

TRANSIENTS MAGAZINE

ISSUE 1



AUTUMN 2023

Issue 1

Autumn 2023

05	linguistic oddities BEE LB
06	Spring (Soma)tic Joshua Zeitler
07	Alice Baptist Mere Jackson
08	Fragments from the In-Between* Pooja Kishinani
09	Transitioning Landscape Joshua Zeitler
10	Time Doesn't Care Katherine Schmidt
11	Demon Sleep Margaret Upton
16	notes from visiting the forms of life exhibition at the tate modern Sona Popat
17	Odyssey Maria Nobile
17	Crash Abdulbasit Abubakar Adamu
18	Spring Sharare Samaie
19	there were twice as many stars the night i tried to kill myself Icarus Grey
19	sometimes strikingly someone Alicia Turner
20	Edges Okorie Divine
25	THERE IS ANOTHER Peace Amos
26	Nimble Hours Shamik Banerjee
26	DISTEND BEE LB
27	haiku James Penha



Artwork

	Rachel Coyne
06	untitled 1
10	untitled 2
27	untitled 3
32	untitled 4
47	untitled 5

27	a blank page in my dream journal Sona Popat	he died in december and Icarus Grey	46
28	An Extraterrestrial Visitation to this Old Cowboy by David Briggs for The Weekly Herald Editorial Desk Trent Brown	Desperate Measures Brandon Shane	47
29	Comfort Zones Nuala McEvoy	a period is only practice dying Joshua Zeitler	48
30	a poem Elijah Woodruff	Do Not Search for Any Meaning, Reason Kushal Poddar	48
33	Water, Guilt, Hemisphere Kushal Poddar	casualty of the industrial revolution Kushal Poddar	49
34	Lament on a Love Lost Rose McCoy	Scenery Blanka Pillár	50
36	When did you know? Kirsten Sto. Domingo	red star descending Karl Koweski	52
37	Uncoursed Theresah Alimisi	Leather Jacket on a	52
38	The Long Goodbyes Carmen Baca	Rocking Chair Bud Sturguess	
39	a ghost must be BEE LB		
39	wanderer Maria Nobile		
40	the empty SOUM		
40	If You Turn Up the Radio I'll Go Quietly Bud Sturguess		
41	ALTRUISM Iniubong Bassey		
41	Noir Temple Kushal Poddar		
42	sometimes I re-remember Alicia Turner		
43	Daily Bouquet Tom Lagasse		
44	Drifting Bodies Ry Forsythe		

HELLO, AND WELCOME TO ISSUE 1 OF TRANSIENTS MAGAZINE.

We're glad you're here with us! We're so thrilled that the words (and art) of our 33 wonderful contributors have found a home within these (digital) pages, and we hope that you, dear reader, find a brief home here too.

We left the theme for our first issue very open-ended, and people took the concept of our magazine in myriad fantastical directions. We've tried to combine the pieces into vaguely thematic sections — a way of telling its own story within a series of stories. Interpret it as you wish.

Several months back, I (Melissa) was having a conversation with my mother. We were in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan at the time, and she was saying how, even after a lifetime of travelling, being here made her realise how much she still didn't know about most places on this earth. "And when I realised there was a whole part of this world that I knew nothing about, that's when I thought, 'Well, I have to go there now'.

And I laughed. Just the day before, someone in a hostel had commented to me how they weren't all that interested in visiting a local mosque 'because they knew nothing of religion'.



AND SO MY MOM AND I DEVELOPED A NEW THEORY OF HUMANITY.

“There’s two kinds of people in this world. When they learn of something they know nothing about, there’s some who think that is the limit of their knowledge.

And then there’s the others, for whom that is only the beginning. The ones who want to go somewhere, try something, simply *because* they know nothing about it.”

Transients Magazine is for the second kind of people. We hope you’re one of them, and we hope you enjoy these words.

nadav and Melissa

Co-Editors



X @TransientsMag

@ transientsmag

<https://transientsmagazine.weebly.com/>

This magazine is dedicated to impermanence.

linguistic oddities

BEE LB

there is something to waiting for a trap that isn't
coming. analyzing lilt and usage and tonal discrepancies
for a word that would consume you. you, i mean me.
word, i mean name. he, i mean they. she, i mean they. them, i mean,
always theirs. this isn't a poem so i can't be tired of writing it
but i can be tired of living it and i am. if everything is a poem i'm tired
of walking through the poem waiting for the next stanza to start.
there is something to waiting for a volta that isn't coming.
trust ends before it begins, waiting begins as soon as it ends, time
is an endless poem i want to be done writing.
writing, i mean living. living, i mean being or breathing or
tripping and falling. if a child mirrors the adult's response, who utters
the first cry? if the first cry is the start of a poem, i start the poem
all the time. i start and stop and get lost in myself
and it seems to be working, if working is finding a home.
if finding a home means following a trail and home has never had a
definition,
then living must be a poem. if living is a poem
the structure must be the walls you reside in. you, i mean i.
walls, i mean form. form, i mean here.
here, i mean i'd rather be anywhere else.

