

THE MASTHEADS x The Berkshire Eagle

vii: the project

Sunday, August 13, 2018



Fold 7: *The Project* is our final fold of the second Mastheads season.

This issue shares work produced in the Mastheads studios during our 2018 July residency by Adrienne Raphel, Jenna Lyles, Jean Chen Ho, Lincoln Michel, and Matthew Kramer.

Fold 7 is dedicated to those who work for days to install the Mastheads studios in each new home they find, navigating 8,000 ton boxes along Berkshire roads, micro-adjusting their positions for just the right view, and leveling trailer bases again and again. This happens thanks to the dedication, love, and bravery (!) of Chris Parkinson, Andrew Barsotti, Jonathan Spinney, Jim Parkinson, Sarah Trudgeon, and Jeffrey Lawrence.

On August 15, The Mastheads writing studios open to the public at Hancock Shaker Village. See you there!

- Tessa Kelly, Director of The Mastheads

On July 24, poet Jaswinder Bolina read at The Berkshire Athenaeum as part of our Community Conversation series.

Born in Chicago, Bolina is the author of the chapbook *The Tallest Building in America* (2014), and the poetry collections *Carrier Wave* (2007), winner of the 2006 Colorado Prize for Poetry, and *Phantom Camera* (2013), which won the Green Rose Prize in Poetry from New Issues Press and was published in an international edition by Hachette India.

Poet Ravi Shankar, writing on *The Best American Poetry* blog, noted that Bolina “breaks new perceptual and sonic ground,” adding “he encapsulates the American South Asian immigrant experience, at least as I’ve experienced it.” Bolina currently teaches in the MFA program at the University of Miami.

Country, Western

Via carriage and steamer and saddle and rail, via twin-prop and airship and ship of the desert, via savannah, via steppe, via zip line and glider, under moat and over rampart, over barb

and under wire, over three green seas, via burro, via grapple, via ballistic trajectory like broke satellites cratered in alien dirt, like banged knuckles on the door of an uneasy speakeasy, we were the party after

the party nobody

wanted, sober and famished, we were the parched fronds beggared and supplicant to the clouds, the clouds cool and distant as a bourgeoisie, and we without our sleet coats,

and we without our hail hats, with less than a shekel, less than a rupee, less than a kroner or any glinting Kennedy, three pence short of a peso, we arrived over guard and under sentry, via catapult, via coyote,

via many genies blinking, we arrived bats in a manse no bat should inhabit, so we grew fin and we grew talon, we scrambled arachnid and jaguared in the canopy, dissembled, reassembled, and it’s true we piss now

in marbled closets and shower indoors as if we are clergy, it’s true no junta defiles us, no furious bomber or hegemon’s boot, but the faces on the currency all watch me, the paintings in the museum say,

This is life on Earth! This is life on Earth! so I’m jealous of their candor, but that isn’t my pasty duchess, that isn’t my butchered messiah, that isn’t my bounty of meat beside the gilded chalice, I’m no Medici,

and that isn’t my life on earth I arrived in via wormhole, via subspace, via mother

ship descending, in a snap-button sarong, in a denim sari, in my ten-gallon turban, I look so authentic you’d almost believe it’s the 44th of July,

and I’m the sheriff of this here cow town, I’m one jack better than a straight flush, buzzards above the valley, I can see the whites of your eyes, my name is Consuela, you can call me Mr. President. You can reach for the sky.

On July 17, Dolores Hayden presented at The Berkshire Athenaeum as part of our Community Conversation series.

Dolores Hayden, urban historian and poet, is professor of architecture, urbanism, and American studies at Yale, and the author of several books on the American landscape including *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, *Building Suburbia*, and *A Field Guide to Sprawl*. She is also the author of two poetry collections, *American Yard and Nymph*, *Dun*, and *Spinner*. Her work appears in recent issues of *Poetry*, *Raritan*, *Shenandoah*, *Ecotone*, *Yale Review*, and *Architrave*.

