

# **SHORT STORY NIGHT**

## **The Miracle Girl**

*Rita Chang-Eppig*

**Read this story and join library staff  
at Lion's Tail Brewing  
Monday, January 8th at 7:00 pm  
for a one-hour discussion featuring  
trivia, laughs, and other surprises.  
21 and older.**

# The Miracle Girl | VQR Online

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By Rita Chang-Eppig, Illustrations by Aya Kakeda

**On the first day** of her stigmata, Xiao Chun's palms bled so much that the school sent her home early. Xiao Xue sighed at this turn of events and gathered her things to follow her sister. Xiao Chun was already prettier, smarter, and more obedient—she just had to be holier too.

Wong Daifu, the village doctor, made a house call when he heard about the strange condition. He squinted at the puncture wounds, which were not round and smooth but thin ovals with fringes of red, protruding skin. "And you're sure she didn't hurt herself accidentally?" he asked.

"We were in class when this happened," Xiao Xue replied for her sister, who sat with her back straight and ankles crossed. "Me and the sixth graders were doing math with the teacher. She and the eighth graders were reading the Bible on their own. Suddenly she fell out of her chair and started flopping around."

"Then I don't know." He instructed Xiao Chun to keep the wounds bandaged and prescribed some herbs to prevent anemia.

That night, after getting shuffled off to bed, Xiao Xue heard her parents talking. "This is all because of the missionaries and their crazy school. I never heard of any bleeding palms before those foreigners got here," her father said.

"Keep your voice down," her mother said. "They've been kind to us. The food they give out isn't bad, and the girls are learning English. So what if we had to convert?"

He snorted loudly. "Either they want to give us food or they don't. Non-Catholics don't deserve to go hungry any more than Catholics do."

Xiao Xue wrapped her arms around herself and tried to sink deeper into the bed that she and Xiao Chun shared. Her sister was already asleep, kicking the blanket off the both of them little by little. The damp air chilled Xiao Xue's skin. A damselfly hurled itself against the window, its rapid wings making a sound like uncooked rice being spilled.

Xiao Xue didn't remember being particularly hungry before the foreigners came—not full, necessarily, but also not hollow the way her neighbors described. They'd fled to Taiwan from the revolution in China when Xiao Xue was a baby. She couldn't imagine lying awake from stomach pangs, feeling her blood thin into air. Yet the more the foreigners insisted that the villagers were poor and hungry, the poorer and hungrier the villagers seemed to become, as

if they were living through some reverse loaves-and-fishes miracle. She once said as much to Xiao Chun, but her sister just rolled her eyes. “I guess you forgot the part about Mom scraping food from her plate onto yours.”

When Xiao Chun kicked again, Xiao Xue snatched roughly at the blanket. Though Xiao Chun didn’t react, Xiao Xue could tell she had awakened. “Does it hurt?” Xiao Xue asked.

“A little,” Xiao Chun said, “but that doesn’t matter. I feel so close to Jesus, you can’t possibly understand. I feel his pain and his love for all of us.”

Xiao Xue wormed closer to her sister, who had unwrapped one of the bandages and was admiring the wound. “What about if I do this?” she asked, pressing her finger into it. The flesh was warm and limp. The blood smelled like spring flowers newly broken through the earth.

“It doesn’t matter.”

Xiao Xue wiped her finger on the blanket and flipped onto her other side. Within minutes she was asleep. At some point in the night, she awoke and squinted at her sister. She was still admiring her hand. In the half-light from the hallway, the hole gleamed like a droplet squeezed from the heart of the sun. Would she feel warmer if she curled herself around the wound, she wondered. Would she shine with Jesus’s love?

**On the second day** of the stigmata, the teachers called an assembly. They helped Xiao Chun onto the stage, which was just six milk crates turned upside down and pushed together. She was wearing a billowy white dress with little blue roses at the waist that one of the teachers had brought to school. It was the prettiest dress Xiao Xue had ever seen. The teachers explained that someone was coming from far away to investigate, to make sure that the stigmata were real. “Of course, we know that Xiao Chun isn’t faking,” Sister Eunice said to the students. “We were there when she fell to the ground. We witnessed the miracle with our own eyes.”

One of the boys behind Xiao Xue muttered something about girls and bleeding. Sister Eunice cleared her throat. “This is no joking matter. Only those with unshakable faith and goodness experience the stigmata. All of you here should aspire to be like Xiao Chun.”

