

SHAHÉ MANKERIAN

Bibliophobe

Father cracked Mama's tooth
with the spine of a book. Maybe
he didn't like the lima beans

in the lamb stew. Maybe he lost
his page when the pressure
cooker whistled. I remember

she grabbed the stovetop
to steady herself. Father tapped
on the hardcover with his knuckles

and glared at Mama's legs
full of goose bumps but no sign
of quiver. I slurped the soup

to distract his anger. Mama
dabbed her mouth with the apron.
Steam covered the kitchen windows.

Father didn't say a word,
but I wanted to scream. "I hate
your fuckin' books!"

SHAHÉ MANKERIAN is the principal of St. Gregory Hovsepian School in Pasadena and the co-director of the L.A. Writing Project. He is the recipient of the Los Angeles Music Center's BRAVO Award, which recognizes teachers for innovation in arts education. In 2017, Shahé received the Editors' Prize from *MARY: A Journal of New Writing*.