An excerpt from her talk follows:

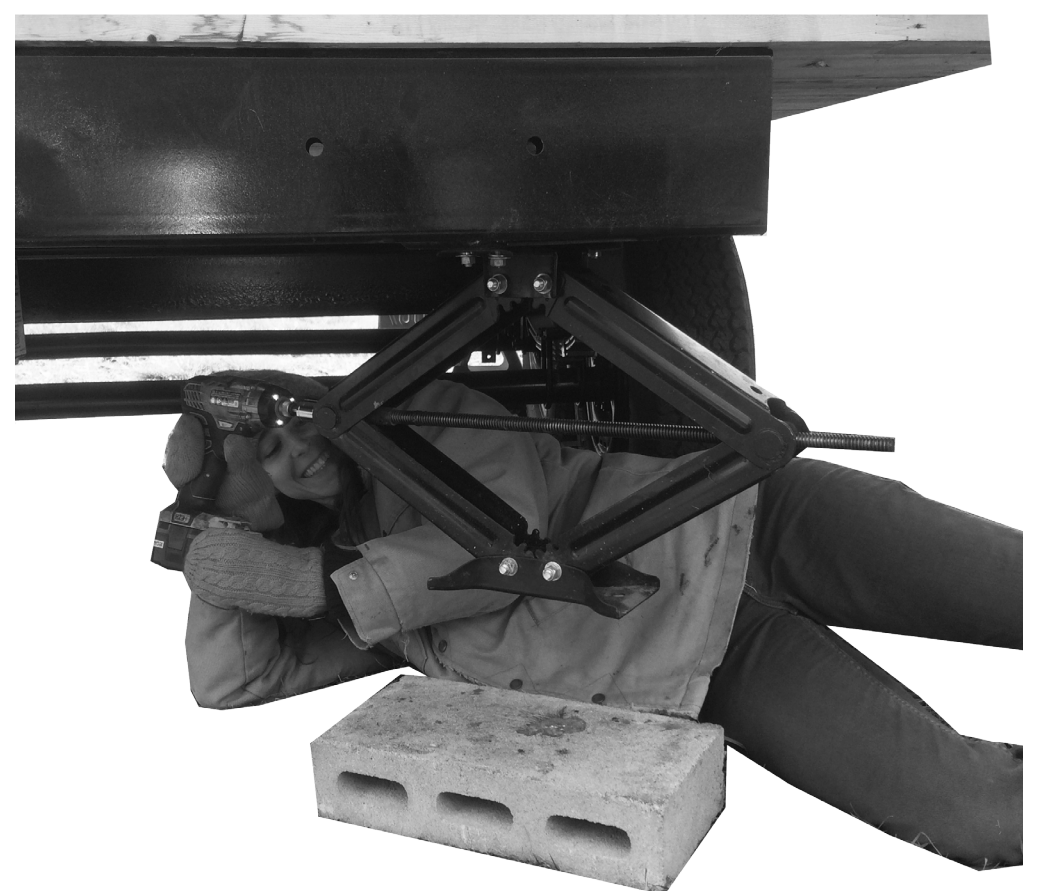
“Well, it’s a pleasure to be here at the Berkshire Athenaeum and a pleasure to be associated with The Mastheads and the wonderful things that are happening in your program, connecting architecture, poetry, and local history. And my talk today is going to be called “Storytelling with the Shapes of Time,” and I will take up place, poetry, and local history.

I’m sure that everyone in the room has thought about how you define place. It’s a very slippery word. My definition is: the power of ordinary landscapes to nurture citizens’ memories of private and public life, and to encompass shared time in the form of shared territory.

I’m an urban landscape historian, as well as an architect, and a poet. I’ve been concerned with the power of place for a long time, and the politics of place. So, I study

landscapes to see how people negotiate around territory, power, and place. Landscapes to me really are a shorthand for cultural landscapes: the combination of the natural, and the built, those space we inhabit. I study ordinary buildings and open spaces. I trace not just the shape of a particular building or a particular landscape, but I’m always curious about the whole process: construction, occupancy, and decay. And my shorthand for this is “storytelling with the shapes of time.” Many years ago I was a student at Harvard, a student of J.B. Jackson, who defined vernacular landscapes as the image of our common humanity: hard work, stubborn hope, and mutual forbearance striving to be love. I come to vernacular landscapes, though, with a little bit more of an edge. A critique of capitalism. I’m

interested in inequality. I’m interested in the divisions of gender and race as well as class, and I think the history of many ordinary places can be interpreted to honor both inclusion and exclusion, to think about how you get at the experience of all residents, not just a few, not just the wealthy people or the famous people, but all the people who have spent time in any particular place. And as a result of thinking in that way I also am concerned about how you nurture public memory, and this is something The Mastheads has certainly made a remarkable part of a wonderful project.”