Xiao Xue nudged Ye Jing’s shoulder. He had been gawping at Xiao Chun since the assembly started. Not that he didn’t gawp at her normally, a fact her mother sometimes teased him about (“Too bad you’re younger than Xiao Chun,” she liked to say to him. “Otherwise you two would make a cute pair”), but now he appeared transfixed. When he didn’t respond, Xiao Xue elbowed him in the ribs.

“Stop,” he said.

“Come to my house today,” she said.

“I have to look after my grandfather.”

“My sister will be there. Wong Daifu ordered her to go home directly after school.”

He thought for a moment, longer than she would have liked. “I can’t,” he said finally, and she felt disappointed and relieved at the same time.

Onstage, Sister Eunice was retelling the story of Saint Francis. While fasting on a mountain, she said, growing more and more impassioned, Saint Francis was visited by a six-winged angel bearing the marks of the Crucifixion. His heart brimmed with both grief and joy, for he was both saddened by the angel’s suffering and grateful that he had been chosen for this vision. Suddenly, wounds appeared in his hands and feet. His side began to bleed as if pierced with a spear.

“Her eyes! Her eyes!” one of the students yelled.

Blood was dripping down Xiao Chun’s pale, heart-shaped face. She seemed surprised by the development, cupping her bandaged palms in front of her chest, mouth slightly open. But she couldn’t catch all the tears—they rolled over the sides of her hands, seeped through the cracks between her fingers, and landed on the white dress.

In an instant, all the teachers and students had surrounded her. Ye Jing knelt by her side, stroking her back.

“I was listening to the story of Saint Francis,” she said, “and I was overcome by compassion for him, so I started crying. I didn’t even realize.”

“Oh, glory, glory,” Sister Eunice said to the ceiling.

Sister Eunice drove the two girls home that afternoon, jabbering about Saint Francis and the importance of works as they walked to her car. Xiao Chun trailed some distance behind them, gazing serenely at the birds and trees. “It is because your sister works so hard,” Sister Eunice said to Xiao Xue, “always helping out those around her, always thinking of the good of others, that she has been blessed in this way. I know you have it in you to be blessed too!”

“I don’t want to bleed,” Xiao Xue said. “It looks like it hurts.”

“Not even for Jesus?”

“I said I don’t want to!”

Sister Eunice looked a little saddened by this, but whatever guilt Xiao Xue might have felt disappeared when Sister Eunice insisted that Xiao Chun lie across the back seat and thereby take up most of the space. Xiao Xue practically had to paint herself onto the door. She pressed her cheek against the cold glass of the window, listening to the car’s grunts.

The long-nosed Buick made her a little uncomfortable. It reminded her of a beast turned inside out, bones to the weather, the tough hide of the leather seats protected, the thick stitching in the cushions like fur markings.

The missionaries had arrived in this car five years ago. It was as if they'd timed their appearance to the sunset. In the liquid red light, the pale vehicle appeared armored in gold. It nuzzled the dirt road and whinnied as it slowed to a stop.

Xiao Xue had never seen a car up close before. Four foreigners stepped out: two men in suits, strips of fabric lolling from their necks like tongues, and two women with curls that had been dragooned into orderliness by a cavalry of hairpins. Xiao Xue couldn't quite understand what she was seeing. They were people—she knew that, of course—but they were so removed from her concept of people that someone might have convinced her otherwise. They didn't look comely or hideous so much as otherworldly. If she were a powerful being, she'd thought, she would choose these people to represent her.

The missionaries built a school and next to that a chapel. No longer did the children have to walk an hour each way to get to the school a town over. The missionaries set up a food pantry where wheat flour and rice were always in supply. They spoke not only Mandarin but also Hokkien. All the villagers had to do was set aside some time on Sundays to listen to their stories.

And so they breathed in the missionaries' messages, and so they drank the wine that could, in the right hands, thicken into blood. The stories became facts, if not among the adults, then at least among the children. It was as if they'd lacked immunity.