Spring (Soma)tic after CA Conrad

I hear the buzz
catch

Joshua Zeitler

a glimpse of
whirring brown
by
reflex
cup my fingers

a wounded June
bug lands
in my out
stretched hand

cracked crepe
paper
skeleton

skimming silence from my palm. read me o read me my eulogy
June bug wings & I'll whisper it back. read me velvet vest
read me chiffon dress read me short skirt & bare shins
on satin sheets in a shallow coffin read me down
to my sloughed knuckles & I'll whisper

it was never June

never June never June

it was never June

never June never June

It was never June.

never June never June

blowing smoke up that little beetle butthole
my breath coddling those baby barb burdened legs
I will allow no last lonely lunge in the early April air
only & &
late July on & on & on
sky on &
on & on



Rachel Coyne

Alice Baptist

Mere Jackson

One day I'd like to lie. When someone asks me where I'm from, what I'm doing here, a stranger in a foreign land. Memorized and true, the monologue has become monotonous. Repetitive. Boring and tedious to even tell.

I'd like to say something else entirely. That my father was from here. That we spent holidays here. That I only knew Christmas in summer. He'd died (true) and I'd moved here to connect with his culture and extended family (false). I had a great aunt and two cousins living in the countryside. I'd change the name of the town with each retelling. I could tell this lie only to strangers of course, people in airports or on buses. People without consequences. Lies that cannot follow me.

I'd make up names for them all. Father- Antonio, or Martin. Great aunt- Veronica, Mirta maybe. Cousins- Felipe and Agustin. Or Fernando and Arturo. I'd give myself a new name too.

I once lost my bus card at a New Year's party. When the host let me come pick it up he'd given me his mother's by mistake. Upon checking the balance (2 pesos), I saw the name on the card was Alicia Bautista (Alice Baptist). What a name. Perfectly translatable, perfectly lie-worthy. And now I had the bus card to prove it.

I'd lie and say I had a husband, a local. Gregorio. No, too old-sounding. Mateo. We were thinking about kids. I'd slyly turn my costume ring (100 pesos at the street market) inward. He'd be something official, like a systems engineer, or a senator's secretary, or the manager of a bank. We'd have two dogs, of which I'd have a photo gifted from the internet in my phone or wallet to show. This is much more palatable and endearing than having an aversion to animals in general (true).

***Alicia Bautista (Alice Baptist) with her dead father and husband
Mateo and two dogs and great aunt and cousins.
That's a story I'd like to tell.***

Fragments from the In-Between*

Pooja Kishinani

I.

There are two truths I know: one, everything is fleeting. You, me, this moment, these words, the memory of you reading these words – they will all cease to exist before we know it.

Two, all of life is a paradox. We are always arriving and always departing. Stuck and unstuck. Free and shackled. Nothing bounds you to the In-Between – you can leave at any time. But your destination will always be here: the In-Between.

II.

Do you remember the title of the book you received from your grandpa on your seventh birthday? The exact shade of your ex-lover's favourite scarf, the one she bought from Morocco?

Do you remember the long, unending summer evenings when you would run and play in the fields, without a care for the world? The scent of dandelions on the last day of summer '09?

It's probably a good sign if these memories are a blur in your mind. Or if you have chosen to alter them – aren't we always mending the past, twisting them to make them fit into the jigsaw puzzles of our lives?

III.

Worlds end all the time. Personal, societal, cosmic. I have seen many worlds collapse onto themselves; moments clashing on to each other. It's an inferno and then nothing.

The most calming thing to do when a world ends is to brew yourself a cup of tea. Let everything you know crumble in front of your eyes. Sip your tea slowly. Then pick up the pieces and begin again. Make yourself another cup of tea. Begin again. Slowly, patiently.

IV.

Every remarkable, significant, unforgettable moment persists in the In-Between. I have known many folks who spend their lives clinging on to these moments; grasping them, chasing them, lingering in the shadow of their supposed glory.

Every unremarkable, mundane, forgettable moment persists in the In-Between. I have known many folks who let these moments slip through their fingers, then wonder where their lives have been.

V.

What do I do here?

I stay, collect, curate discarded moments from other people's lives. (People discard moments too easily, without much thought.) I build a patchwork of these moments though they don't quite make sense to me.

Why am I here?

My own life abandoned me a long time ago. So the In-Between is my mine (aha, see what I did there) of hopes, dreams, loves, longings, desires. I am a hungry shapeshifter with an insatiable appetite. I am in multiple lives at once. I am always peeking, always seeking, always dissolving into another life.

I leave no trace; I barely recognise myself.

VI.

My brother's favourite poet was William Stafford. "It could happen at any time." He'd often repeat, a reminder that at any moment the world could crush or fulfill our dreams.

Decades later, long after his absence burned a hole in my chest, I wander these streets with only one wish. To see his gentle smile again.

It could happen at any time.

VII.

You don't know me. I don't know you. But you are here in the In-Between. I am holding out my hand to you. By the time you take it, I will be gone. But a cup of tea awaits you. And so does your life. Take it. Notice the forgettable.

Everything is fleeting. You might as well write, write, write. You might as well live, live, live.

*the only realm that exists. It makes no sense.

Transitioning Landscape

acrylic on canvas, 14 x 18 inches

by Joshua Zeitler

Here you are,
Holding the painting out
& shrinking behind its faithful strokes.
I know this place—it's the view
From your mother's yard, late evening,
Before the eyes can adjust;
Melting creamsicle smears the stratus grey,
Everything earthbound in silhouette,
Wheat & bare branches rise
Mascara black against the magic hour.
You haven't signed your name.
Connor, with your permission, I would like to speak
Freely of the darling pine—lone, diminished
Alongside where the white hot sun passes on,
Transforms the field in a pool of burnt umber, raw sienna.
A mistake, you said. Please, take it back.
It is what enthralls me, what my eyes return for,
What the camera could not trap—& why not paint every tree
You've dreamed? Prickling with new life into the coldest night.