JEAN CHEN HO

At the Night Market

Mah didn't kill herself. She only threatened to, from time to time. Like when I told her I wasn't going to college. Not a proper four-year UC or Cal State, no community college with a high transfer rate neither. I was about to graduate high school with the rest of the nerds and geeks. What else did she want from me? That was the second time I remember her screaming about wanting to die. And for a Christian like Mah? Crying out for Jehovah to take her life, sweep it all away, meant she was really, really mad.

The first time was when she found out all that stuff about my father.

It was Baba who ended up killing himself, a few years later. But before all that I was just a kid in high school, a girl falling in love for the first time.

Her name was Ping, and she was my piano teacher. (Mah found out about that, too.)

Back then people used to ask me all the time if I played basketball. When I answered no, told them I didn't have any athletic inclinations, they'd always shake their heads wistfully, as if I were wasting a great gift.

I hated being tall. The names they called me: Tank. Gargamel. Big Foot.

The only good part was having wide palms and long fingers, a huge advantage in piano. I used to span an octave with my thumb and ring finger, a superhuman feat that delighted Ping.

My height came from Baba. Everything else I got from Mah: pale skin, big lips, and her same eyes, single-lidded and defiant, very dark brown.

Baba was naturally golden-colored and tanned darker in the summer, when the badminton league he played in with other Taiwanese dads set up their nets outdoors. My father had light eyes. They were a grayish mud-brown, with weird flecks of dark green, evidence of some atavistic mixed blood curled into our family tree. You can't tell in photos, which was all I had now. Dog Eyes, Mah called him. Gou Yanjing.

Everything came to a head over winter break my senior year in

high school.

I'll start from the night before I was getting on that fourteen-hour flight to visit my father, LAX to Taipei nonstop. Mah wasn't coming with me. End of the year was when she had to put in extra hours to close out the books, so it was just me and Baba, ten days together.

Soon as she got home from work that day, Mah tied the pink Hello Kitty apron around her middle and started making food for her Bible study, like she does every Friday. I sat at the dining table and watched her pour oil into the wok, swirl it around to coat the bottom and sides. With her back to me,

Mah asked how my piano lesson went today. Fine, I said, doing my best to keep my voice normal.

Ping was five years older than me. She was a masters student in music composition and performance at Cal Arts up in Valencia, but she drove down here for my lessons, and to do her shopping at 99 Ranch. Friday afternoons were ours alone, Ping and me. Obviously, Mah didn't know anything about what went on after my hour-long instruction, how Ping and I crept upstairs and lay in my bed together: talking, kissing. Magic wreathed those hours before Mah came home, the sound of the garage door scrolling up and the engine of her Toyota minivan restoring the ordinariness of everything in my life.

I changed the subject by asking her for ten bucks to go the movies.

"Better you stay home tonight," Mah said. "Wake up early tomorrow." She stood at the stove, her back to me, placing wontons into the oiled wok with the extra-long chopsticks.

"But we already finished packing everything—"

"Then you can play the hymns for us on piano," she said. "The aunties miss you." She turned around and gave me a meaningful stare-down. "They ask me all the time, where is Jane? Why she doesn't go to youth group? She forgot all about Jesus?"

I had nothing to say. She turned back to the stove.

"Be useful," she said. "At least you can set up the chairs."