Xiao Xue had liked the missionaries at first, even Sister Eunice, who doled out candy to any child who could perfectly recite a Bible verse or prayer in English to her. Xiao Xue had chosen the Lord's Prayer because it was relatively short and easy to read. Sister Eunice's face, normally still as a pond, had quivered into a smile, little ripples spreading near the corners of her mouth and eyes. She laid a warm, heavy hand on Xiao Xue's head, and Xiao Xue swore to herself that she would memorize every word in the Bible if this was going to be the typical response. The piece of candy, a doubloon of chocolate, she split into four pieces so she could continue to savor it until she was done memorizing the next passage.

But then, without even being asked, Xiao Chun had recited the Apostles' Creed in front of the whole assembly, in Latin. In that moment, Xiao Xue saw clearly her place in Sister Eunice's eyes (and by extension, she supposed, God's). She never recited again, even when Sister Eunice called upon her to do so. There just didn't seem to be a point.

**The pilgrims began** arriving on the seventh day. Bearing gifts of dried fruit, oolong tea, and ginseng shaped like dangling puppets, they arrived, tracking mud onto the freshly washed floor and clogging up the family's one outhouse. Christians and non-Christians, they arrived,

spurred by the missionaries' word-of-mouth network, because a spectacle was a spectacle no matter what one believed.

Xiao Xue's father had at first railed against the idea of strangers in his home, but the other villagers begged him to reconsider. Pilgrims meant money for the restaurant and the corner store. "Maybe you can even sell some of your bamboo carvings," her mother said.

For days, her mother swept and scrubbed. This put her in a bad mood, even though she had been more excited by the idea of pilgrims than anyone else in the family. Nothing was clean enough, not the low wooden table on which Xiao Xue had spilled sauce and left a stain, not the cups and bowls, which were cobwebbed with fine cracks. Whenever Xiao Xue asked for anything, be it an afternoon snack or help with sewing a truant button back onto her school uniform, she received only a scolding. The morning they were set to receive the first visitors, while Xiao Xue was playing with beanbags by herself, bothering absolutely no one, her mother said, "Am I supposed to do everything around here? Go make yourself useful!" Xiao Xue stomped out of her mother's hollering range and into the bedroom, where her sister was taking a nap. She'd been about to wake Xiao Chun up but stopped when she saw her expression. What was that English word they'd learned in school? *Rapturous*. On Xiao Chun's fair face, with its long dark lashes and brows, the expression was *enrapturing*.

She rooted around in her mother's drawer and found the sewing scissors. Xiao Chun snoozed through her haircut.

Her mother shrieked when she saw Xiao Xue's handiwork. "You told me to make myself useful," Xiao Xue said. "Her bangs were getting long."

She was locked in the closet as punishment. All day, she could hear pilgrims swishing about on the floors, burbling excitedly. A few times, she could hear her sister's voice, thin and shiny like a fishing line. It was dark by the time they let Xiao Xue out. Xiao Chun was the one to do it. "I forgive you," she said, her uneven bangs pulled back with a pearly headband Xiao Xue didn't recognize. It must have been a new gift from Sister Eunice.

"I don't care," Xiao Xue said.

"Well, I still forgive you. I just hope you learn the error of your ways. Envy is a dangerous sin." Xiao Chun reached out and lifted a tuft of Xiao Xue's coarse hair. Once, while playing with friends, Xiao Chun had called her over so she could practice braiding. Xiao Xue sat down, her back to the other girls, and her sister began combing roughly through the tangle. Distracted by the pain, she didn't notice the muffled giggles until it was too late. Her hand flew up—the comb was stuck in her hair. When she failed to pull it out, the giggles sharpened into gasping laughter. In the end, her mother had to snip the comb loose. "Little hen, how did you do this?" she said, gathering the newly cut strands into proper braids and tying yellow ribbons around the ends. Yet Xiao Xue didn't tattle. Maybe she believed her mother would have taken her sister's side anyway. Or maybe some part of her did feel like it was her fault,

having such ugly hair. According to Sister Eunice, places like Europe and the United States were prosperous because God favored Christian nations. What if her sister was beautiful because God favored her? What did that mean about Xiao Xue?

**Xiao Xue snuck** into her father's work shed one evening. He'd been spending more and more time there of late, making bamboo figurines for the pilgrims, who, it turned out, were willing to buy them, if for no other reason than that he was the father of the miracle girl.

