

TWO POEMS BY MEGAN FERNANDES

SPECTRAL

Cachuma Lake, California

At daybreak, we hear voices broadcast
across the pines, play chess in tunnels
pumping through the ripe clots of trees,
kneeling into the belly of the forest.
The sea is green with weeds, snake-like
and in the shack, there are sodium lamps
scanning the fog, rose-blooms falling
from the wallpaper.

Nothing lives here,
just abandoned supper plates and blue
shutters. Even the flat-cheek rabbits
keep away. But I know there is something
alive—like Lucretius when he gazed
out his window and saw the loose dust
hovering in the Roman daylight. He saw
not graves, but ghosts, barbed into the
atmosphere.

SOUTH PHILLY

That was the summer when I came back defeated by California, the summer when my parents gave me train fare, and when I accepted it. When my boyfriend moved to Brooklyn

and came out, when I worked the early morning shift at the hostel on Bank street in Old City for ten bucks an hour. I would cast up South street in a late fog, listen to Satie's gypsy scales

and grace notes, think about Romania and Wagner and furniture music, read dystopic books about uncontainment: telepathic mind-energy, leaking genes, pheromone transmission, germ

plasm and the imprecise phage or muton in the air—trashy, pop, paranoid shit. When I met Petey, drunk at a the Trocadero Theater in Chinatown, he took me up to a roof on 3rd and Arch

and we kissed there for a long time, researching the city light, the pebbled sky gathering in the humidity around the bridges: the green-winged Whitman, peaky Franklin, the trussed Ross.

I took him home, past the fabric district where Quinceañera dresses hung dead-like on headless mannequins, past the 4th street delicatessen where the turkey from a sandwich, carefully

rationed, fed me for nearly a week, past the dying video store where I rented and then watched *Hannah and Her Sisters* for days, for days and days, back to my home in Queens Village, a home

I borrowed from Camille that summer while she was in Japan. We stayed in bed. I told him about Kevin. He asked me if I knew, saw clues, and I flipped around in the covers, said *maybe*,

something about a teapot tattoo that made me wonder, but you know, those were the days when almost everyone I knew was bi, hated gender essentialism, didn't ask too many questions. And

we were in love, I guess. I gave Petey a key. He took me to the Italian market, bought me truffle oil, kissed me against the cold exposed brick of my apartment before I caught my plane back

to California, back to a job and the dead grass that some call golden, but to me, was always so dry and disappointing. So unlike the moody treescapes of the east coast, her cities splitting the

summer green, that heat stretching along the salted Atlantic.