Mah kept the metal folding chairs stored in the garage. One by one, I planted them in a half circle around

the glass-topped coffee table in the living room, opposite the overstuffed black leather sofa we've had since I was little. There was a fat rip in one arm but Mah had stuck a piece of black electric tape over it. Above the sofa, a large framed painting of Christ himself hung on the wall, his ocean blue eyes turned skyward, a crown of thorns resting on his head. The first time Ping came over to give me a lesson, I caught a look of horror in her eyes when she saw it, but she politely turned away without saying anything.

I was looking forward to my trip tomorrow, but what I really wanted to know was when Baba was coming back. My freshman year, he moved to Taiwan for a job at his alma mater in Taipei, working to secure overseas internships for their engineering students. Mah had acted like it was no big deal when they broke the news to me. Why do you always cry so easy, I remember her saying. He's coming back, she'd added, matter-of-factly. He's still going to be your dad.

He'd promised it would be temporary, a year or two, tops.

I'm graduating high school next May.

I hustled to finish the chairs so I could hide out in my room before anyone arrived. I didn't want to run into Auntie Ruby, Mah's best friend at First Chinese Calvary. Every time, without exception, she asks me if I've grown another inch. I get it! I'm a tall-ass freak. Then she starts in on the cost of tuition at Stanford, where her son Kenneth is a freshman. How he could've gone to Berkeley on a full ride but hated the campus when he visited.

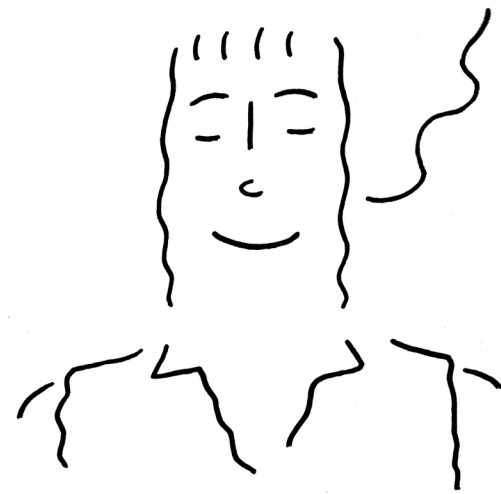
I imagined Mah and the church ladies sitting in the living room tonight, Bibles covering their laps, praising Jesus in earnest voices. I tried my best to be out of the house on Friday nights, but when I was stuck with no plans, I'd hear them crying out Hallelujahs and Amens. Sometimes, I wondered what exactly Mah prayed about. I tried to eavesdrop once. My Chinese isn't bad, but Mah was using some unfamiliar words, so I couldn't quite figure it out. Something about me, another bit about Baba, our family in Taiwan. It sounded

almost as if she might start crying, she was so overcome with emotion. I couldn't believe it, but it was her voice, breaking.

After I finished the chairs, I brought a plate of Mah's wontons up to my room. My suitcase looked dangerously close to busting at the seams. After I'd packed in my clothes and shoes last night, Mah had stuffed in all the goodies our relatives requested: Costco size bottles of fish oil lozenges and chewable B-12 tablets, a dozen tubes of Ultra Strength Ben Gay cream, an assortment of Avon lipsticks with names like Mad for Mauve and Pucker Up Pink. Baba had only asked for one thing: as many packages of corn tortillas as I had room to carry. He said Mexican food hadn't made its way to Taiwan yet, and what he missed most about California was the tacos.

MATTHEW KRAMER

I love the smell of bug spray in spite of it having a horrific chemical smell. Sunscreen is almost erotic as well.



It reminds me of summer, along with the scent of dead skunk on the roadside.