He didn't acknowledge her at first. She padded around the small space, proving her fingertips on the augers' fanged bits, sliding her palm between the jaws of the vise and cranking the handle until she felt pain. She stood on tiptoes to see what her father was working on—most of the toys in the house came from here. For their most recent birthdays, Xiao Chun had received a dove; Xiao Xue had received a fat, grumpy-looking hen.

Her father was carving a woman wearing a flowing wimple, her hands together in prayer. Xiao Xue would have guessed he was carving the Virgin Mary, except the face wasn't a foreigner's. She felt an odd revulsion at the mismatch. Mary was pure and clean, shaped from white marble, not brown bamboo.

"You usually make animals," she said.

"Does your mother know you're here?"

"Yes," she lied. "Why aren't you making animals?"

"The pilgrims are asking for Mary. Go do your homework."

"I thought you didn't like the pilgrims."

Her father put down his tools so he could toss her a carved chicken. She caught it and fiddled with the movable wings. "It doesn't matter what I think," he said.

"They're stupid." She thought about the pilgrims' loud conversations with her sister, who held court in her white dress, cradling babies, washing the feet of the old. She thought about her own feet sliding around in the shit overflowing from the outhouse. The more she thought, the more upset she felt. "You should stop letting them come. You said the only thing they're good for is tiring Xiao Chun out."

He sighed. "Who knows. The town has been doing much better since they arrived. And Wong Daifu says your sister's healthy, just a little anemic. So maybe it's fine. I still don't know whether I believe any of this miracle talk, but money is money."

He went back to his carving. She stood there. She'd hoped he would take her side on this at least, though why should she have? All the problems in her family were her fault. The clothes she ripped while running and climbing. Her mother getting tired easily since giving birth to

her. The family not having a son.

A daughter was fine for a first child—a blessing, even, because eldest daughters could be relied on to take care of younger siblings, whereas eldest sons could not—but then Xiao Xue had come along, tearing her way into the world, dark and bearish even as a baby. Their mother had bled so much that the midwife warned her against ever having another child.

Her parents never talked about it, though sometimes they yelled about it. Once, an auntie from the village asked her parents to look after her newborn son. All afternoon, they tickled his little feet and his round tummy. That evening, Xiao Xue saw her father sneak up behind her mother as she was washing dishes and wrap his arms around her waist. He whispered something in her ear. She pushed him away. “You know we can’t,” she said.

“You’re too cautious. Maybe that old shrew was wrong,” her father said.

“What if she’s not? Do you want to raise our children by yourself?”

He threw a dish on the floor. “So that’s it, then,” he said. “My family’s name ends with me.” Grabbing a new pack of cigarettes, he crashed out of the house. The next morning, Xiao Xue found him dozing on a chair in the kitchen, one cigarette left in the pack. She sat down next to him to eat her breakfast, accidentally jostling the table in the process. He rolled up the steel doors of his eyelids reluctantly, as though not quite ready to open shop. “You always come at the wrong time,” he said. And then the doors rolled down again.

**On the twelfth day**, Xiao Chun stopped eating. At lunch, she gave her food to one of the younger children. “All I need is the Eucharist,” she announced. Sister Eunice practically cartwheeled to the tabernacle, where they stored the consecrated hosts.

“Won’t you be hungry later?” the child asked her.

“Jesus received no food while on the cross,” she said. “Even if I felt hunger, it would pale in comparison to what he experienced. There are those who need this meal more. I do not wish to be someone who simply takes and takes.”

From that day forward, all of Xiao Chun’s school lunches went to the other children. The boys clamored loudest, and one of them usually ended up getting her portion. One afternoon, Ye Jing dropped by their house to deliver a hat his mother had woven for Xiao Chun in thanks. It was yellow-brown with thorny, unfinished ends. Near the brim, she’d scarred the bamboo with a tiny cross. Xiao Chun was napping, so Xiao Xue let him into the house.

Of all the villagers, Ye Jing’s family had perhaps taken to the missionaries the most. Xiao Xue’s father said it was because of the revolution in China. Like the missionaries, Ye Jing’s parents had narrowly escaped the Communists. They’d bartered all their valuables for a ride on an unreliable ship. The story about Moses guiding the Israelites across the Red Sea rang



out to them like a clarion. Ye Jing didn't understand why she disliked the missionaries so much. "They were nice to us," he insisted whenever the topic came up. "They were the only ones my grandma could talk to about how much she missed China. Did you know that a rich man wanted to marry Sister Eunice, but she decided it was more important to serve God? She left her entire family behind to come help us."