It is all I see—buried
Pinecones flush with seeds.

Time Doesn't Care

Katherine Schmidt

The loblolly pine trees near the 7-Eleven don't know that I've changed.
The Presbyterian church that houses a daycare doesn't know me anymore. How dare the Starbucks at the intersection of Columbus and Easterly welcome me back after everything. After everything I've learned: how time can warp when I walk for miles and miles. How it's just walking, one step after the other, but it's also everything else: toothaches and births and hum. How living means going forward, even if slowly. How each second holds an eternity and then I blink, and it's over. The dissonance. The relief. The humanity of it all.



Rachel Coyne

Demon Sleep

Margaret Upton

Xavier's brother's room was haunted. Maybe haunted was the wrong word. A presence? His grandmother said his weird dreams weren't because of the room but because he ate pork too late at night.

"Aye, mi'jo. Pork digests slowly. You can't eat it late at night. Gives you nightmares." Strange dreams took off in his head; he couldn't fly out, jump out, or talk his way out of them. The pork dreams take hold and stir up trouble: thought of friends betraying, images of his awkward pre-teen face. His brother's bloody corpse lying on the floor—even though he died by military bombing a whole continent away.

In his brother's room, he would face a demon sitting on his chest and holding him very still until his mind woke, but his body lay immobilized.

Xavier was overtired. The kind of tired he couldn't fight, born of too much overthinking and anxiety. He woke four hours later with the demon on his chest, clawing at his lungs like a cat. The demon stood about three feet tall, solid and heavy, and sat on his chest like the ancient practice of torturing a man with bricks and stones till the chest eventually burst or caved.

Xavier lay on his side, drooling; he could not move.

When he moved into his grandmother's house he heeded his brother's warning and took the smaller bedroom with its uniform square 10 x 10 format and its built in shelves that went floor to ceiling. He felt stronger with stacks of books and papers at his back.

He didn't mean to be living here again. Post college, he'd imagined he'd have landed a killer job by now, like midwestern kids who moved to California with a certain brash naiveté that unabashedly reached out and grabbed internships and stellar first jobs. People not from Los Angeles had the idea that things could belong to them—careers, perfect settings, cars. Xavier wanted that sense of force. He wanted to be Homer Simpson from the beginning of Day of the Locust, the person who could bankroll things.

Instead he became Tod Hackett – born among the jaded, the offspring of those who'd come to California to die in good weather. He had no reason to believe the myths of 'making it' in southern California, the dreams of tourists and future Santa Monica Boulevard male prostitutes from Nebraska. No one he knew had ever 'made it.' Dreams were for different zip codes, closer to the beach.

His grandparents pretended his stay helped them out. They were kind that way. His new no-degree-needed job was only ten minutes away. He was the assistant to an assistant of an architectural firm specializing in designing strip malls and storage facilities. Which is to say, a secretary in a firm that designed nothing. Each design was something basic to be thrown into the outskirts of the county without too much thought or effort. But when would he actually become an architect? Maybe his room could be his office, and his brother's his bedroom. He could try freelancing. Yes.

He had no new boyfriend yet — his last one left for the East Coast, with an internship lined up in NYC and a rich uncle to stay with. He knew better than to even pretend that they could wait for each others' post-college purgatory to work itself out. Xavier's boyfriend was far too pretty and Xavier far too insecure, so Xavier broke up with him via text before the poor man had reached La Guardia.

Xavier had a student loan he couldn't pay, and the legend of his brother's room, and those two things took turns occupying his mind.

His brother's room was in the front of the house with its own door to the outside world and its own bathroom. It had a trap door in the ceiling of the walk-in closet where he found a pound of cannabis from the 1970s when his uncles had had the room.

Xavier's brother told him of the dreaming. His brother would be awakened by . . . something . . . he didn't know what. He tried to sit up but couldn't. He saw a ghost-like flicker by the door. The ghost wasn't trying to hurt him; it would just hover there. Then his brother shook it off and went back to sleep with headphones on, blasting something industrial. He said he'd fall into a deep first sleep, but when he awoke before the second sleep only his mind was awake; his body was hopelessly paralyzed. The horrible sound, like his head was being invaded by the loud internal speaker of a demon, penetrated his brain. The voice rang in his ears: Do you know who I am? Do you know who I AM? His brother tried to shake his head 'no'. He tried to open his mouth with every ounce of his paralyzed strength. I am coming for you, the voice said.

His brother tried to yell out against the demon. He'd try to hear his own voice inside his head. It always sounded like the demon was winning. His brother tried to say the Hail Mary, the Lord's Prayer. But no words came and he could only think the word Jesus. Jesus. Jesus — until he felt the words and weight on his chest lift, and the demon had flown upwards to the ceiling.

His brother's body slowly tingled awake. His brother was convinced that the demon snagged a little bit of his soul. He trembled while he told the tale to Xavier. His chest felt hollow. He began sleeping on the couch in the living room after that; stayed away from the museum-quality pot in the popcorned ceiling.