JENNA LYLES

The Organ's Loom

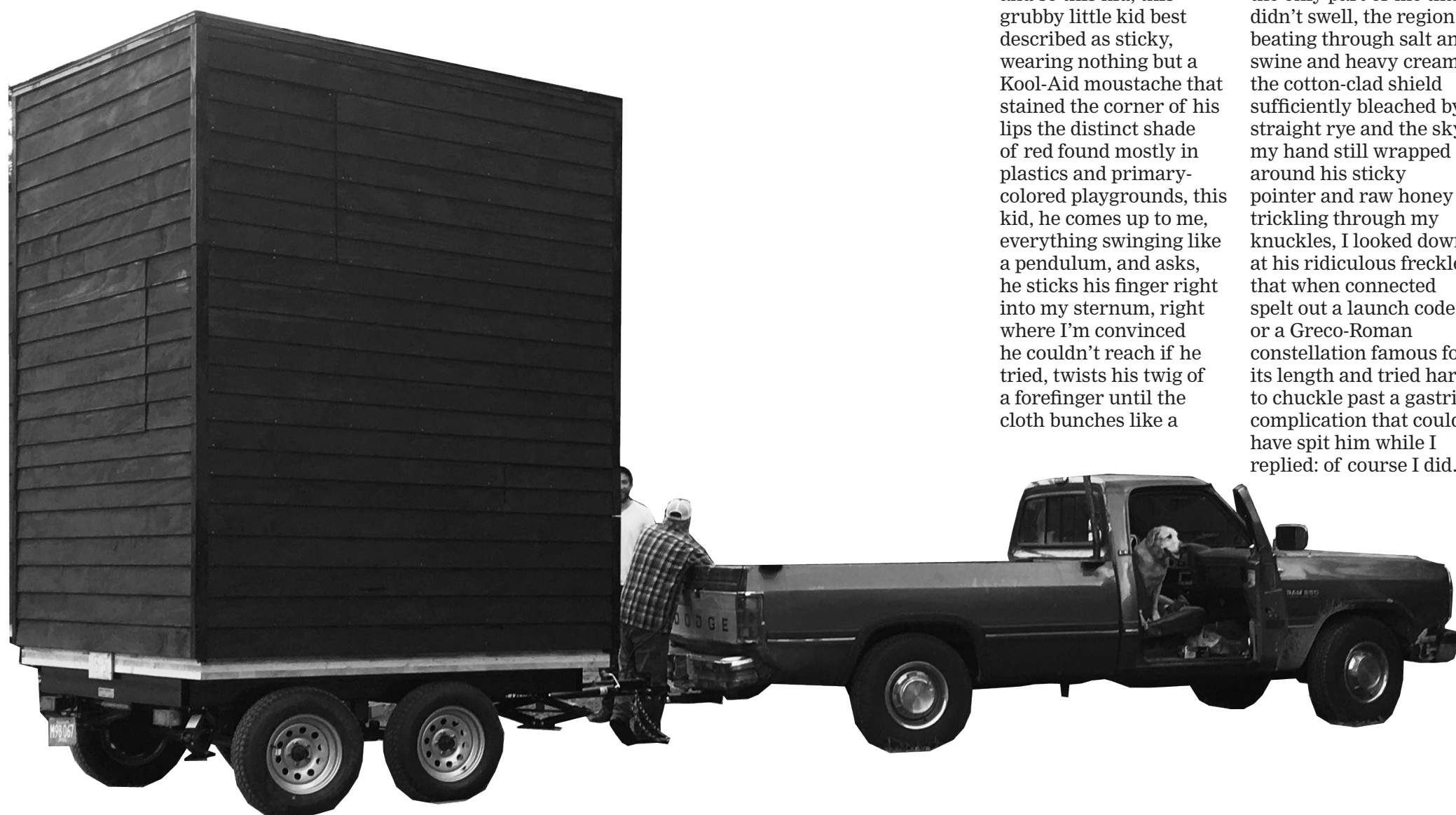
and the bottle's imminent backwash sways left to right round and round and round, until the body's listless mouth swallows it down a hollow hatch attached to the organ's loom. Taking with it, a spaceless tomb, a jampacked coffer topfull as muse. A useless, toothless fang-bearing rouse, so ruddy it's ruby it's damned out of tune. It's true. It's true. The organ's loom is out of tune; its valves water-boarded, its blood perfumed. Its tissue unraveled, its rugae unloosed. The backwash ballooned, the stomach turned rune, and the organ alone in its dark fleshy room. An organ turned organ, an organ that looms.

