

Mariana Valencia, Solo B

Classical sculptures are *often* broken.

Often, these sculptures have broken over millennia. You've seen them before.

They occasionally have a missing hand, foot, nose, head, ear. Or, they might just *be* a hand, a foot, a nose, a head, an ear.

The remains of these classical sculptures are proof that they were once complete, perfect.

The Western tradition of classical sculpture began in ancient Greece.

A classical sculpture of a person was made by a person.

A classical sculpture of a person cannot heal its own losses or ruptures.

A restorer of sculptures can repair a broken sculpture close to its original form.

A rupture is difficult to heal.

When a spleen ruptures, it must be removed. When a bone breaks, it can heal over time.

The human body has the ability to heal its fractures and its wounds.

Physical and psychological specialists can help mend ruptures, fractures, and wounds.

These specialists are external aids to the body, the actual healing comes from within the body.

A psychological rupture "heals" by redistributing its effect with a reasonable and objective viewfinder that renders the rupture into a new shape.

Thereafter, a psychological rupture stops aching from a singular place; the damage is spread, an even sensation of resolve.

Bones, organs, muscles, blood, nerves, fat, flesh. My mother was injured in an accident this year.

A broken tooth, shoulder, hip, fibula, and ankle on the left.

A broken tooth and wrist on the right.

Since the accident, I've compared my mother's broken body, in its temporary state, to that of classical sculptures.

I once made a dance featuring a character named Star Baby.

Star Baby wears roller skates and has black hair.

Star Baby discovers at a very early age that when she glides through space at a fast speed, she is able to hear the stories of the Star People.

Star People are queers who are no longer on earth with us and Star Baby tells us their stories.

I once read a book featuring a character named Witch Baby. I read this book six months after finishing the dance with Star Baby—Witch Baby is dark-sided and sensitive; she feels everyone's pain but projects anger, and she too has black hair—

Witch Baby wears cowboy boots that have wheels on them like roller skates.

Cowboy boots on wheels.

Cowperson boots on wheels.

I prefer calling them *cowperson boots*—on wheels. Everybody is *not a boy*.

But everybody *is* a person.

I suppose I could also call them Western boots but west is relative to where you call west, so I'll stick to cowperson boots to be more specific about the west I'm referring to.

Cowperson boots also makes me think that the boots are made from a cow-person. A person who is also a cow. Cowperson.

A comparison between Star Baby and Witch Baby:

Star Baby and Witch Baby both have wheels on their feet, both have the name "Baby" in their name, and they both have black hair. Star Baby and Witch Baby are sensitive to beings both visible and invisible; Star Baby and Witch Baby are fantastical.

This is a picture of my mother when she was a child in Guatemala. She holds a clay water jug.

When I imagine my mother's life during the years before I was born, before she was my mother, I tend to no longer see my mother, rather, I see stages of a person as a child, an adolescent, and as a woman without a child.

This is a picture of my mother with her arm around *her* mother in Chicago. The image was taken the year before I was born; before they each became my mother and my grandmother. Those years are physically unknown to me.

My mother's name is Ileana.

Helen is the Greek name for Ileana. Helen of Troy is an ancient woman.

Helen of Troy story is also physically unknown to me. Ileana means Helen in Romanian.

Romania was once home to the largest Romani population in Eastern Europe.

The Roma are often called Gypsies because there's a misconception that the Roma came from Egypt and so the name took hold. The Roma actually originated in northern India.

The Roma are a nomadic people who have suffered from systemic prejudice for centuries. The Roma nomadic lifestyle has helped them survive persecution and exile.

The Roma nomadic lifestyle defines them untethered, without a nation to call home. The Roma are often perceived as uncivilized.

It is quite civilized, or even sophisticated, to honor one's body as a home.

We arrive with a body and take it with us when we die.

Our bodies *are* our homes.

When I feel sadness, I respond with humor. On my map, sadness lives next to humor.

Humor and sadness have a door between their houses where they can move back and forth all day. Sadness, humor, sadness, humor, sadness, humor.

All day all night.

To help this picture form for you, I suggest you imagine those magical doors in hotel rooms where suddenly, you're in your best friend's room.

It would be absolutely perfect to suddenly be in my best friend Lydia's room and for Lydia to suddenly be in mine.

Entrances and exits are expected and unexpected. All day all night.

To help this picture form for you, you might also try envisioning my relationship to sadness and humor as a basket of petals and I'm the four-year-old flower girl who clumsily but purposefully shares the petals with the floor. I throw fistfuls of petals into the air with the hope that they will fly, then gravity hits and they fall.

Into the air and down. Into the air and down. Into the air and down. Again and again. Air, down.

I once lived in a cave in Sacromonte, Spain.

Sacromonte is a Roma town that overlooks the city of Granada.

The Roma from the Sacromonte caves preserve the Flamenco traditions of the region. A tradition that's preserved by passing down movement from one body to another.

At night, women make percussive sounds with their bodies; their voices echo on the hillside.

It's the kind of sound that makes my body find its womb.

It's as if something I didn't know I was missing has been returned to me.

Sleeping in a cave is alarmingly silent, and if a sound is made, the sound is very clear.

It's shockingly dark to sleep in a cave, yet once my eyes acclimate to the darkness, I can see different strengths of velvety light.

Like when I close my eyes and face the sun.

Or when I close my eyes and shield them with my palm, there's still light.

Even in the solid presence of darkness, stubborn and resilient tones of light survive. In the distance, women make sounds.

Helen is a heroic tale of war. She made a sound.

When my mother tells me stories about her life from before I was born, they sound like heroic tales too. They sound heroic mainly because they're about a person I never knew.

And though my mother might be a hero, the person she was before she was my mother is a different hero. Women make sounds.

Pre-Columbian means before Columbus.

Pre-Columbian sculptures are also ancient and they too have missing parts.

Pre-Columbian sculptures look more like the shapes we are today. They just do.

Pre-Columbian sculptures were shaped and framed with the qualities of modern humans.

They're not classically shaped but their humanity is a closer rendering to what we understand as people. Connected somehow to the earth with wobbly edges, softer tones.

Expression and delight.

Not delight like a cherub, rather human delight like when I open my favorite bag of chips and devour their flavor.

This entire dance echoes the shapes of some pre-Columbian figures. The movement, the title are in Spanglish and I call them *Solo B*.

I once saw a dance where the choreographer read the Genesis story out loud. She sat in the audience as the dancers performed cycles of movement. Beautiful cycles, simple movements, athletic costumes.

If those dancers were classical sculptures and if only hands, feet, noses, heads, or ears were left of their sculptures, they would absolutely be preserved because they render a type of body that is classically considered in a Western view, perfect, or able.

A musician once wrote a book by the same title as the dance I just described and in the book she unspools a tale about a teenager who ice skates on a frozen lake—she wears a coat; a gift from an older man who later becomes her lover.

Devotion is the name of the dance and the book I just described.

Lydia once made a dance that she performed in a post-industrial space on a street near my house. Post-industrial means after industry.

From Lydia's dance, I can mostly remember how nice it felt to watch her move. I've watched her body move for 18 years.

From Lydia's dance, I can mostly remember her limitless devotion to movement.