


JEAN CHEN HO is a writer in Los Angeles. She was born in Taiwan and grew up in Southern California. Jean is a doctoral candidate in Creative Writing and Literature at the University of Southern California, where she is a Dornsife fiction fellow. She tweets at @jeanho.

‘For my last night in Taiwan, Baba wanted to show me Shilin Night Market. We rode the subway, transferring at the Taipei Main Station for the northbound green line. It was Saturday night, and the market was jammed with people of all ages, swaying down the alleys at a leisurely pace. The air in the night market was saturated with the smell of grilled meat, steaming custard and red bean pies, propane fumes and human sweat. And the noise! Shoppers jabbered into cell phones, deep house pumped out of every other storefront, vendors stood next to their stalls and shouted at the passing crowd: Two for one deals on genuine leather sandals! The best shrimp dumplings in all Shilin! Fresh sweet papaya juiced to order! Best quality underwear for boys! Girls! Ladies and Gentlemen! Baba and I dragged along with the crowd, pausing here and there to browse the wares.

Eventually we made it to the massive food area at the back. I sat down at one of the communal tables set up in the center. Baba brought over a bowl of oyster vermicelli and told me to dig in, while he returned to the queue for stinky tofu. I dipped into the noodles, the oysters floating on top of the soup, fat and glistening as polished jewels. Baba returned with the rest of the food, chewing on a stick of pork blood sausage.

“There’s one more person who wanted to meet you before you leave,” my father said. I asked him if it was another relative, and he shook his head.’

MATTHEW KRAMER is a writer, illustrator, and artist in Providence, Rhode Island. He has an MFA in Literary Arts from Brown University, where he has taught for the last year. He works as a freelance illustrator and writes comics and graphic novels. His artwork can be viewed at matthewckramer.com and canttakemeanywhere.com and followed, via @canttakemeanywhere, on Instagram. See work sample on back page.



JENNA LYLES is a multi-genre writer based in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Currently, she is a McNair Fellow and MFA candidate at the University of Alabama, where she teaches creative writing and serves as an assistant editor for *Black Warrior Review*. Her work is typically in conversation with women, race, sexuality, and the protean nature of relationships—both real and fictionalized. You can find her at jennalyles.wordpress.com.

The Ambitious Boll Weevil

I raise you ten bales you can't bring yourself to sit for as long as them can stand. Till until pink-orange is blue, blisters bracin' your axe; all your kin tarred with the same brush.

I raise you twenty bales you broke your bread with manicured paws, rose a sticky bun out a dusty chamber and clamored when the yeast wound spiraled sacked your guests against their chairs.

I raise you thirty bales you never drank off dehydration out edless hands cupped. Well-born belly you drained your mammy's nipples like a fresh calf allergic to water. Save.

I raise you forty bales you lose your claid crop; them rows bound to bow and buckle instead. You be mad as weath come sure as rain of mufin, earin' them barracks up lookin' for the leader.

ADRIENNE RAPHEL is the author of the poetry collection *What Was It For*, and the chapbook *But What Will We Do*. Born in New Jersey and raised in Vermont, Raphael holds an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and is completing a PhD at Harvard. She is currently working on a book about crossword puzzles.


excerpt from A TRANSATLANTIC CELEBRATION OF THE TIMES CROSSWORD

‘2200 Deck 11, Stairway A, the Atlantic Room. By day, the Atlantic Room is for contraband bridge; by night, contraband meetings. There is a spotlight shining on one chair at one table. My father's house has many mansions.

All the prices on the ship are in dollars, all the grammar and spelling is British. We speak in British and spend in American. (LINERNOTE, a singular combining form of “liner notes”; LINERNOTE, the currency of the ocean liner itself, whatever bank note we're calculating with as we swipe our key cards.)

The crew members are all on an enormous switchboard. All of the passengers are assigned assignments by their stateroom numbers. (Those in double staterooms, most of the ship, are distinguished by other codes, primarily male/female, or age, or hair color for same-sex siblings and same-sex couples. 6270A and 6270B, for example, although I, in my own stateroom, am simply 6270.) All our wires are crisscrossed across the giant board, somewhere between a games compendium, a topographical map, and Risk.

The crew assigns us routines before we know our own routines. I wake up and go to the fitness centre each morning, but not so early that I'll arrive for breakfast in the restaurant. I never arrive for either breakfast or lunch in my assigned restaurant. On Floor 6 aft, the crew can serve all the early breakfast in beds before even knocking to see whether or not I'm awake. I'll be at the gymnasium, so they can make up my stateroom; I'll come back and shower and then leave again, and it's fairly moot whether or not they make up the room before or after I shower, there will be time between, say, 10 or 11 am and 4 or 5 pm. I'm typically wandering the ship in the middle afternoon hours. The head waiter and the stewards know when I'll be having a hurried muesli and coffee in the buffet area. “Good morning, Ms. Raphael.”



LINCOLN MICHEL was born in Virginia and lives in Brooklyn. He is the author of *Upright Beasts*, a collection of short stories. You can find him online at lincolnmichel.com and @thelincoln.

excerpt from My Life in the Bellies of Beasts

‘I was born prematurely and, as such, was a very small child. So small, in fact, that shortly after emerging into the world, I was gobbled up by a clever fox that terrorized my parents' farm. It had sneaked in the back door while everyone was distracted. My mother's tears of joy turned acid, and my father cursed the lazy farmhand he'd tasked with mending the fence. These were the first and last words I ever heard my parents utter.