Wins, Whoever Eats the Most

and so this kid, this grubby little kid best described as sticky, wearing nothing but a Kool-Aid moustache that stained the corner of his lips the distinct shade of red found mostly in plastics and primary-colored playgrounds, this kid, he comes up to me, everything swinging like a pendulum, and asks, he sticks his finger right into my sternum, right where I'm convinced he couldn't reach if he tried, twists his twig of a forefinger until the cloth bunches like a

shirred dress, he pokes me right there— right where everyone can see my buttered bib tortiled around his top knuckle like some sort of scorned canebrake, this kid, with his bird chest aimed up at me like a cannon, like his split-screen pectorals caught me walking in and walking out with a fork in my pocket, he asks, fueled by nothing but liters of what makes children fizz, in a voice as certain as math, his fingernail still stamping a half-moon roundabout my heart's mattress and his chin up like he's beholding a mountain he hasn't yet scaled but is bound to scale with nothing but a pair of scissors and jawful of Lemonheads, he asks me, dead serious like the answer will leap out and lick him if he likes it well enough: did you win?

and so I, well, I was bunching up my spattered sleeves and fishing pie out of my nails, stepping aside for a whale to pass by, the kind of competitor that could eat a raw car engine and all, when I cleared my throat and started to say, gently plucking his finger from the only part of me that didn't swell, the region beating through salt and swine and heavy cream, the cotton-clad shield sufficiently bleached by straight rye and the sky, my hand still wrapped around his sticky pointer and raw honey trickling through my knuckles, I looked down at his ridiculous freckles that when connected spelt out a launch code or a Greco-Roman constellation famous for its length and tried hard to chuckle past a gastric complication that could have spit him while I replied: of course I did.





The Berserkshires

This is my very first attempt at a crossword puzzle, composed in the Berkshires, about the Berkshires, for the Berkshires. Theme answers populate the circled squares. After wrestling for days to get the fill, boxing myself into corners, I finally threw in the towel, cashed in my chips, cut my losses, and finished. There's no lack of awkward answers (68- and 69-Across are especially nails-on-a-chalkboard), and the theme itself isn't smooth (the circled letters in the southwest quadrant... don't really work). So I present this as a work-in-progress, Draft #1 of an obsession.

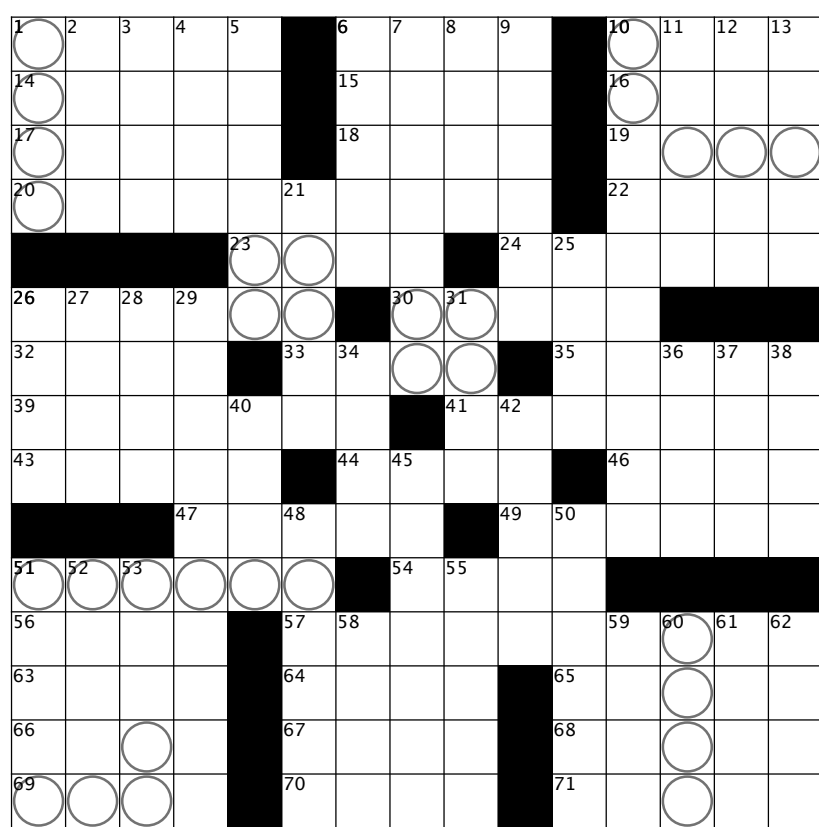
ACROSS

1. Lip stain
6. ___ Hashana
10. "The bird, a nest, the spider, ___": William Blake
14. Kind of motel
15. California-based gas company
16. Como un millonario
17. Mistake
18. Workers' rights org.
19. Boast
20. What tomorrows were, two days before
22. Prefix to port
23. Tired
24. Baby's first getup
26. A certain drive
30. Holey one
32. Type of soup noodle
33. Cat's call
35. Disinfectant since 1889
39. Most dear
41. Popular 2017 toys to "unbox"
43. Buttinski
44. Jet-black
46. Austen heroine
47. TD Garden, for one
49. Refuse to yield
51. Knot, as in hair
54. Said, as a farewell
56. Lion's share
57. Eleanor and others
63. "___ virumque cano" (first word of the "Aeneid")
64. Bugs
65. Ancient Greek marketplace
66. Modern education acronym
67. Business school subj.
68. The ___ is in: Abbrev.

69. Questionnaire for patient's stress levels
70. Types of Toyotas
71. "___ Another" (NPR word game show)

DOWN

1. Gardens, for Edith Beale
2. Ancient stories
3. They're used to row ashore
4. Robert Burns, for one
5. Canny
6. Wellness abbrev. first used as a term for soldiers' free time
7. Disney World's home
8. Foretell the future with a crystal ball
9. "___-Jobson": Law in linguistics
10. Quintessence
11. Mikes, as a spy
12. Bad bacteria, sometimes
13. David also known as Ziggy Stardust
21. Lives with
25. Type of set, in mathematics
26. Skeleton discovered in 1974
27. Not working
28. Windfall
29. Shares a photo, today
31. Like a wise bird
34. Mess on the dessert menu
36. Type of truck



Adrienne Raphel

LINCOLN MICHEL

excerpt from: My Life in the Bellies of Beasts

...She laughed, but I was afraid and slid back down into the guts. I didn't think a boy who had lived his life in the bellies of beasts was worthy of her.

I howled with self-pity, and the girl rubbed the mastiff's belly, saying, "There, there."

Eventually my constant loneliness made me resolve to leave the dog's belly. And I did. Using all my strength, I pulled my way out of the mastiff's maw. It was dark outside the dog. My limbs ached, and I decided to rest. As I sat on squishy ground, I realized I was merely in another belly. The dog had been gobbled up by a grizzly bear when I hadn't been paying attention. I couldn't believe my bad luck!

When I tried to escape the bear she grew angry and climbed up a tall tree. I was almost a teenager now, and life felt like a rotten trap. Everything that seemed sweet contained hidden thorns. If I had fresh honey in my grasp, it was followed by the painful sting of swallowed bees.

But life moves on, and one grows accustomed to anything. Years passed. The grizzly was drugged and placed on a boat that set off for a foreign zoo. The boat was caught in a terrible storm, and the bear and I were tossed overboard, only to be consumed by a shark that was later swallowed, accidentally, by a giant sperm whale.

I was now in the largest belly I had ever been in. There was nothing to restrain me anymore. I was a man, and I had to make a life for myself. I set to work, building a shelter out of driftwood scraps and skewering fish from the stomach's pond for food. Sometimes I thought about the little girl in the sundress and felt a sadness in my stomach. I lived in the whale for a long time. My skin grew spots, and my hair fell softly to the ground. My years were swallowed one by one by the beast of time.

Then one day, I noticed the whale was no longer moving. I hadn't felt stillness in many years. I was afraid and sat waist-deep in the cold saltwater. I pressed my ear to the whale's ribcage and heard shouts and noises beyond the barrier of flesh. Then metal claws tore the walls of my world open, and I tumbled onto a wooden deck.

It took my eyes quite some time to adjust to the light. My old skin was covered in flecks of blood and slick blubber.