"Do you want to see her?" Xiao Xue asked, then grabbed his hand without waiting for his response. "Come on."

They squatted on the floor next to the bed. Xiao Chun was getting paler by the day. Ye Jing lifted a hand but didn't touch her, just laid it next to her pinkie on the bedspread. "She still isn't eating?" he asked.

"Only the host."

"She doesn't look like she's getting thinner. That's good." His expression was soft like clay yet to be sculpted.

"You should kiss her," she said. "See if she wakes up."

"What?"

"Kiss her."

"That's not funny."

She grabbed his wrist to stop him from leaving. "Practice on me. Pretend I'm her."

Still gripping him, she lay down on her back and closed her eyes. First she felt his breath. Then she felt his lips. With a tug, he fell forward onto her. They lay like that for a little while, perfectly overlapped, unmoving. His body was unevenly hard. It felt like lying on pebbles but in a world where land was sky. Suddenly he whined in a pained way and pushed himself to his feet.

"This is dirty," he said, scrabbling at his lips as if they were poisonous slugs. "Bad. You're bad." He ran out of the house. She wanted to chase after him, but her legs had other ideas. On the bed, Xiao Chun stirred and curled up on her side. Her sister was the inside of a nautilus shell, bright and pure. Sometimes Xiao Xue struggled to believe they were sisters at all.

That night, before bed, she scrubbed her face until the skin split. She felt better after the minor bloodletting, as if sanctified, as if lightened.

**The teachers liked** to tell this story: One day, God decided to draw mankind a bath. He took one group of people and cleansed them first. They, having bathed in pure water, emerged white. Then God took a second group of people and cleansed them. They, having bathed in slightly soiled water, emerged yellow. Finally, God took a third group of people and cleansed them. They, having bathed in heavily soiled water, emerged black.

“I don’t like this story,” Xiao Xue said to her sister once, after a teacher had retold it. “It says we’re dirty.”

“We’re not the dirtiest,” Xiao Chun said.

“It says God loves the foreigners more than us.”

“God has infinite love. You’re misunderstanding the story.”

But Xiao Xue didn’t believe her. How could her sister possibly understand, the honors student, the village beauty? How could she understand the pain of imperfect love, a star delicately cut from golden paper and then roughly torn? Sometimes second-most was second-least. And sometimes second was simply last.

**The days dragged** like the foot of a cross in the dirt. If the Bible had taught Xiao Xue anything, it was that everything had a time frame. God created the world in six days. The Earth flooded for forty days and forty nights. But this commotion around the stigmata was easing into a kind of permanence that she had not anticipated. The stream of pilgrims had not slowed. The presents for Xiao Chun piled up in the closet, tumbling out and whanging Xiao Xue on the head whenever she opened the door. Her parents couldn’t even punish her in the usual way anymore if she misbehaved.

They started sending her to bed without dinner. One night, after Xiao Xue had kicked Ye Jing in the shin (she’d overheard him predicting Xiao Chun’s canonization), her mother sat down next to her and pushed a small steamed bun into her hand. “I don’t know what your school has been telling you,” she said, sighing, “but some things can’t be changed. We all have the *ming* we have. A man fated to be poor will always be poor. A man blessed with good fortune will never go hungry. The only thing you can do is accept. If you don’t, it just leads to more suffering.”

“You and Dad didn’t accept going hungry,” Xiao Xue said. “You joined the Church.”

Her mother stood, shaking her head. “Eat your bun. And don’t tell your dad.”

**Xiao Xue stole** away to the bushes behind the school and plucked six mean red berries from them. Years ago, she had accidentally eaten a few of these berries and gotten so ill that her parents stayed by her side all night. These berries were riper than those from last time, sweet but with a stimulating tartness underneath.

The convulsions started during the geography lesson: “The Mongoloids, with their wide cheekbones, weak brow ridges, and flat noses, were given dominion over East Asia and Southeast Asia. The Caucasoids, with their oval faces, thin noses, and superior courage and genius, were given dominion over all of Europe, parts of North Asia...”