It was cozy and warm inside the fox's belly. I barely noticed what had happened. To me, it seemed I had merely gone from one womb to another. When I was hungry, I ate the scraps of raw meat that fell around me. When I was sad and wailed, the fox howled lullabies to guide me back to sleep. All in all, my early days were bearable.

In time, I began to grow skittish. I was no longer a baby, and I needed to stretch my limbs. One day, as if to answer my prayers, the fox was cornered by a local hunter and his giant mastiffs. The fox tried to run away, but I had grown so large that I weighed her down, and she was torn apart by the hounds. I felt the cool air and saw the harsh sunlight for the first time before being swallowed by the largest dog.

I can't deny I felt a great sadness as I settled among the bits of organ and clumps of fox fur. Yes, the fox had kidnapped me, but she had also been my home, and that is never an easy thing to lose.

Still, the mastiff was roomier and more appropriate for a growing boy. I could feel my muscles developing as I did push-ups on the soft stomach floor and pull-ups on the outline of the mastiff's large spine. When the dog bounded through the grassy fields, I would crawl up his throat and rest my chin on the back of his massive tongue, gazing out at the dry, open world.

I even fell in love this way, believe it or not. There was a kind girl who lived next to the hunter's house who would feed the mastiff I lived in tasty leftovers through the gaps in the fence. She wore pastel sundresses and had dandelions in her hair. I couldn't believe how light and beautiful she looked in the sun.

“What are you doing in there?” the girl said when she saw me peeking from the back of the mouth.

“I live down here,” I said, ashamed.

“Well, come on out!”

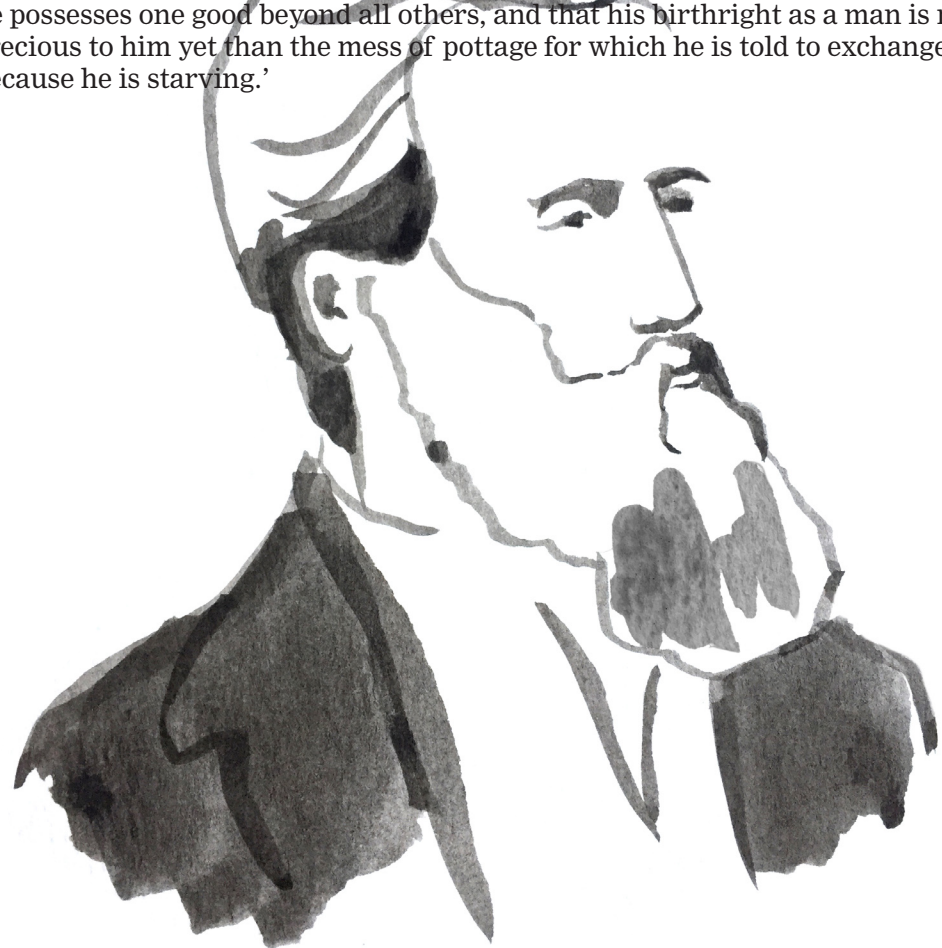




FANNY KEMBLE was born in London and raised in a family of prominent stage actors. After a tour of the United States, she married Pierce Mease Butler, one of the largest slaveholders in the nation. The narrative of her five-month stay at a Butler plantation, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839*, traces the development of her abolitionist sentiment. She sued Butler for divorce in 1849.

excerpt from Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation in 1838-1839

‘Ask the thousands of ragged destitutes who yearly land upon these shores to seek the means of existence—ask the friendless, penniless foreign emigrant, if he will give up his present misery, his future uncertainty, his doubtful and difficult struggle for life, at once, for the secure, and as it is called, fortunate dependance of the slave: the indignation with which he would spurn the offer will prove that he possesses one good beyond all others, and that his birthright as a man is more precious to him yet than the mess of pottage for which he is told to exchange it because he is starving.’



HERMAN MELVILLE was born in New York City in 1819. He received a sporadic education and worked as a bank clerk, a clerk in a cap and fur store, a schoolteacher, and a “boy” in the merchant marine. He spent 1841-1844 at sea on a whaling voyage, eventually jumping ship in the Marquesas Islands and travelling to Tahiti and Hawaii before joining the U.S. Navy. In 1850, he moved to Pittsfield. Among the novels and short stories he wrote at Arrowhead are: “Bartleby the Scrivener” and *Moby-Dick*, inspired by his view of Mount Greylock, dedicated to Hawthorne, and read by hardly anyone until after his death.

excerpt from Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Tale of Wall Street

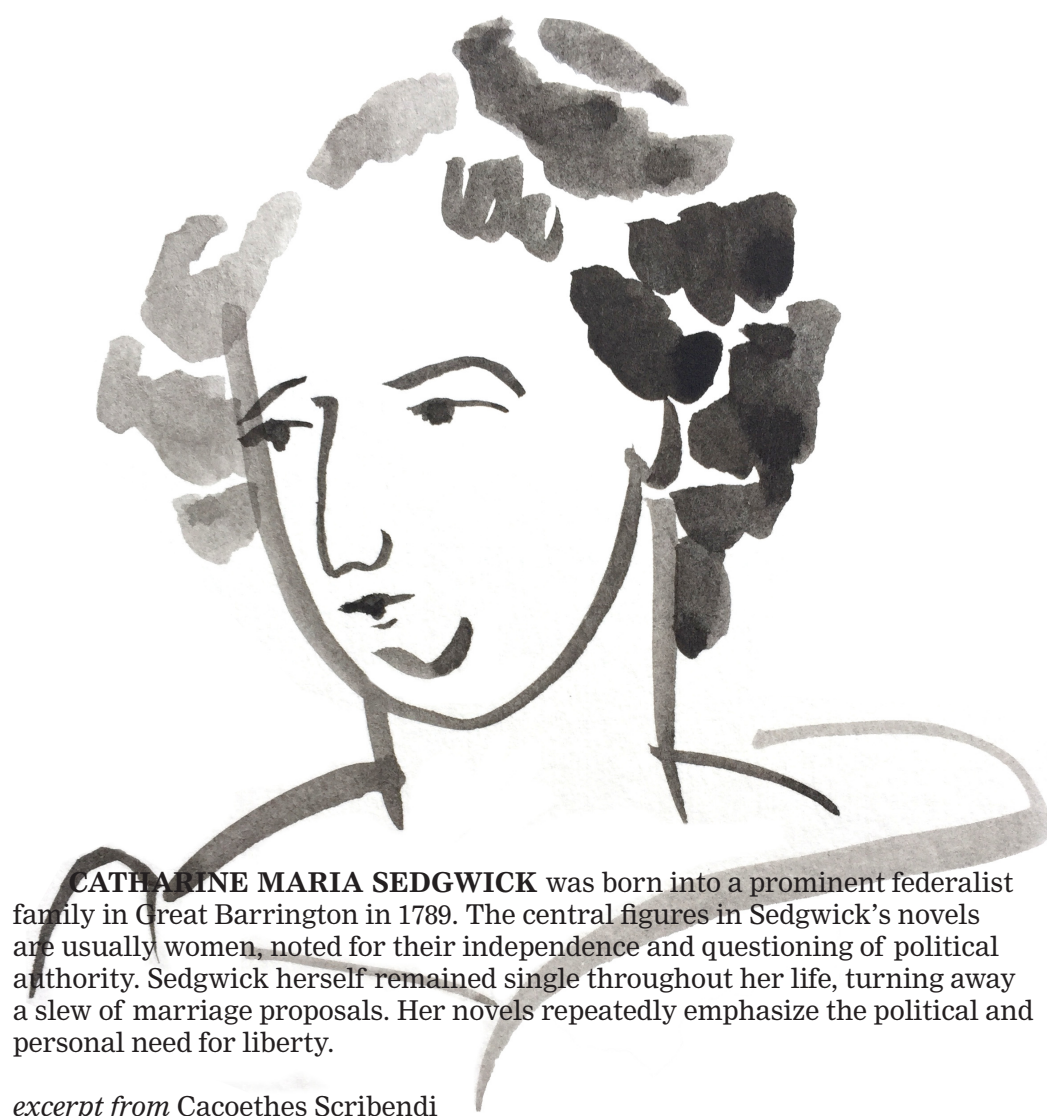
‘Now and then, in the haste of business, it had been my habit to assist in comparing some brief document myself, calling Turkey or Nippers for this purpose. One object I had in placing Bartleby so handy to me behind the screen, was to avail myself of his services on such trivial occasions. It was on the third day, I think, of his being with me, and before any necessity had arisen for having his own writing examined, that, being much hurried to complete a small affair I had in hand, I abruptly called to Bartleby. In my haste and natural expectancy of instant compliance, I sat with my head bent over the original on my desk, and my right hand sideways, and somewhat nervously extended with the copy, so that immediately upon emerging from his retreat, Bartleby might snatch it and proceed to business without the least delay.

