

in this immersion. From above, outside, one looking in—even oneself looking at when not immersed—one says: She is alone. In a corner. With a rock. A nothing. Dirt even. And a spider, a creature, horrible to many. One says: A pitiful existence. When one . . . She might go out. To a game. To a barbecue. To Calgary. She might go ski in Calgary . . .

You say, she says: This engagement with ideas, this thinking is cold, intellectual, just words in books.

Immersed, I say, in this reality. Senses throbbing, the intellect replenished and fed, a meal of senses and mind, a cold bath, a hot bath . . .

While he flies to Calgary, flipping through *Skyline Magazine* or *WSJ*, or you say, she says: She speaks of reality but engages in words, her body at rest, alone, her mind immersed in books, books that say reality is an illusion, and she calls this reality.

I am human. I know as much as anyone and less than most. I am not good with facts, history, dates. I no longer seek knowledge. I am tired of knowledge. Do not mistake reading in a corner as knowledge, the pursuit of knowledge. It is immersion only.

So introverted, you say, she says! So deep in self, she doesn't even know that others see her as a separate person. They talk about you, they say, and then, when you find out, when I find out, it is a wonder.

To this extent: it is a wonder that they think I exist, they think I am a person, in a body, living a life.

But I am aware. I know. I am not so blind. According to most, even in reality, I am a body, living a life, in what is called a world, and in Company, in Man's arms, I would be—she and I will be—anonymous.

**Max Diksztejn** is the author of the novel *City of Cats* (Four Watt Press, 2016), set in Rome in 384 CE. An excerpt of *City of Cats* was published in *American Atheist Magazine*. Diksztejn received an MFA from Sewanee, The University of the South, in May 2017. She is at work completing a second novel and working on other long and short pieces. Diksztejn lives with her husband in San Francisco, California. This is her first published short story.

## GARY IRVING

*Lust*, 2017  
Mixed media on canvas within  
a handmade frame,  
36.5 x 22 x 5 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST