's eyes shine with mischief. The man obliges and feeds his husband a slice of apple, and a cheeky tongue swipes against his fingers as blunt teeth sink into the slice.

"I thought you would have had your fill of fish by now."

His husband laughs then presses a kiss that tastes of apples and sea salt to his lips.





*She was
the type of girl
who didn't
know the
meaning of
all things in
- Baked moderation
Bikini*

From Loch Depths

Shelly Jones

Sea monster myth:

lore bubbling up
from dark depths.

Loch kin whisper
cryptid stories.

Lake waters roil
as fabled scales
slip into shadow
plunge mud banks.

Grey mists churn,
doubt skips over
the murky surface
in inky gloaming:
Nessie waits low.

Cosmic Turtles

Danielle Rookwen

The youngest carry villages on their backs.
They wander mountains with swaying gait,
sometimes orbiting those old enough to carry towns.
Larger moves slower here.

If rolling hills pass close, those who ride will say hello
and trade goods and news. One might never see that
roving town again. Vast is the world they travel.

City dwellers hardly see the younger, drifting
settlements. Their home is old and slow,
migrating with idle torpid steps.
The seasons pass faster.

The travelers who roam on foot for adventure
and communities searching for an unsettled guardian
have a myth—all life rests on a cosmic sized behemoth.

Kissed by the Fae

Diana LoRicco

One day I stepped into a faerie ring
Despite my poor old mother's threats and pleas.
She would not hear my stark insinuations
That they're just mushrooms grown where once were trees.
But though I found no pixies, ghouls, or imps,
Another figure waited in their stead,
A woman simply cloaked in velvet leaves
And wreathed with silver twigs to crown her head.
From parted lips a berry red, she spoke
"Strange girl, why do you stand upon my grave?"
Said I, "some deeper force compelled me here,
But to glimpse your beauty, I think I've stayed."
I kissed her once, she took me by the hand
And as one, faded back into the land.

Interview with Minna Zallman Proctor

by Melissa Ashley Hernandez

Minna Zallman Proctor is an editor, award-winning translator, and writer. She is the author of the essay collection *Landslide: True Stories* (Catapult, 2017), *Do You Hear What I Hear?* (Viking, 2005), and co-author with Bethany Beardslee of *I Sang the Unsingable: My Life in 20th Century Music* (University of Rochester Press, 2017). Her recent translations from Italian include Fleur Jaeggy's *These Possible Lives* (New Directions, 2017), and Natalia Ginzburg's *Happiness, As Such* (New Directions, 2019), shortlisted for the Warwick Prize for Women in Translation and longlisted for the PEN Translation Prize. Her translation of Cesare Pavese's existentialist interpretation of Greek myths, *Dialoghi con Leucó*, is forthcoming from Archipelago. She has written for *Bookforum*, *The American Scholar*, *Conjunctions*, *The Nation*, *Aperture*, *NPR.org*, *The New York Times Book Review*, and others. She has been an editor at *COLORS* magazine, *BOMB*, and *The Literary Review*. She teaches in the creative writing program at Fairleigh Dickinson University. She is currently working on a collection of short stories responding to Pavese's myths and a new translation of Fabrizia Ramondino's *Althénopis* for New Directions.



Minna Zallman Proctor cannot be summed up into words. She is an ethereal and unending fountain of joy and wisdom and is monumentally skilled at her craft. She gave me the opportunity to pick her brain about mythology and folklore, and I left with more questions than before! Differences between mythology and folklore can sometimes be nebulous and in many cases subjective, but we still had a great time discussing ideas and hypotheticals.

Minna Zallman Proctor on Mythology and Folklore

The Minison Project: There's so much to cover, let's just jump right in! What is your relationship to folklore and mythology?

Minna Zallman Proctor: The first thing I think of when you ask this question is that when I was a little kid I never went through the big Greek/Roman Gods and Goddesses stage that a lot of kids go through. I did a report on Herakles when I was in fourth grade and I was really intrigued by the concept that all the stories came from urns—which they didn't but that was interesting—and I always believed the interesting version of truth over the real version. Other than that, I liked Irish folktales Arthurian legends, Norse mythology, and African folktales, because those were the books I found on my parents' bookshelves. The Irish folktales were in a book that I loved especially called [There Was a King in Ireland](#) and all the stories (obviously) started, "There was a King in Ireland..."