In this very attitude did I sit when I called to him, rapidly stating what it was I wanted him to do—namely, to examine a small paper with me. Imagine my surprise, nay, my consternation, when without moving from his privacy, Bartleby in a singularly mild, firm voice, replied, “I would prefer not to.”’

W.E.B DU BOIS was born in Great Barrington in 1868 and later attended Fisk University and Harvard. He broke ground as a historian of slavery and sociologist of race relations, laying the theoretical foundations of the Civil Rights movement, and as the founder and organizer of the NAACP, giving it its activist force.

excerpt from Darkwater

‘I was born by a golden river and in the shadow of two great hills, five years after the Emancipation Proclamation. The house was quaint, with clapboards running up and down, neatly trimmed, and there were five rooms, a tiny porch, a rosy front yard, and unbelievably delicious strawberries in the rear. A South Carolinian, lately come to the Berkshire Hills, owned all this—tall, thin, and black, with golden earrings, and given to religious trances. We were his transient tenants for the time.’



CATHARINE MARIA SEDGWICK was born into a prominent federalist family in Great Barrington in 1789. The central figures in Sedgwick’s novels are usually women, noted for their independence and questioning of political authority. Sedgwick herself remained single throughout her life, turning away a slew of marriage proposals. Her novels repeatedly emphasize the political and personal need for liberty.

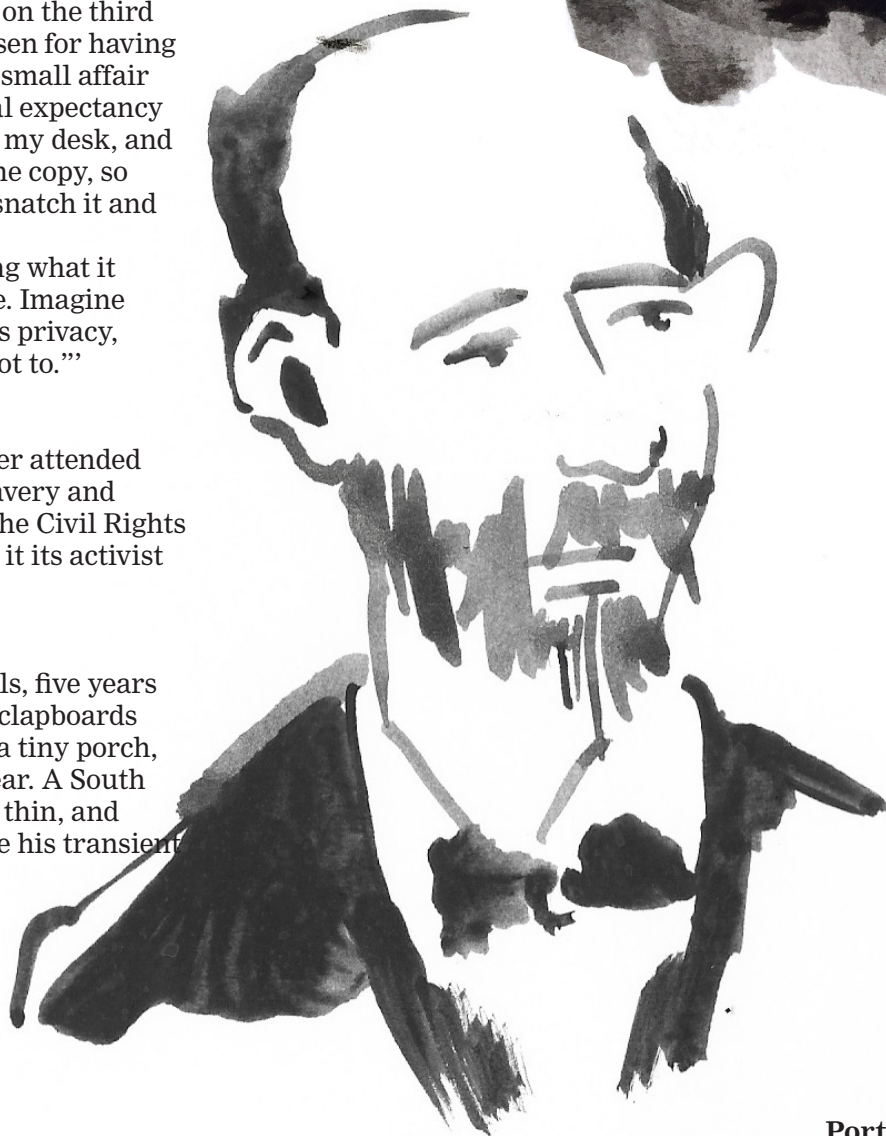
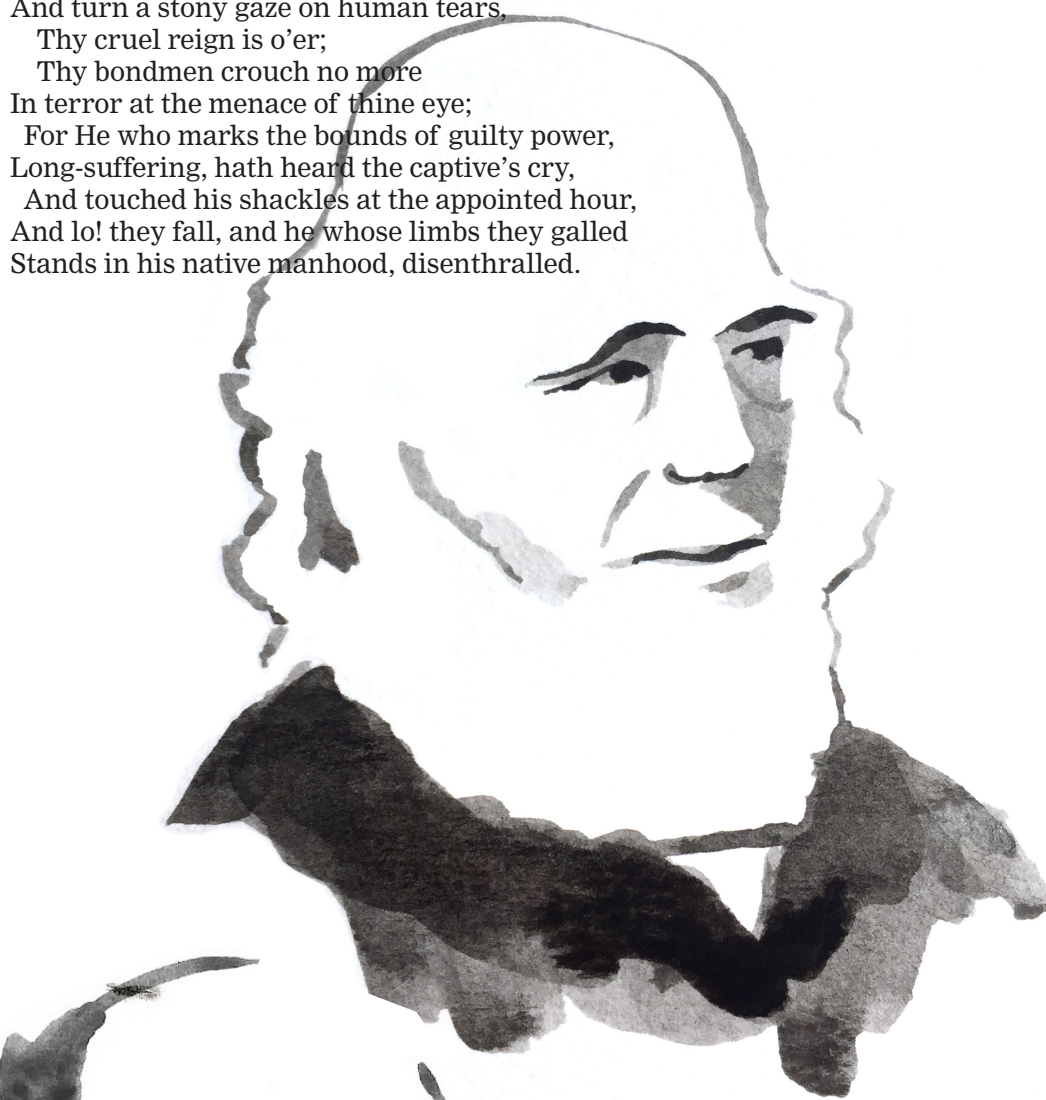
excerpt from Cacoethes Scribendi

