



OBITUARY

after Victoria Chang

COLLECTIVE MEMORY died in the mid-nineties with the birth of cargo shorts & with the halted heartbeats of hemophiliacs & gay men, some intubated, some alone in New York apartments, tubes circulating through the venting. If each tube snakes its way out the window, then where does memory go? Somewhere into the cold, winter air, picked up by a breeze, & what is a breeze but a circle? High temperatures to low, up to down, returning never ending. A breeze can go anywhere if it catches the right convection current. Today, one breeze picked the oak leaves up off of the front lawn & I thanked it because: less raking. Less neighborly judgment. Less & less & less. The memory is a jagged rock that fell from this breeze, a rock a person picks up off the lawn, then gives to the next person, younger, who happens to be a lapidary who then polishes it into a ruby, & gives it to another person, younger, who likes the ruby, likes its shine, likes the way it bounces the light, squints in admiration. That person places it on the window sill until the next person finds it. That person says, *What a nice stone. I wonder what it's for.*