She fell out of her chair. The bitter-gourd porridge the school had served for lunch rushed from her and puddled on the ground. A jagged pain in her side, under the ribs—was this how Saint Francis had felt? When Xiao Xue opened her eyes again, she saw only waving banners of light, the archangels soaring into battle bearing the standard of God. Children screaming, a voice urging calm. An angel with six incandescent wings gliding closer, closer.

Xiao Chun touched her on the shoulder. The angel vanished, as did the pain. Xiao Chun smiled beneficently and said, “You’ll be all right now.”

“What happened? Was it the stigmata?” another student asked.

Xiao Chun reached into the puddle and picked out a single red seed. “She ate the berries behind the school,” she explained. “I’m sure she didn’t mean to.”

“You healed her,” Sister Eunice whispered.

“God healed her,” Xiao Chun said. “I merely prayed. When his love passed through me, I understood what I had to do.”

Xiao Xue leaned back against her chair and closed her eyes, struggling in vain to call the angel back. She knew this next part. The story about Xiao Chun’s actions today would spread, as all the other stories about her had. There would be more pilgrims, more presents. There would be investigators sent by the Church, all of whom would leave humbled and awed because it was true, her sister was a miracle. Xiao Xue excelled only in eating up the food.

Once more the students gathered around Xiao Chun. Even the class next door had rushed in, Ye Jing and all the other boys. They haloed her, limned her with the gold leaf of their adoration while she clasped their hands with her own bandaged ones. A perfect circle of love flowed around her, through her, so much love that she couldn’t contain it and it had to bleed out of her palms as if she were offering rosebuds. *Here. Take.*

Where was that love all those times Sister Eunice bent Xiao Xue over her knee and spanked her light-brown flesh until it turned purple-red? Xiao Chun never once defended her or begged Sister Eunice to stop. Instead she watched Sister Eunice mete out the punishment, the impulse of a smile at the corner of her lips.

“You ate that berry on purpose, didn’t you?” Xiao Chun asked as they were walking home. “You’ve eaten it before. I remember.”

“I saw an angel,” Xiao Xue said.

“Why did you do this? I was worried, you know.”

“I saw an angel!” Xiao Xue screamed. “And you made him go away because you couldn’t stand me getting more attention!”

Xiao Chun actually jumped a little. When she spoke again, her voice was very soft. “Have you ever thought,” she said, “that maybe I get more attention because I’m not constantly making trouble just to get it? Because I actually think about other people? All those times Mom had trouble standing after scrubbing the floor, did you once offer to help? Maybe you don’t get attention because you don’t deserve it.”

She drew out that last sentence slowly, like a magician pulling a sword from her mouth. Then she straightened the bow on her uniform and walked off, leaving Xiao Xue in the middle of the road.

**The priest from** Europe arrived on day fifty-something, a trunk of scientific instruments in tow. The villagers thronged him as he passed. They tried to explain, though he showed no sign of understanding them, that Xiao Chun was truly blessed. She was their miracle, they said, Taiwan’s miracle. A pure, shining thing no one could ever have imagined rising from its dusty yellow ground. Tell all the foreigners, they urged him. Tell them that God has favored us too.

The house was noisy nearly all the time now. There was talk of more visitors from Europe, of an official chapel, another school, a souvenir stand. “How many figurines do you think you can carve in a month?” Sister Eunice asked Xiao Xue’s father, translating for the priest. “Oh, a lot,” he answered. “However many the faithful need.”

Xiao Xue slipped out of the house while they planned and made her way to her father’s shed. Lined up on the workbench was a choir of little Marys. Her father was improving: Their faces had thinned to ovals, their noses were alpine peaks. But still there was something familiar about the eyes and the expression. It was Xiao Chun, she realized. He’d been carving her all along.

She wandered over to the vise and the augers. Picking up the sharpest one, she held the tip to her palm and pushed down. A single tear of blood welled up. She looked at the new addition to her hand, or rather, the subtraction, an absence to be filled with God’s love. She wondered what it would feel like, and how deep the wound would have to go before she finally became holy.



## **Rita Chang-Eppig**

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Rita Chang-Eppig received her MFA from New York University. Her stories have appeared in *McSweeney's Quarterly Concern*, *Kenyon Review Online*, *Clarkesworld*, *Santa Monica Review*, *Conjunctions*, and elsewhere. She has received fellowships from the Vermont Studio Center and the Writers Grotto, and she will be a Steinbeck Fellow at the Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies at San Jose State University starting in fall 2020.