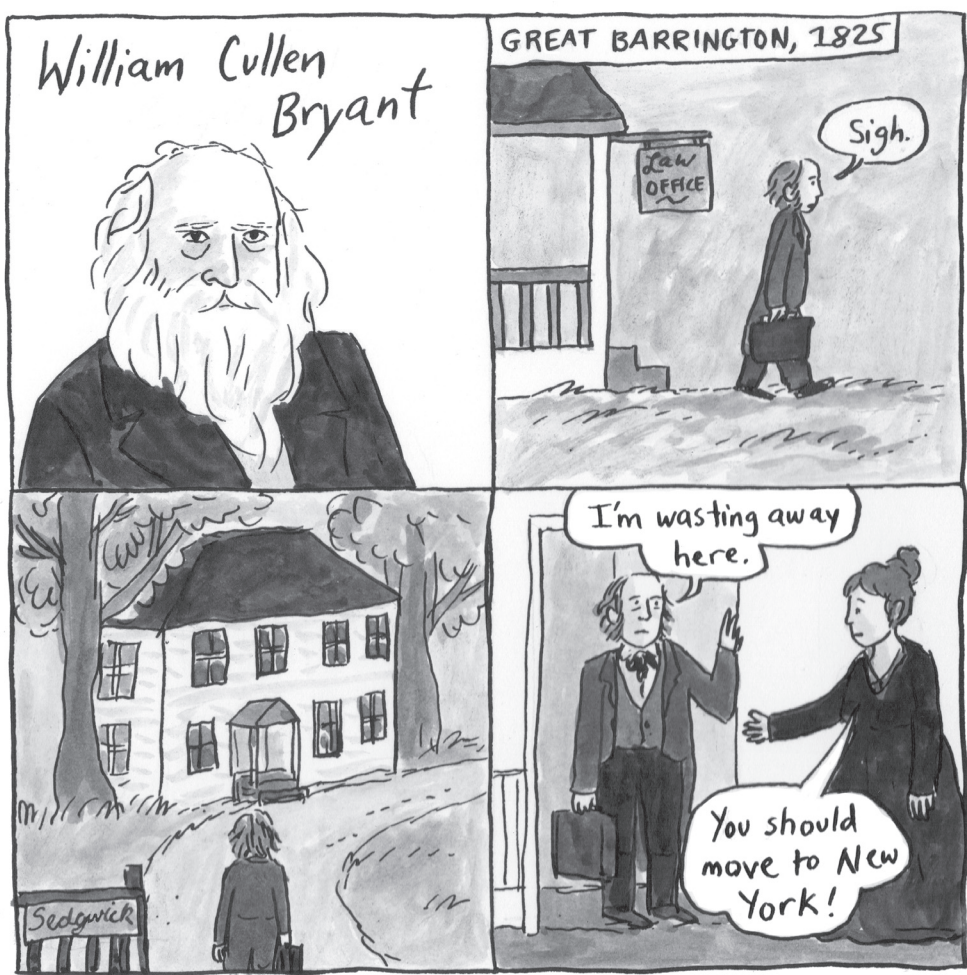
‘...Mrs. Courland divided the world into two classes, or rather parts — authors and subjects for authors; the one active, the other passive. At first blush one would have thought the village of H. rather a barren field for such a reaper as Mrs. Courland, but her zeal and indefatigableness worked wonders. She converted the stern scholastic divine of H. into as much of a La Roche as she could describe; a tall wrinkled bony old woman, who reminded her of Meg Merrilies, sat for a witch; the school master for an Ichabod Crane; a poor half wilded boy was made to utter as much pathos and sentiment and wit as she could put into his lips; and a crazy vagrant was a God-send to her. Then every “wide spreading elm,” “blasted pine,” or “gnarled oak,” flourished on her pages. The village church and school house stood there according to their actual dimensions. One old pilgrim house was as prolific as haunted tower or ruined abbey. It was surveyed outside, ransacked inside, and again made habitable for the reembodyed spirits of its founders.’