Tonight was Xavier's night to face his fears and sleep in his brother's old room. He missed his brother so much, and thought maybe the room would bring him closer. He turned on the lights which led between their two rooms and then went back down the hall to turn the lights off one by one behind him. He heard his grandparents dozing in their separate rooms across the hall. They would be of no help in a demon attack.

At the door of his brother's old room, he stopped, and then ran across to the double bed and turned down the covers. Earlier, he'd placed a baseball bat under the bed, homeboy style, but even as he did it he laughed. Can a bat stop a demon?

His brother, with all his military gear and his super-tight muscles couldn't stop the demon sleep. What made him think he could?

He wanted to do it sober, but popped two of his grandparents' Ambien and took his grandmother's jug wine from out of its hiding place in the hall closet. If the demon sleep showed up, he'd be ready and he wouldn't flee. Xavier tripped across the hallway, stumbling against the wall, feeling the textured wallpaper. He felt his bare feet against the pink carpet. He left the door open, afraid to wall himself off from his grandparents. He jumped into the bed having not fully undressed and waited.

The queen size bed still had the comforter that his brother used and Xavier took a deep breath. It smelled faintly like his brother. He cried a little. In the night, the faint gray room blinked with the green and red buttons of dying technology scattered about the room.

Xavier
fell
asleep.

The door to the closet grew larger and expanded onto the ceiling and the floor. Mannequins dressed partly like Ken dolls and partly like his brother emerged from the doorway and formed a circle around the bed. One of the mannequins had a tin drum and a marching band uniform and began to play.

In the corner of the room, by the picture window, a green vine grew directly out of the beige carpet. Xavier woke up. Only he didn't wake up all the way. He watched as the vine grew. He tried to speak. He tried to lift his arms and fingers to pull the covers up to his face, but he could not.

The vine grew larger, its leaves giant, the size of body pillows. In the center of the plant, coming out of a bud, he could make out a dark green creature that looked a little like a praying mantis. The creature's head seemed vaguely human, with wisps of hair, Bowie blonde. He stretched his exoskeleton to full height, his blonde hair making shadows on the ceiling.

The creature grinned at Xavier, extending its body and six limbs, the two in front raised up and the four in back straddling the still-growing vines and leaves.

"Good evening, Xavier," the creature said in a low and distinct voice, possibly British-accented. Xavier tried to respond but could neither speak nor move. He thought if he thought it loudly enough, he could let his head know that he intended to be wide-awake and then that might wake him completely.

He became aware of the mannequins again, and of the rat-ta-tat-tat of the drums. The drums everywhere now, the mannequins moving closer. Xavier expected something a little more macabre in the demon room. His brother never mentioned anything like this.

The vines acted like a magic carpet, and carried the creature directly over the bed. The mannequins stood with their legs touching the sides of the bedspread. A drum roll commenced.

The mantis lowered his head to Xavier so that its blonde hairs touched his forehead. The creature's giant red eyes unnerved him. He felt warmth between his legs and knew he had peed.

"Grab onto my head, Xavier," the creature said. "Think it." Xavier thought about his arms moving — and then they moved. He placed a hand on either side of the creature's face, surprised at how smooth it was. The smell of his green skin was intoxicating, lovely. Arousing.

“Twist my head counter-clockwise,” the creature instructed. Xavier did as he was told.

“I’m not a mantis. They lose their heads after they fuck. I’m a locust. Your brother sent me.”

As Xavier turned the head, he could hear cracks and small breaks, but the creature never shouted in pain, even when his mouth was turned toward the ceiling. When Xavier had twisted in a full circle, the head popped off and rolled onto the bed, stopping directly in front of a mannequin, who stopped playing and placed the head on his drum.

Xavier’s breathing grew panicked. He stared at the black hole where the head had been. There was no blood or whatever locust have. Xavier noticed all the mannequins’ clothes were gone. A leaf covered each groin and the vine now took up the whole room, curling up into each corner.

Xavier touched the rim of the black hole of the creature’s neck and stuck his hand in. It felt like feathers and wind. He put his other hand in. He felt like he could almost move his legs and his back. He lunged forward grabbing onto the hole with both hands. It massaged him. He wanted more. It felt so peaceful and warm. He moved deeper into the body, smothered in its warmth and feathers.

The vine stopped growing, and slowly began to retract itself, the leaves furling, the body shrinking. The mannequins stood naked, at attention, fully erect. Their mouths opened. They began singing a song without words.

In the morning, his grandparents found a tin drum, a wet bed, and a tiny curl of a plant pushing out between the beige carpet and floorboard beneath the window. Maybe Xavier had taken off again for a while. His grandma looked for a note but found nothing.

His grandfather yanked out the vine and threw it on the compost pile. His grandmother placed Xavier’s mail on his desk. A student loan in default, from what it looked like. She vacuumed her grandson’s room. There were bits of leaves everywhere, a severed locust head, and its body, which she did not see.

notes from visiting the forms of life exhibition at the tate modern:

by sona popat

norse mythology: yggdrasil: ash tree at the centre of the cosmos

yggdrasil = axis mundi = world tree = connects every part of the universe

three-headed snail

venn diagrams

swirls

male & female

-

mondrian thought the male was vertical and the female horizontal - supportive, holding you up, steady

and constant

af klint drew spirals and swirls and us walking along the way:

a three-headed snail &

a venn diagram: us holding hands,

changing our minds and

picking our path

and

not defined at all

Odyssey

Maria Nobile

Do I exist in alternate universes?
How many versions of me currently exist?
Am I a poet or a warrior?
Am I a brunette or a blond?
Did I make the same choices?
Did the outcome change or remain the same?
All these questions rack my brain.
I am stuck at a crossroads seeking answers from you,
The Universe.
Only you know which version will persist to live
another day.