But that's my formative/little kid relationship to myth. My interest in the African folktales stuck the longest, because they were all short and profound and funny—like the one about how the sun went to live up in the sky because he was annoyed about the way people kept breaking bits off of him for an afternoon snack. Caveat: the book I read from was edited by Paul Radin, a Jewish immigrant from Poland who was an influential anthropologist in the 1950s who specialized in Native American and African religion and language. I suspect that a great deal of his work and probably [all his cultural perspective](#) has since been invalidated.

Then I didn't think about myths at all for a long time. ...until I started work on this translation project about Greek mythology, and suddenly that's all I think about.

TMP: I suspect that a lot of the obsession for Greek and Roman myths stem from focusing on those literatures in schools, so I find it fascinating that you discovered Norse and African folktales to be more captivating for you. With that and everything you've been researching for your translation project, which I'll ask about later, how would you classify the differences between folklore and mythology?

MZP: I am 170 percent sure that there is a formal distinction in the social sciences, which I don't know and won't look up, because it's more fun to guess and make up an answer. So, with the caveat that I'm inventing this: Mythology explains things—why the grass is green, where you go after you die, why we exist. Mythology is exalted, larger than life, aspirational and eternal. Folklore are stories authored by a community—stories that are passed down whose purpose is story, nothing more or less. Folklore is local and specific and only lives as long as people repeat it. Both mythology and folklore are author-less. This is important. They belong to time and place, but not a single intelligence. Because folklore is specific, it reveals details about very specific cultural systems... of a family, of a village, of a town. Mythology is more general with an eye toward universal, and the figures of mythology are avatars; there is nothing

really substantial in their character build that determines their actions; there are no real individuals; the gods have many faces and many names—suggesting they are many but none. Folklore is the language of a people. Mythology is more of a code than a language, and as such has a broader reach. This shared code crosses lands and histories and cultures and timelines. We continue today to repeat and interpret those ancient mythologies bringing them forward organically from a long long time ago to now. Roland Barthes said the mythologies a society creates express explanation and desire and that determines, and codifies, values.

And again, I just made this up. There are actual, formal definitions in some fields and volumes of theories and debates too. In other words there's a 100 percent probability that there are many answers to this question that contradict, or at least discredit, mine.

TMP: You said "folklore is local and specific," but when people document folklore on the internet where it can be widely spread, does it lose specificity and context? And what role do you think technology has played in allowing these stories to reach beyond their regional communities?

MZP: That's such an interesting question and I wish I had a very smart answer. ...In discussions of the internet, people reference this participation inequality ratio: 90 percent of users are "lurkers" (aka "audience"), 9 percent occasional participants, and 1 percent create all the content. (This ratio is over fifteen years old, so it has likely shifted as social media has grown.) In really crude terms, participation inequality is bad because it means that one percent of people have

"undue" or "outsized" influence. But the same ratio applies to wealth (the "one percent"), and we know that wealth isn't just having more, it's about controlling [more](#) and so everything that's about control—legislation or information—is basically controlled for all by the very few. Which is sinister and antidemocratic and totally from the dark ages and all of this has happened before and all of this will happen again. But, there is something about that ratio that also calls to mind a group of people gathered around a storyteller. Yes, folklore is of a community and is not about authorship, and yet, it's not as if the village gathered for storytime and then everyone started talking at once. That's anarchy, not folklore. When everyone on the internet is talking at once and no one is listening, then everything zeroes out and is totally useless. (Like, if you're looking for a restaurant on Yahoo and it has 800,000 reviews, you know you're not going to learn *anything* about whether to go to that restaurant from the reviews: half the people hated it and half of them loved it and half of them hated it for dumb reasons, like it was raining the night they went, and the other half of them hated it for good reasons that are meaningless to the other half of the people—like, say, the ketchup was too vinegary, which is meaningless because half the people hate ketchup and wouldn't order it anyway, and half the people prefer their ketchup more vinegary, and half the people wonder "How much is too much?" ... so that's just time wasted.) I guess what I'm saying is that folklore is by definition unauthorized, it's passed along by people and may be altered in the process for any number of reasons. If it's being passed along on the world wide web instead of in a town square, the people who receive it to pass it along might evolve it differently than the people

