

BURNER

magazine

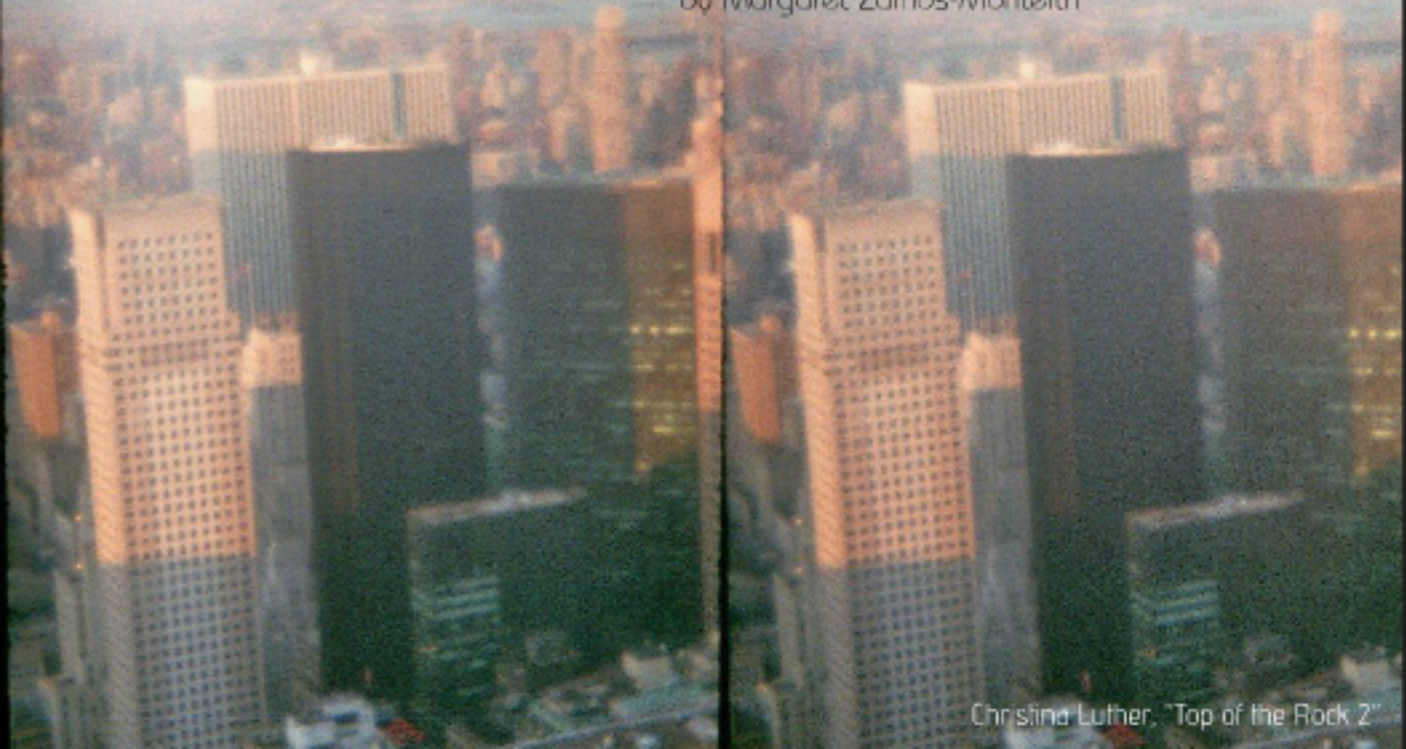


Poetry, short fiction, photography, art, interviews



The Book Of You

by Margaret Zamos-Monteith



Christina Luther, "Top of the Rock 2"



Christina Luther, "Little Girl in the NYC Easter Parade"



Christina Luther, "Top of the Rock At Night"

You hate this place. You will miss this place. You see its beauty. You fear its wrath. You meet interesting people. You watch them form groups. You are a part of a group. You hear gossip spread. You spread it too. You didn't want to hurt anyone, but you hurt someone. You were trying to be who they want you to be, but you don't like the same artists. You eat red meat. You don't wear Converse sneakers. You believe in God, but only because you fear consequences.

You speak up; say you don't agree. You mean well, but the truth cannot always help them. They are not pleased. You say no. They are less pleased. You told them no worries. At that moment, you meant no worries, but now you have worries, large worries you'd like to discuss. They seem surprised; they feel misled. The rules have changed and you are not who they

imagined. You don't drink as much as they assumed. You've slept with more people than you care to admit, but not in the way they think. They get angry, but you don't know why.

You never wanted to be in a clique. You wanted to be included, but you are not a pack animal in need of a herd. You thought of the community, tried to befriend them all. There are too many communities.

You try to hide. You lay low and avoid all conflict. It manages to find you. Your errors get outlined: you've been misconstrued. You understand there are many truths, that yours is maybe wrong, but it is your truth. You defend yourself, but they won't listen. You tried to listen and you probably failed. You get called mentally unstable. You might be mentally unstable.

There are people talking about you and you don't want to hear those words. They sound unfamiliar, like Swahili. You contemplate clever things you could say, how they might wince and grasp that they have wronged you. You say nothing because suddenly, you feel so depressed. Your anger is gone. You think you are stupid. You have made so many mistakes and they are all because you were stupid.

But you will learn, you tell yourself. You will learn and not repeat the same blunders. You know you will. You contemplate suicide. Suicide! It would end all this pain. You know that it won't. You think about drugs. You worry about side-effects. You pretend outwardly the worst never happened; accept that mistakes were made.

You will learn to like this place in retrospect. You'll let your cracks show. You'll repeat some of the same blunders and realize that you can't know the ending without ruining it, so you'll stop trying to find it. You will laugh and be surprised to discover that you have grown used to side effects.

Margaret Zamos-Monteith was once a kindergarten teacher, and while she can't quote Kierkegaard by heart, she did once win a round of drinks in a bar for being able to recite the beginning of Camus' The Stranger in both French and English. Selected as a finalist for the Southwest Review's 2009 David Nathan Meyerson Fiction Prize for her short story "Borders", she holds an MFA in fiction from CUNY/Brooklyn College, as well as a Masters from Columbia University. She is currently a Senior Writer for The Lo-Down, a community news website about the Lower East Side, as well as an editor and translator for Peeping Tom, a French art not-for-profit whose first journal about Berlin, The Chain, was published in spring 2009.