Between the unshaven sailors, I saw a woman looking at me and smiling. Her skin was crumpled with age, and her hair was long and white. She was wearing a green sundress and holding out her hand.

"How did you find me?" I managed to say.

"I've been searching for you all my life," she said. She bent down to kiss me softly on the brow.

She helped me off the ship's floor and gave me a bowl of hot soup. The sailors waved goodbye to us at the next port. We married and bought a little apartment in the city, far away from the woods and wild beasts. Inside, we enveloped each other in our arms and whispered the words we'd saved up over all that time. There weren't many years left for us, so we were determined to live them happily. We drank dark wine and filled our bellies with rich meals of liver and ripe fruit.

Time passed, and my days were calm.

Yet despite all my happiness, life was uneasy for me on the outside. Often at night I would wake up in a sweat, my body encased in the tight sheets of our little bed in a cold apartment in a city surrounded by the warm sea. I felt small and alone in that dark room. I could feel the breath of my wife on my neck, but it felt like the breath of some unstoppable and infinitely large beast, the one waiting for the day that it would swallow me inside the blackness of its belly forever.

THANK YOU
THANK YOU
THANK YOU
!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

The following people, foundations, businesses, and institutions have supported The Mastheads this season, allowing us to deliver our second year of public programming in 2018.

our backbone:
The Feigenbaum Foundation, Joan and Jim Hunter, Hans and Kate Morris, David and Marita Glott, Housatonic Heritage, Mass Humanities, Berkshire Bank Foundation, Hill Engineers, Architects, Planners, Inc., Steve Oakes, Berkshire Athenaeum, General Dynamics

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Cultural Resources Foundation,
Dafna Alsheh,
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Guido's Fresh Marketplace,
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Kyle and Lili Chambers,
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Matthew Chester,
Mélusine Wines,
Methuselah,
Natanya Bittman,
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Red Lion Inn,
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Stephanie Thier,
Sue Pickwell,
Susan and Andy Kelly,
Ted and Jen Glockner,
upstreet literary magazine,
William Havemann

Fireside Poems

The following poems about the Mastheads studios were written by 4th-grade students from Morningside Community School during an October 2017 field trip to MASS MoCA. The visit was part of our Fireside poetry-in-schools program, led by Sarah Trudgeon, Director of Education for The Mastheads.

My studio is like a fly she is harmless. My studio eats like a pig she loves meat. My studio loves color like a rainbow.
—Emma Moon

My studio runs like a bull
My studio smells like wood
My studio is as happy as a little girl on Christmas.
My studio would ask, "Get me out of the ground."
—Laureus Pettijohn

My studio is black like a dark forest at night.
The windows turn like a leaf on a windy day.
The smell of my studio is like the smell of fresh wood.
You can hear wind zooming fast on the fall day.
—Carlina Mazzurco

My studio sounds like a bus
My studio would dance like a dog with worms
My studio acts like a book getting thrown around
My studio smells like a dying donkey
My studio is black as my hair
—Malliha Shaileshkuma Tanna

The windows in my studio open like doors.
My studio looks like my almost bald dog.
The boards in the studio look like A giraffe. My studio eats like a person.
my studio smells like wood and sap.
—Michelle Davis
My studio looks like a box

My studio can talk breathe dance and walk. My studio is dark like the universe.
My studio is warm like a fireplace.
—Jordynn Cote



G	L	O	S	S	R	O	S	H	A	W	E	B
R	O	A	C	H	A	R	C	O	R	I	C	O
E	R	R	O	R	N	L	R	B	C	R	O	W
Y	E	S	T	E	R	D	A	Y	S	H	E	L
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L	I	B	I	D	O	D	O	N	U	T		
U	D	O	N	M	E	O	W	L	Y	S	O	L
C	L	O	S	E	S	T	L	O	L	P	E	T
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R	O	A	R	R	O	O	S	E	V	E	L	T
A	R	M	A	I	R	K	S	A	G	O	R	A
S	T	E	M	E	C	O	N	D	O	C	I	S
H	A	D	S	R	A	V	S	A	S	K	M	E

Berserkshires Solution Key