who receive it and repeat it in the town square, but that just means that there are now different evolutionary tracks (probably many many different ones) for that story. Some are more local than others. Consider this, the African folktales I read in the 1970s were collected in the 1950s, translated by one person from a variety of languages and cultures into a monolithic text, and published in a book, which fixes a story in that moment and culture and medium. It un-folklores it. In other words, is the world wide web essentially more pernicious than 20th century ethnographers? Probably yes, and probably no. ...Maybe it depends on whether you like ketchup.

TMP: “Un-folklores” is such a good term. You bring up a good point: when everybody is talking at once, can anybody really be heard? I often wonder about our future and our legacy as human beings. Do you think any modern stories will be classified as mythology or folklore in the future?

MZP: I don't know. The question is really about whether we human people have hit some natural limit of archetypes, or explanatory apparatus (e.g., Why is the sky blue? Where does water stop? Why do we exist?) Are there things in the natural world that don't already have a variety of explanations versatile enough so that the stories start repeating each other? Will we change the natural world so much that we'll need new explanations? And, in terms of being worried about our future because we're always challenging and disrupting the natural world, don't you think it's significant how many morality tales in mythology and folklore turn on the sin of hubris (aka pride)? ...Maybe that's because humanity keeps moving toward its own eradication with progress,

and recklessness? And then it explodes and starts again, or the gods throw rocks and destroy and rebuild? It's been and will be again, etc. Why does Prometheus's liver keep growing back so that the birds can eat it again? Will AI ever be so mysterious that we'll need to explain it in terms that go beyond “manmade”? Can AI turn into organic matter? And, if so, is that how the earth ends and restarts? Is bacteria AI? Will the new organic AI need explanations about how it came to be, or will it just access its vast information banks and discover that it was created out of 1s and 0s by people who were created out of cell division? Do you think, maybe, that aliens/life on other planets will be our future folklore? Or, do you think that the idea of other life forms on other planets is another variation on the idea that gods live in the sky? Was Zeus an extraterrestrial? And, I want to know about sharks.

TMP: I think we all want to know about sharks... Do you think folklore is a building block to creating mythology or does mythology spawn folklore?

MZP: I think they are two kinds of storytelling that both have strong cultural roots and identities. Whether you're using my explanation above or Carl Jung's, the distinction between myth and folklore is artificial; it's either descriptive or theoretical—like the distinction between poetry and prose. It's not as if you're describing mitochondrial division, or the difference between sand and glass. Sure there's overlap and fuzzy boundaries. (Is a story about how the leopard got its spots a local morality tale or a cosmology?) Different cultures express different needs and wants through the stories they tell. But ultimately storytelling has its origins in rational

thought. The question *Why?* is the primordial ooze of language. *Event and consequence* are the primordial ooze of story. Those are the building blocks; mythology and folklore are some very big buildings those blocks made.

TMP: Let's talk a bit about your translation project! What's that about?

MZP: My translation project is hard to explain. Every time someone asks me about it, I talk for an hour too long. I have to find a compact way to describe it. Like everything complicated, it starts, of course, with my mother. My mother was fascinated with this book, which in Italian is called *Dialoghi con Leucò*, and its author, Cesare Pavese, who was mostly a poet and novelist—even though this book is not really either. I'm chronically fascinated by my mother, who was a composer, whose music was inspired by literature. When my editor at [Archipelago](#) and I were casting around for a perfect new project—and she was making some wonderful, very fun suggestions—then I had this image of my mother holding this particular book, and I asked if maybe it could be the perfect project. Ultimately, it wasn't a perfect project; it was something else. More like a dare. The hardest thing I've ever translated. Baffling on every single level, from the subject matter to the language, to the emotional center, its socio-historical context, the conceptual landscape, the legacy. I love it unreasonably now, but I think that's because I finished it.