Crash

Abdulbasit Abubakar Adamu

It's all so familiar
You ask for lifts to the sky
You are denied
Allowed to trek tarred roads
Harassed at roadblocks
A mighty price to pay to get home
Then the same plane comes
Offering you lift to the skies
You have settled with not climbing
But it all feels like
Jumping off a plane with no parachute.

You know there are too many risks
The rainbows, no matter how beautiful
Can't stop you from crashing
It all feels familiar.
This is how your heart crashes.

sometimes i lay in the muddy grass
my thoughts wandering far away
and my eyes glazed over
waiting for the earth to envelop me
until i draw my last breath

spring wraps her arms around my torso
her honeysuckle breath cool on my neck
lips lingering on my mouth
fingertips warm to the touch
tucking under the straps of my shirt
leaving ghostly pale imprints on my skin

she whispers predictions that filter into my mind
of flowers that bloom against the sun's rays
blushing pink against her gaze
of warm sunny days
when all my troubles will seem distant
and far away

she's begging me

she's asking me to stay and become her witness
just a little longer

i do love her
but i fear she asks too much of me

if i open my eyes
i will be forced to face the world
and all it's cruelty that waits within
and i am not ready

i think
i'll savour her kiss
just for a little while longer.

Sharare Samaie

Spring

***there were twice as many stars the
night i tried to kill myself***

Icarus Grey

CW: suicide

and the moon asked me to think twice as i hung the noose between her ivory gossamer hands
verdant grass kissed my feet and the breeze warbled requiems in showers of grief
cassiopeia lay prostrate with sorrow
while the other constellations watched on in horror
as i waltzed to the end, a shooting star drawn to the lunar chair
screaming sadness into the ether of collective apathy.

orion cleaned up the mess i left behind,
put away the chair
he braided memories into flowers and put cassiopeia back together.

***sometimes
strikingly
someone***

Alicia Turner

I shudder at the thought
of being
anything
at all—

through the shutter, I look
through every person
standing under the apple tree
and peel away their small talk.

I peel my hands from the glass
on the windowsill
and only leave an imprint behind.

And sometimes that's what it means to be alive:
inheriting impermanence

atop impermanence, a paranoia of personhood,
irretrievable slipping,
prone to being
more or less
light.

Edges

Okorie Divine

7:17 A. M.

CW: death, bodily harm

Echezona apologized to him for the previous night. WhatsApp messages came in quick succession, and Okwuchukwu wondered how his brother was able to type that fast. Echezona, who preferred to croak his messages in short voice notes; Echezona, who hissed at the propriety of formal English, insisting on the shortened forms of words, and slang. He smiled, letting his mind usher in the commotion outside – rushing feet and an impatient warning for the current occupant of the bathroom. He felt whole, a warm rush of peace, now that Echezona had apologized. He no longer needed to call his mother to initiate reconciliation if after two days Echezona didn't call him. He continued to read the other messages that kept flowing in. His memory snaked to the previous night. In their argument, when he was bouncing his keyboard in fury and Echezona was speaking too fast in voice notes, Echezona had called him selfish for asking for money too much and not thinking that he, too, needed some things to sort for himself. Now, Echezona was apologizing, recording an audio message, and before he could read all the other messages, the audio message came. Five seconds. He played it, a deep sense of nostalgia gripping him. Echezona's voice came with a swell of memories, their endless back-and-forth bickering over nothing.

Nwanne m oo, the voice said, upbeat, as though Echezona had his mouth ballooned with laughter as he spoke. *I'm at work now ehn. I'll send you something this evening oo. No vex oo.*

He swatted a mosquito on his arm and played the message again. Echezona spoke in his characteristic way of stressing excitable information, adding *oo* and *ehn* here and there, as though those would always help reassure his listener.

Echezona was still online. Okwuchukwu typed: *All right. Thanks, bro.*

Outside, a man roared, "Can you believe that dollar is now 800 naira?"

The bus was what the local boys would call *keke-bus*. It was new, a small shuttle bus, with the glossy black painting and the sharp and elegant writing in yellow: BUSIMO. Something every driver dreamt of. So when Echezona honked, he did so not just to clear his path, but with relish, enjoying the sharpness of the horn and how it set two school girls scampering to the gutter. He chuckled to himself and tapped the steering wheel, then whistled a tune and hopped down from the bus. He must seek passengers, or else older, rickety buses would out-perform his. Impatient passengers weren't bothered about how sharp the bus looked, but how filled it was and how ready it was to leave the park. Three school girls in white and blue uniforms stepped out of an alleyway that led to ITC park and smiled their way towards him. It was a good day, after all.

12:37 P.M.