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT, born in Cummington in 1794, was America’s reigning literary figure throughout much of the nineteenth century. Bryant consistently stood for resistance to the spread of slavery. In 1820, during a period when public speaking still frightened him, he had orated against the Missouri Compromise and denounced his senator, Daniel Webster, for brokering passage of such a morally repugnant law. In later life, Bryant became editor of the *New York Evening Post*, and his reputation as a political sage eclipsed the poet in the public’s mind.

excerpt from The Death of Slavery

O THOU great Wrong, that, through the slow-paced years,
Didst hold thy millions fettered, and didst wield
The scourge that drove the laborer to the field,
And turn a stony gaze on human tears,
Thy cruel reign is o’er;
Thy bondmen crouch no more
In terror at the menace of thine eye;
For He who marks the bounds of guilty power,
Long-suffering, hath heard the captive’s cry,
And touched his shackles at the appointed hour,
And lo! they fall, and he whose limbs they galled
Stands in his native manhood, disenthralled.





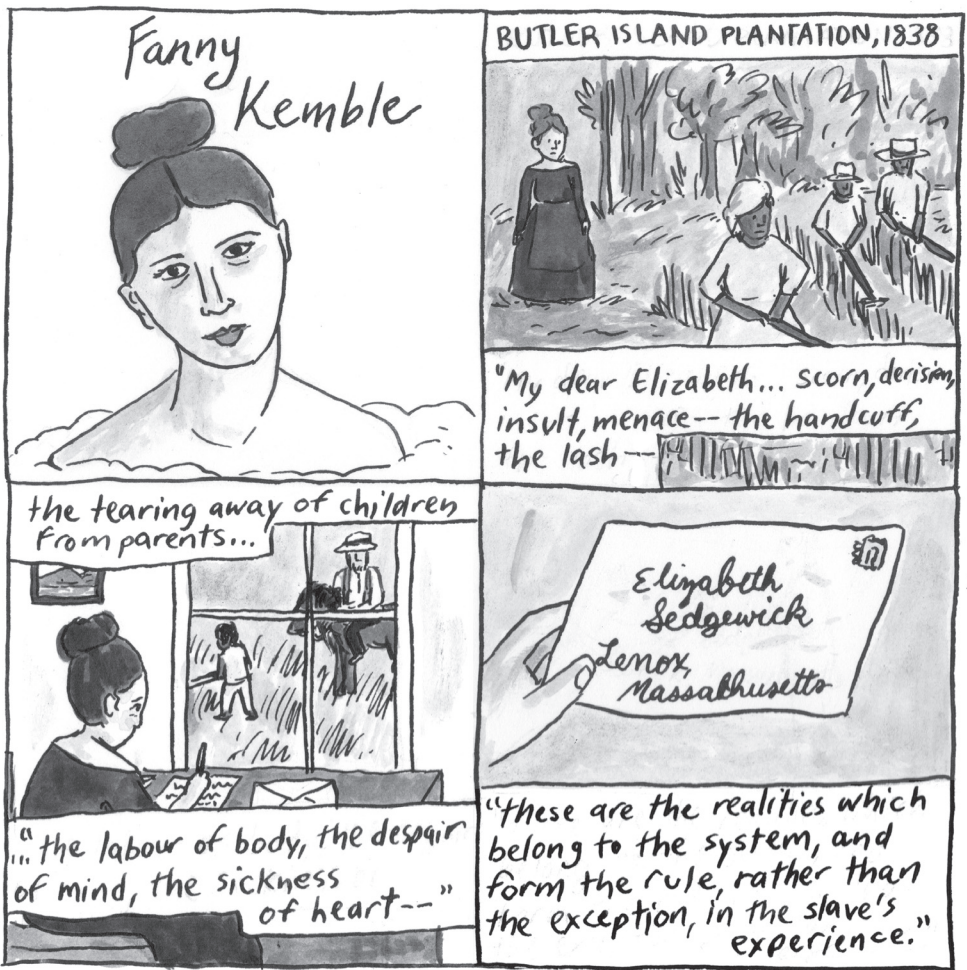
POETRY PROMPT: I Remember

Poetry comes from all around us. It often arises from the simplest details: poetic language from plain old common speech; poetic rhythm from basic repetition; poetic imagery from our memories. Here's an excerpt of this kind of poem from Joe Brainard:

I remember the first time I saw television. Lucille Ball was taking ballet lessons.
 I remember Aunt Cleora who lived in Hollywood. Every year for Christmas she sent my brother and me a joint present of one book.
 I remember a very poor boy who had to wear his sister's blouses to school.
 I remember very old people when I was very young. Their houses smelled funny.
 I remember the only time I ever saw my mother cry. I was eating apricot pie.
 I remember how much I used to stutter.
 I remember waking up somewhere once and there was a horse staring me in the face.
 I remember saying "thank you" in reply to "thank you" and then the other person doesn't know what to say.
 I remember how embarrassed I was when other children cried.
 I remember one very hot summer day I put ice cubes in my aquarium and all the fish died.
 I remember not understanding why people on the other side of the world didn't fall off.

Try writing a poem, 7 to 10 lines, set in Pittsfield, that starts out, "I remember." If you like, type it up and send it to info@themastheads.org. We'll publish a few favorites in FOLD 6!

The poems below were written by 4th grade students in Sarah Trudgeon's Fireside class at Morningside Community School in Pittsfield. Fireside is The Mastheads' poetry-in-schools program, which we run collaboratively with the Superintendent's Office of the Pittsfield Public Schools.



Fireside is named after the Fireside Poets, a group that includes Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, both writers with close ties to Pittsfield. To learn more, visit www.themastheads.org.

untitled

I remember when my mom and me walked out of my grampa's house and there was a raccoon in the tree.
 I remember when I got stitches on my lip because I banged it on the silver metal part.
 I remember when my first tooth came out.
 I remember when I first rode my bike and my mother wouldn't let go.
 I remember when my father put cake on my face when it was my birthday.
 —Kyana Summers

untitled

I remember when I threw a ball my dog jumped and sat there.
 I remember when I got my braces, it was a horrible moment, it hurt.
 I remember when my dad got hired to be a firefighter.
 I remember when my mom had my baby brother and when my mom brung him home he looked like a blob fish.
 I remember when I first saw my brother walk.
 — Freddy Conyers