Here's my attempt at a compact description: *Dialoghi con Leucò* is a collection of 27 short lyrical dialogues between Greek gods and heroes, reimagined as existentialist debates, the paradoxes of which are extrapolated from

their big mythological stories: Oedipus wondering whether the choices of his life have any moral meaning at all if they were all prophecy. Calypso trying to convince Ulysses that immortality is just as good as mortality—because she loves him and wants him to stay with her, but she doesn't quite believe her own argument and he sees through her. Endymion complaining because his rapist, Artemis, won't let him love her back. Leucothea (the white goddess) trying to convince Ariadne that she should stop crying about Theseus abandoning her, because Dionysius loves her and is going to turn her into a constellation—a cold comfort. Sappho hating the afterlife, because it exists, and she had killed herself to stop her thoughts, not to sit in them for eternity. And so on. They are funny and brutal and complex and suffuse with contemplations of life and death.

TMP: That sounds right up my alley, I can't wait to read it! Is there anything you wish I asked that you would like to talk about?

MZP :Melissa, you've asked me everything there is to ask in the world and many things that I don't have answers for. I've been thinking about myths in such a specific way for the last three years, and it's been very fun to think about myths and folklore from a more holistic, cultural perspective for this interview. There's a reason we all come to myth with different questions and wildly different answers, and the reason is routed in myth as a common point of reference. In his foreword to *Dialoghi con Leucò*, Pavese wrote: "*Given the option, a person could certainly get by with less mythology. But we've come to accept mythology as a language, an expressive mode—which is to say, it's not random, it's*

a hothouse of symbols that belong, like all languages do, to a specific set of references that can't be conveyed any other way."

MYTHOLOGY LIGHTNING ROUND:

TMP: What is your favorite myth?

MZP: Orpheus

TMP: What is your favorite folktale?

MZP: The Devil

TMP: Which mythological figure do you relate to most? Who do you find most interesting?

MZP: Circe

TMP: Which mythical creature would make the best pet, and why?

MZP: Heracles. I think he'd be good at protecting me.

TMP: In mythology or folklore, if you could swap the roles of a hero and

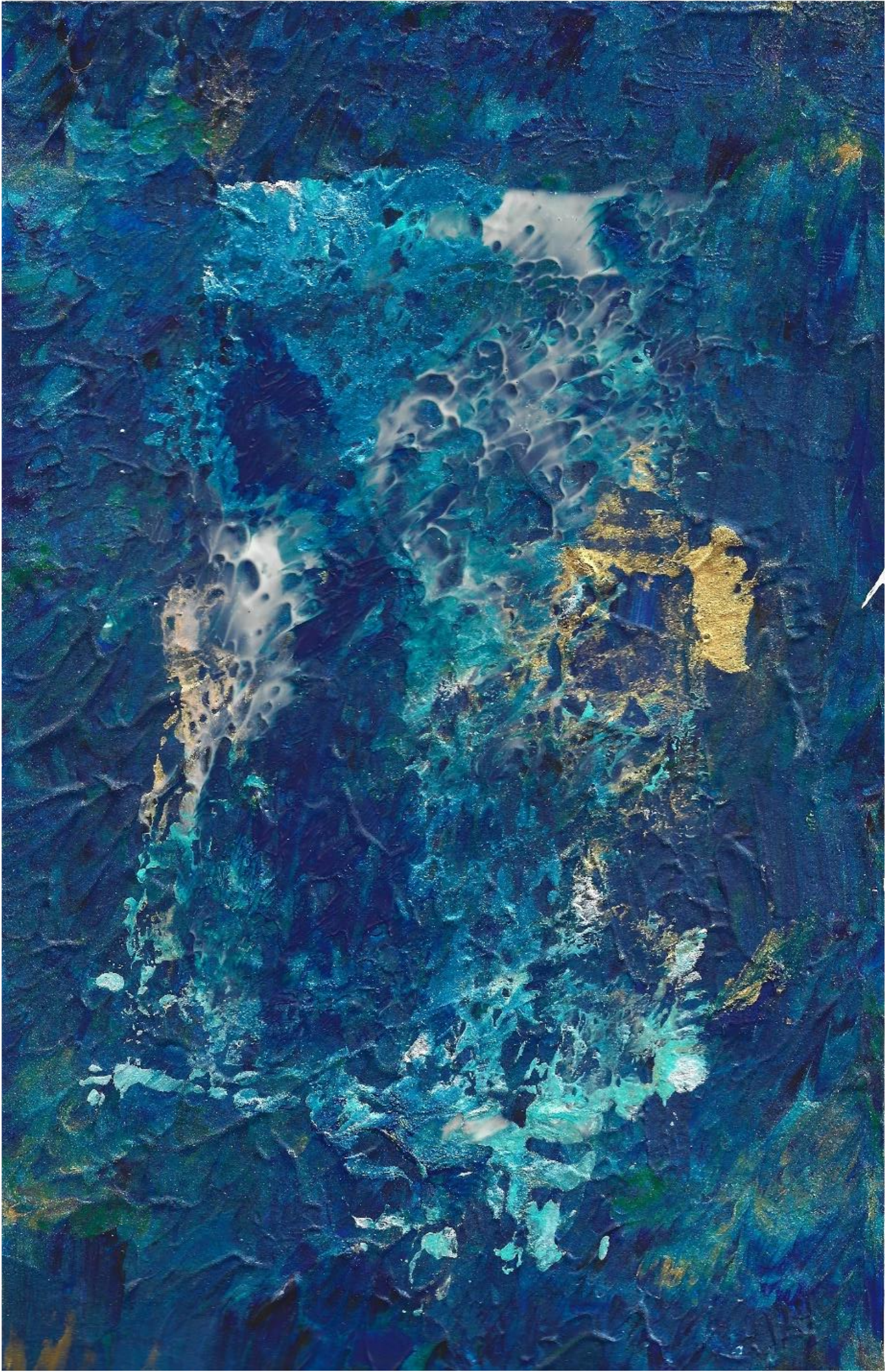
villain, who would you switch and why?

MZP: ...I don't know. I think one of the cool things about mythology/folklore is that all the archetypes are both good and bad or value-neutral or undeclared. Like the idea of a "trickster god" for example, or Dionysius, who's fun, and fun-loving, and dreadful, and a savior, and a killer. ...PASS

TMP: Is there any country's mythology or folklore that you haven't explored yet that interests you?

MZP: Of course—it's not like you *finish* being interested in something you don't know everything about. The list is inexhaustible. But. ...if I had to pick two (because one is totally not possible), maybe I'd say Poland and Brazil.





Hecate's Cat

Thomas Zimmerman

Her black cat opens its pink mouth and meows:
you smell turned earth and Lethean pools. Outside,
the moon has spilled its silver milk to rouse
the banshees, succubi, and ghouls that hide
within the shadowed woodlands of your mind.
Your mother was a witch, and so's your girl-
friend (why do you keep typing *fiend*?). Their kind?
Anne Sexton wrote a poem about them. Hurl
the book across the room. The cat will shred
it, but your girlfriend's got the verse by heart.
You call her goddess while you fumble with
her bra. She scares you shitless—and, in bed,
she weaves her spells, she practices her art,
transforms you to a mouse, as in a myth.

my modern daedalus,
he called himself,
swooped n blinding me
w mercurial inks
& silverized vapors.
so, i wandered: who falls?
what is an addiction
to dark room ventilation
& the concentration
of light, heat n hues,
when he left me
daguerreotype?
still i present my skins
to hihankara.

Caliche Fields



Routine's Myths

Thomas Zimmerman

Your wife's on Zoom, the dog is zonked, a beer
sweats heavily in front of you. The pot
that you call Thumper rocks with boiling-hot
linguini, writhing snakes in water. Here
is where the everyday transmogrifies.

Yes, that's Medusa on the stovetop. Don't
dare meet her eyes. Your liquid courage won't
suffice: so find a mirror, then she dies.