The boys at Relief Market knew him too well. Echezona had been one of them, selling furniture and properties for a millionaire tycoon in Dubai who trusted him so much he let him have a branch of the company all for himself. His mother had danced around their little sitting room the day the man handed Echezona the keys to the shop, and his brother only typed *Thank God* on WhatsApp. Then, *it is good news. That boy sef*, Echezona had muttered.

He was working hard for the family, his mother told him every night, so regularly he'd begun to see everything he did as salvific, rescuing the family from the gullies of poverty. It powered the enthusiasm with which he left every morning. And just this morning, for the first time, he'd seen his mother praying for him and his brother, and for the five minutes he stood listening, his mother prayed especially for him and his bus.

When he gave up the shop, telling his mother he'd no longer do *boy-boy* for someone, seeing as it was leading nowhere, she'd only swallowed air, groaned quietly, and said it was fine to look outside sometimes. He didn't know what she meant, but the next week, he met a man who was ready to give out his minibus for town service, with returns every week for two years. *That's what we call prospect nau*, he told his mother in between laughter, as he relayed the news.

Relief Market was his last bus stop for now. Sometimes, mostly on weekends, he'd drive to Orji flyover because students were leaving school for town and other places. Today, the last man on his bus wore a three-piece suit and Echezona had had to check himself so as not to laugh at how out of place the attire looked in the mired place they were in. Who would desire to choke himself in that suit with the sun spitting fire on earth? But he didn't say anything. He weaved his way left and entered the station, honking uncontrollably. Women pushed amongst themselves, making way for him, and he smiled. He'd told Okwuchukwu once that this was one of the things he relished about this job: making people scamper for safety once you arrived. Okwuchukwu called him vain.

His next turn was the furniture and household items line. He honked, and the sales boy hailed him, arms beating the air in greetings.

Oga m. Boss man. Drop something for boys.

Abobi kee way gi nah. He called out to a boy standing shirtless before a television store. He had mastered a growl-like voice when he began to dwell among them. It was a street voice.

He didn't drop anything for the boys. He only smiled broadly like a deluded politician and parked in front of the mobile phone shop. His passenger disembarked, cursing Nigeria for Echezona didn't know what. Facing the driver's window, the man groped in his pocket for money, muttering, *how much?*

"200 naira, sir."

The man's eyes flared. He stopped searching.

From Bank road to Relief market? Are you sure of what you're saying?

Oga, na 200. No be me be Minister of Petroleum. U no dey see fuel price?

Don't talk to me like that, this boy. Are you sure you're not trying to dupe me?
The man was wagging a finger already.

Dupe you? How much I wan make from you. Echezona hissed. *Oga pay your money joor.*

And if I don't?

This time, it was Echezona's eyes which flared. He sat up in his chair. *Dem no born you well. If you comot here with your two legs, call me bastard.*

Oya let's see who walks out alive.

What happened next was swift, too swift for Echezona to stop the man's hand from reaching his thighs. And there it lay, a brown leather wallet with 1000 naira notes peeking out. His jaw sagged in wonder, before he put together what it all meant. The man was screaming outside. The world was spinning in Echezona's confused head.

Oga. Wetin you dey do?

Boys were already striding out of their shops, bare-chested. Sturdy arms pushed to his bus and before Echezona could call on the man again, a hand whizzed to his eyes, blinding him, and he passed out.

*

Muffled voices came to him first, before he realized he was on the ground. It'd rained the previous night, so he knew he must be messed up in the mud. He cracked his eyes open and saw a boy clutching a piece of wood. Another one was pushing the crowd back.

A voice was saying beside him: *Eche no get wahala. Why e go steal common wallet nah?*

Another replied: *You no see the money wey full that wallet. Omo, the guy wan cash out once.*

He raised his hands to the voices, but someone slapped them down. A kick came to his back and he tumbled over, his lips collecting mud. The way his dick danced freely, he knew he was naked — maybe his boxers had been shredded. The wood landed on his bare thighs and he wondered why he hadn't died yet, why he could still hear voices around him. From his half-closed eyes, he searched for the man, people coming vaguely into his view. He made out the man in the suit amongst the crowd. He was furiously explaining to another man who was nodding pitifully and looking disdainfully at Echezona. His scream came out hoarsely and only attracted the beating of slippers on his face and back. Then, one of the boys had an idea.

Abeg, who get fuel? Make we burn this criminal.

Women screamed in protest, snapping their fingers. But the boy was stomping around, as though he smelt there could be some fuel lying around. Echezona spoke again, this time a little more audible than the first time. "Wetin I do, Abobi?"

He first smelt fuel in the hand that slapped his eyes and nose, before he tasted blood and before he passed out again.

*

8:49 P. M.

Okwuchukwu checked his WhatsApp for the third time and typed his tenth message to Echezona. Throwing his phone on the bed, he groaned, "*This my brother sef.*"

THERE IS ANOTHER

Peace Amos

I hope you wake up to tell

the tales you long to say.

To sway any smile that lingers,

Any feet that tread slowly,

Any hand that caresses at a slight touch,

Any finger that tucks in your hair,

Pat it, to remind you of being a baby.

Any words that walk naked in their form to your mind,

Any mouth that says that which only your

heart can read,

Any smell that halts your steps to take it all in,

Any hair that comes with the colour of your heart -

To say just this :

Do not give in.

For another comes not with this,

But for you, it was made

It loved you first.

Nimble Hours

Shamik Banerjee

With prostrate eyes I see life's hours go—
The nimble hours! how they loft and flow!
And likely so, one day my lump would rust,
Seep to the clay, beneath the soil and dust.
This lump that I amounded o'er the years,
Through sorrow, merry smiles, defeat and tears;
And gathered too a scholar's mind and heart:
An epic lineage which rear'd my art;
And thus I lived and deemed each man my brother,
Saw God's impression in my sire and mother
And learnt life's truth by touching fire and sleet—
The power of retention will deplete
To morsels when my husk will get reduced
And by neglectful world will be refused.

DISTEND

BEE LB

time swells between us, pulls taut.
distance stretches and snaps

back in place. i don't pretend
to understand. or i just don't try

hard enough. is there worth in this
body with no one to touch it?

this body — my body
still no connection

haiku

James Penha

don't know if i dreamed today.
i mourn the lives
i could have lived,
slipped away
like sleep

lying on the lawn
breeze blowing dandelions
his breath in my ear

banana tree leaves
ripped into ribbons by winds—
mustaches for tots

volcano bursts
molten lava rock sand ash
earth's breath

a blank page in my dream journal

Sona Popat



Rachel Coyne

An Extraterrestrial Visitation to this Old Cowboy

by David Brigg

for The Weekly Herald Editorial Desk

Trent Brown

On Saturday night, I was visited. He was six foot eight, at least, and he wore the regular old get-up, but it was all brand-new clothes. No dirt on them. He told me his name was Parth, shortened and translated from something that sounded like Parthenaugamon. I offered him whiskey, but he said he could not digest it. This form was only for my comfort.

Parth cut to the chase. He proved to me the validity of his alienhood, gave me the details I needed to understand his situation, and spared me the ones I wouldn't be able to get ahold of. He told me that his race of people, on his home planet very far away from ours, had been all but driven out. But not by force. Instead by the rise of modernity.

He told me that they were simple farmers of a mineral only found in the air. They'd grown so good at it, no one had any other jobs. And yet, a new technology appeared that could do their job. They became poor, subsisting off the wages they could get from cleaning up where the tech made mistakes that they wouldn't have made. So, he stole a government ship and left. And now, he was here, sitting on my front porch. He had taken a detour, a stop along his way, to Montana.

That sounds a lot like some people I know, I told him.

He said, yes, that's why I'm here. My people got ahold of your movies and books. The Westerns. Lonesome Dove. Unforgiven. True Grit. We watched as you declined, you horsemen, just as we did. And we appreciated your resilience, your stoic toughness.

Abduction? I asked.

What? He replied.

So, I asked, you're looking for advice from me then?

No, he said, you can't offer us anything new. I'm just here to tell you to rethink your resilience. Go searching for a better place. This is not the Alamo.

I think I'll stay here, I said. A cowboy doesn't give up on this land. It's all we've got. This is the only place we've ever been.

He nodded and told me that cowboys would all be gone soon with this attitude, distaste in his voice.

I didn't disagree. Stand for nothing, fall for anything. Have you heard this before? I asked him.

No, he said.

Think on it, I said.

And then our conversation waned. There was not much else to talk about. There was nothing much else left between the two of us at all.

Can you ride a horse? I asked.

He rode off, a little wobbly, on my best mare, Silver. In that moment, I was convinced, more than ever before, that the only cowboys across space and time are right here. This is the only place we've ever been.

Comfort Zones **Nuala McEvoy**

The deliberately neutral curtains are finally up in our borrowed living room. They don't quite fit. It upsets me disproportionately. I bought them in a bustling street market in Istanbul, on the cheap. They didn't fit amazingly in Turkey, but they hung well in Romania. They stayed in the packing boxes in Germany (German windows are generally taller than most) and now, here in this new house, there is a bit of a gap because they aren't wide enough, and they are a tad too short. They look shabby, too, all the hems have been taken up, down, taped and once even glued (desperate measures), but right now I put aesthetics aside, and I try to make myself feel overjoyed that I don't have to go out and buy a whole new set.

I've managed to unpack the box of tatty photos and they are displayed on the recently dented sideboard. The scruffy frames hold a myriad of memories taken from all of the places we have lived: memories such as that gusty boat trip along the Bosphorus, the time we explored the ancient wooden churches in Romania, the joyous occasion we went crabbing in Mallorca, the mellow paella we ate in the Albufera in Spain. We carry fragments of every foreign home with us, and as I unpack the roughly hewn but colourful ceramics from Horezu or the pearl inlaid wooden stool from Şanlıurfa or the dusty handwoven rug from Ceuta, a mismatched patchwork of memories of our nomadic lifestyle comes to mind.

The kitchen isn't coming along so well this time. The crockery is in the kitchen cupboard, but it is mismatched, and badly chipped because the removers didn't wrap it well, yet it will suffice, and for that I remember to be grateful. The removers didn't find the saucepan lids in any of the boxes and that's annoying. I know that I'll be putting plates over pans for the next year or so. I will silently mourn my old saucepan lids. The fridge from our last home doesn't quite fit, so we'll have to buy a new one, and I still need to purchase several more adaptor plugs for the other kitchen appliances and bits and pieces. I must make a note to do that on Monday without fail. We haven't been able to boil a kettle for a couple of weeks, but hey, it's not the end of the world.