untitled

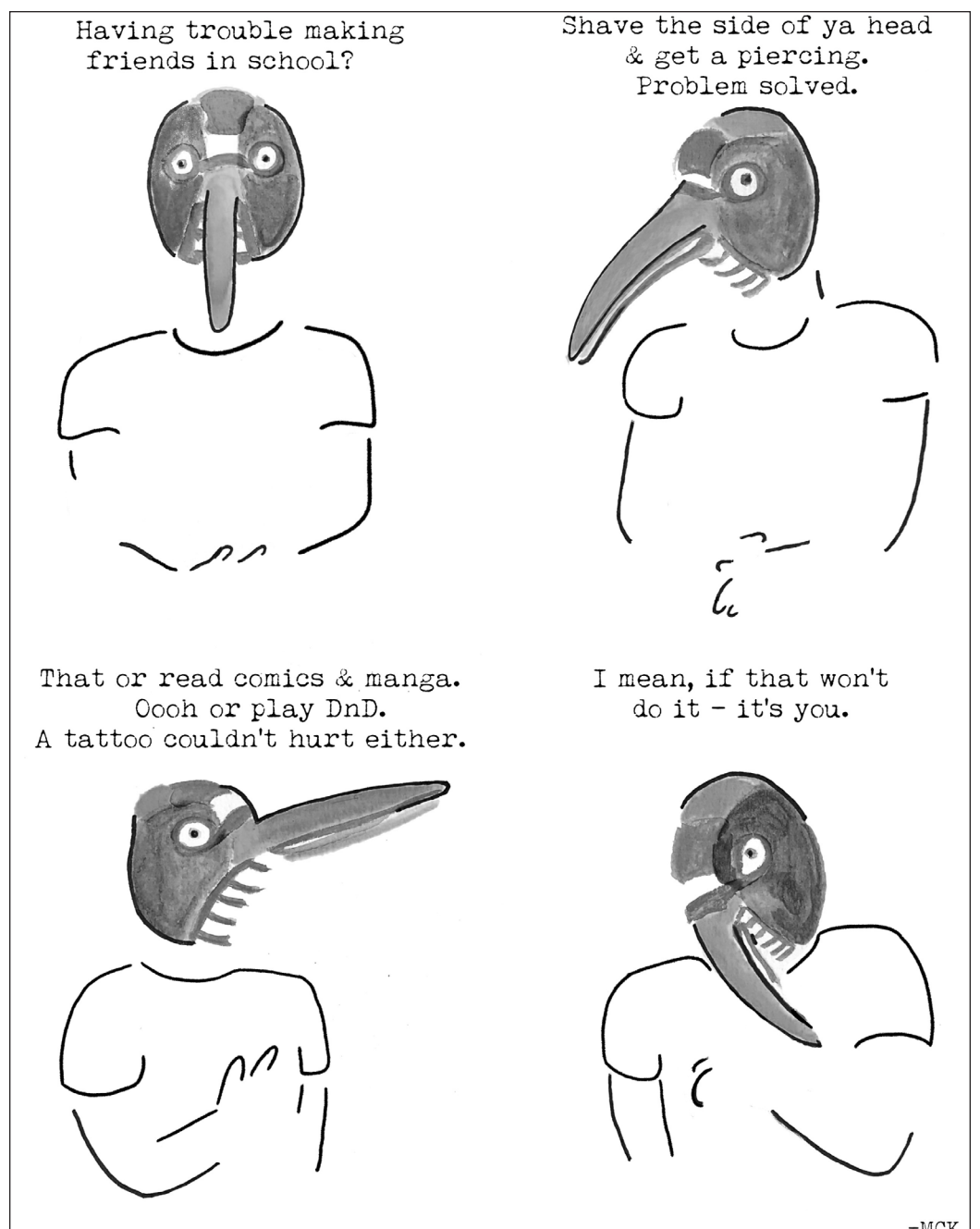
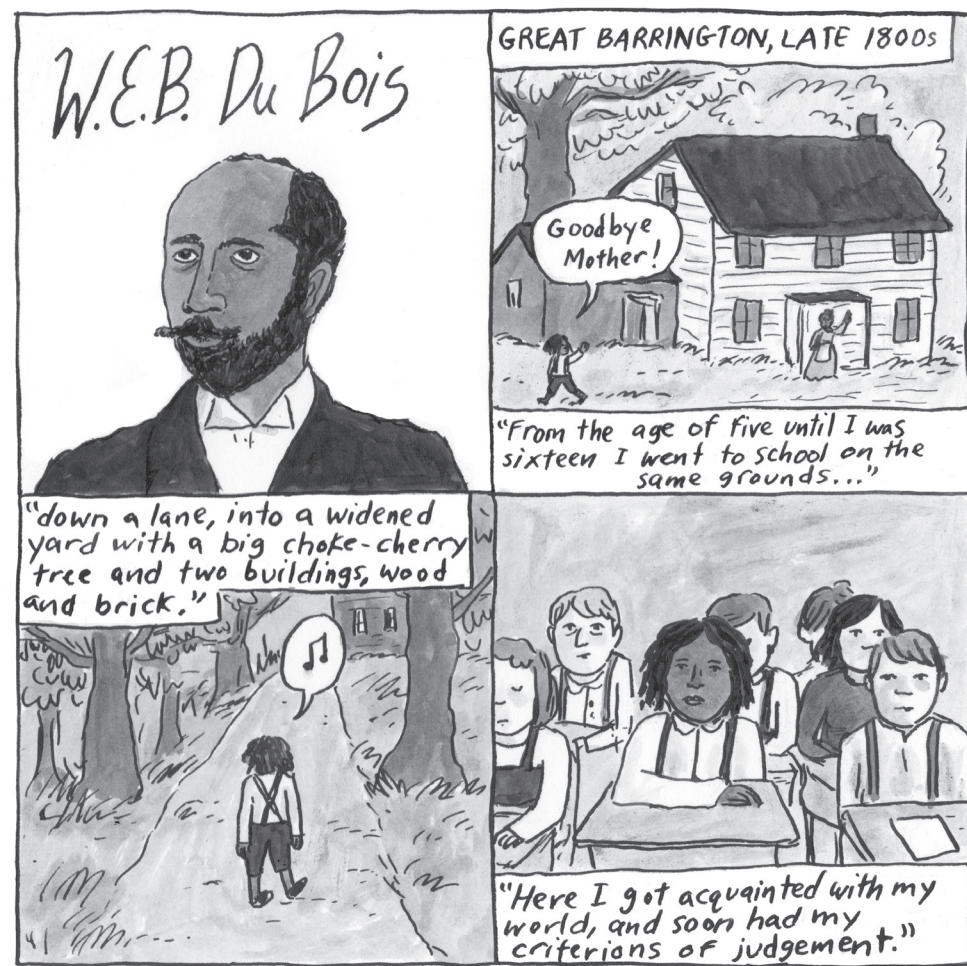
I remember my sister touched a dead squirrel.
 I remember my mom's friend threw me across the pool.
 I remember when I played track mania and it was really good.
 I remember a big Labrador jumped on my brother.
 I remember when I was on a raft behind a speedboat and when it turned I drifted.
 —Michael Duclos

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MELISSA MENDES

MATTHEW KRAMER