Outside, a centaur paws the mulch. The pines
behind the deck lend shade to meddling Fates.

A Valkyrie rides high above the plates
you left out on the picnic table. Lines
like these the Muse has coaxed from you: an art
that's cobbled from the dogged, beating heart.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR BURYING YOUR BROTHER

Silas Wendelin

arise before the sun cracks open red
upon the countenance of city walls
you leave behind for fields soaked by bloodshed
where lies the corpse upon whom you must call.

when breaks the coming day on sleeping Thebes,
and soldiers of the king bring him alert,
the chorus will remark upon this deed -
now, gather up your courage and the dirt.

the state will make more brothers into bones,
devour more sisters once your justice comes
to swallow you beneath the earth and stone,
and ruin shall befall all you turn from.

but that grim fate you cannot lay to rest,
so scatter dust on Polynices' chest.



Aeneas

Exulting

Ganga

shamik banerjee

Thy course emerging from Lord Shiva's pate,
First floweth to Haridwar's bank and earth
Where mankind takes deep plunge to cleanse his fate
And shrived from malefactions, forms new birth.
With hardened devotion, we worship thee,
For thou, like God, art form'd of permanence;
Sprigs bend, leaves twitch to show their piety;
The elks and Monkeys bow with reverence.
Thy sanctity I knew not till I paid
A pilgrimage; dipped in a stream of thine
And felt in sprite like father had convey'—
'A flux of bliss and freedom, like the shrine
Of God where man's despair does wash away':
One Sonnet, on such grandness, cannot say.

About the sonnet, Ganga': This sonnet is to the most widely flowing river of India, The Ganges. This river derives its state of divinity from the holy scriptures of Hinduism. It is considered 'the mother of India' both mythologically and culturally and its source is believed to be the head (pate) of Lord Shiva. It is believed that bathing in it purges one of his sins. This poem expresses the unfathomable and ecstatic peace I had felt upon dipping in it.

A Siren's Melody

Anna Jackson

I grasp at my ears
As in bleeds song
Bereave my limbs
As they spur me on.
I'm dragged below,
Each fibre aches
To be ever closer.
My jaw snaps open,
Screams no sound,
A desperate plea.
My body surfaces
Near absent of me-
Floats in the air
Of Sirens' melody



Eros

salvatore di falco

A wind reed clear
and silky-sinewy
charms with sweet
communing music.
Soft eyes submit
to the magic wand.
Quick, deepen the
caresses. Drowsy
blinks turn blank,
head nods where it
marries the neck,
a rock on a cliff,
feathering eyes
to starry dreams.

Io

salvatore difalco

Appearances die
when hair leaves
and horns come
and eyes enlarge
and chin shrinks
and hands and feet
clop like hooves.

The cad flew, save
for a tincture,
fearing goodbye,
a feeble showing
for the semi-clad
hoi poloi toeing
his horny temple.



KAMAL // RAIIVATAKA

Arya Vishin

remember our big
marigold suneye
gaze, how you, pink-
petaled, cradled
me, inside a thing
so holy we did not
know how to speak
about it? how when
you had left your
girl we shivered
snakelightning
on that mountain,
melodious in our
prayers, and how I

//

couldn't look at a
world with no you.
who wouldn't want
you, blooming and
transcendental?
remember how you
loved me devotee
surrendered, how
selfsame soul we
laughed eternal
in litterfall. we
always knew this
land was not ours
the way we wanted.

97% of scientists agree that Icarus knew better

D.W. Baker

molten wax wings

sky lit in breath

slowly dripping

final heat death

revelations

falling quickly

revolutions

turning sickly

red eye sunrise

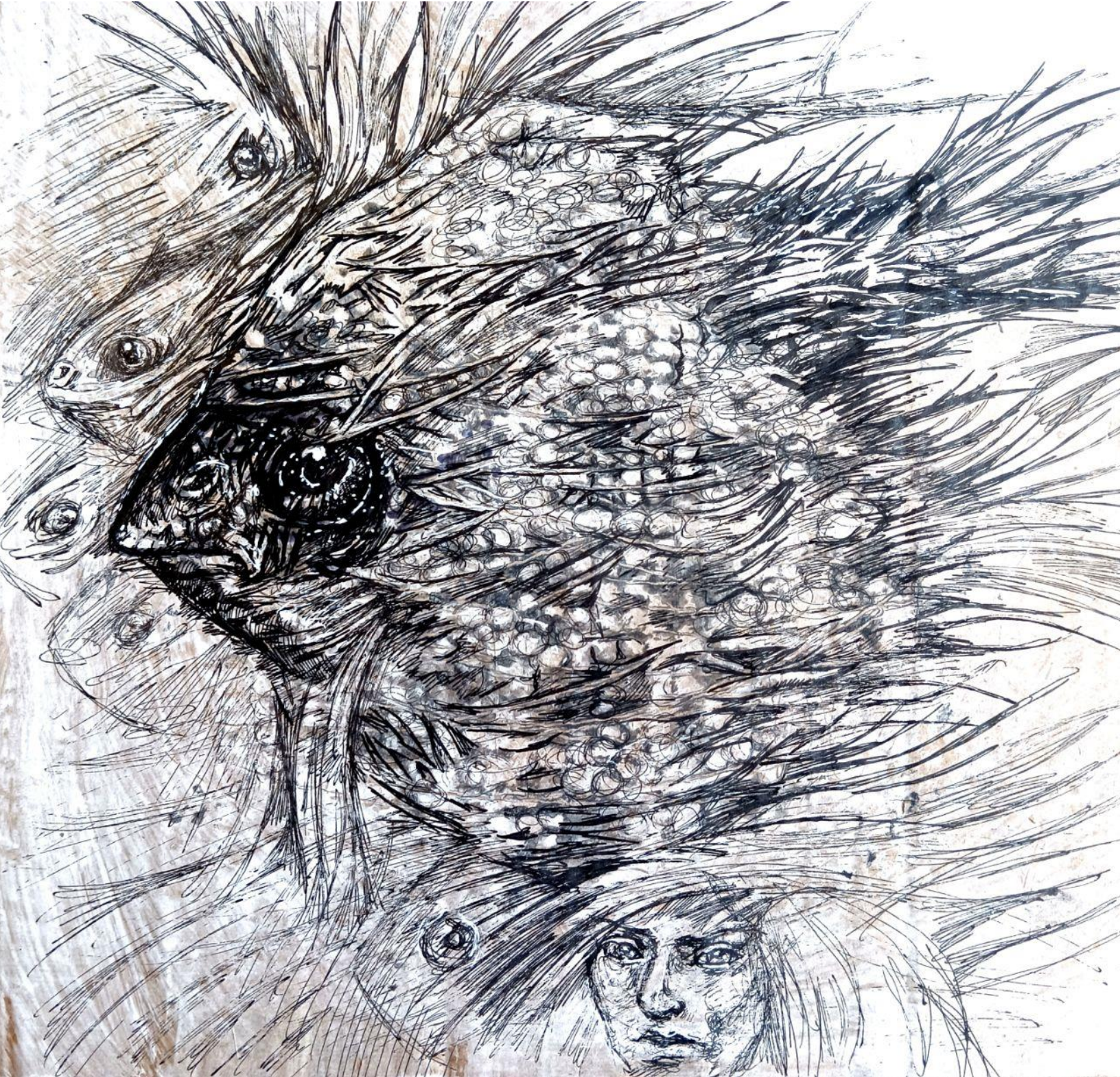
air craft waste land

food web demise

right hand left hand

grieving father

barren daughter



wanáǵi yuhápi

Caliche Fields

minotauromachy: the distinguishing between breath and smoke to cleanse within the haboob of bone-ash.

cafecito vapors
crushing on his
stories of sacred
pan laberinto.
golden hour rathe
y la vía láctea
hold witness to
jovial thunder.
concha crumbles
& aroma incensed
as i thumb thru
to rosca de reyes:
aloof pharmakós
and so he lives.

Caliche Fields