We need to get internet. We're dreading it because we know that the person they send to the house probably won't be able to communicate with us. In Turkey, it was an ordeal to get internet installed, and we ended up signing a contract for other things we didn't want or need. Paying the rent in Romania was a monthly drama. Our building housed a community office where we had to go and pay, and we cringed at the awkwardness of not being able to speak Romanian. We smile a lot in these situations. In fact, we smile so much our jaw aches, but affability and a good deal of eye contact can work wonders.

The house wasn't clean when we rented it, and we spent a solid two weeks scrubbing out the traces of the previous renters, clearing the rubbish that they had decided to leave, and sorting out the jungle of the garden. All the while we had to remain chirpy for the kids and think of treats and ways to make them feel happy to be in yet another new city. Our brittle optimism doesn't fool our wise children and they have been crabby and irritable. Huw has complained about not having anyone to play football with, while Lucy is still sulky and morose about leaving her dear friends behind. My heart aches heavily for them.

Last week was Huw's birthday. He had only been at school for three short days, and we could see that he was anxious about not having friends to invite to his party, so we ended up hiring an overpriced room and extravagantly inviting the whole class. It's weird to host a party for a bunch of strangers, but it's a tiny price to pay for taking your children to unsettling new destinations every couple of years. The guilt of putting them through this upheaval is tremendous, especially at first, when you have to say 'goodbye' to them at a new set of school gates in an alien country. When they finally seem at home, the relief is infinite, but the remorse returns when it's time to hit the road yet again.

And then there is the unexplored city. Unfamiliar places always seem so vast at first, so baffling to get around, so frustrating to try to get to know. Haltingly, you begin to edge your way around, but initially it seems like an insurmountable task. Using public transport in a strange metropolis, finding the best shops, scrutinising food labels in a new language (thank goodness for Google translate: in the early days I had to lug a dictionary around with me) are all tasks that take time to get accustomed to, and the sheer energy required to carry out these usually routine jobs leaves you shattered and numbed at the end of the day.

Discovering the culture around us comes later, but it is reassuring to assert that however different a culture may seem, most people are fundamentally good, honest and kind, and most stereotypes are just that: ignorant pigeonholes into which we conveniently and fearfully place the unknown. Language is such a useful tool to help us understand new cultures, but all of this occupies more time and drains yet more energy.

Then there always comes that day when the kids are at school and my partner at his job. Suddenly, the new house seems achingly empty when they purposefully head out in the morning. The removal boxes are flattened and are stacked in the hallway, waiting to be taken away. The flurry of activity over the last weeks has finally died down, and things are abruptly eerily calm. The children even manage to smile for the first time as they leave the house for school. The 'to do' list is infinitely shorter and more manageable. We have internet. I've found a supermarket and I know where to find the eggs, the bread, the milk. I know what brand of yoghurt to buy. The kettle has an adaptor plug. I can make myself a coffee and sit back on the sofa alone in my silent house, and stare at the unknown horizon beyond the deliberately neutral curtains that had initially caused me so much displaced angst.

This is always the moment when I begin to wonder about my time and my place here. Will I be happy? Will I make friends? What about a job? What's my role? My defence mechanisms to overcome these insecurities are always to delve into my hobbies, to roam the streets, to establish routines, to use social media. Oh, and to shop, of course. I'm an expert at holding conversations with myself when there is nobody else around. That means I'm never lonely. I'm brave when it comes to going into a restaurant on my own and asking for a table for one. I've learnt to be intuitive when trying to understand a foreigner speaking to me. I'm good at mime and don't get embarrassed by using gestures even in a chemist's or at the doctor's surgery. I'm privileged to have racked up so many experiences in foreign lands. I know that the niggle in my stomach will vanish soon, it always does. I smile wryly though, when I think of how my acquaintances view my set of circumstances. 'Exciting, adventurous, glamorous' is how this drifting lifestyle is often perceived from the outside, but I know for a fact that most of my friends would staunchly refuse to pack up their home and start over, time and time again.

And so, for the umpteenth time, I brace myself for the rounds of coffee mornings, the luncheons, the social networking events. I grit my teeth as I set off to find new allies. I put on solid walking shoes to familiarise myself with this alien city, and as I step outside the door of our unfamiliar home, I know that the time has come for me to construct my own comfort zone and to find my own peculiar niche in this unexplored territory.



Rachel Coyne

a poem
Elijah Woodruff

you tell me
that i do not write
poems about you
what can i say
what can i say to convince you
that like a ghost you linger at the edge
of every line written
that if you die
i will burn words
to cinders to feel
your warmth
again

You come in like water.
I hear the ghost note, x, pp,
turn to see you eerie
in the half and half
of the refrigerator light and my shadow.

I don't need another guilt trip,
stumble upon a photo album,
lose myself in a village road
or flower sneezing. I tell you so.
You evaporate.

The light puddle on the floor
clot into darkness.

**Water, Guilt,
Hemisphere**

Kushal Poddar

Lament on a Love Lost

Rose McCoy

THE CLOSEST I EVER CAME TO HAPPINESS was with someone else: this whirlwind of a girl with striking eyes and endless coils of rust-red hair, a laugh like a bell and a smile like the break of day. She was kind, a rare gem in the world, and before she left me she loved me, and for a while we were beautiful: just the two of us.

She taught me to see the world in color, painted me a perspective that was uncomfortable at first but grew to fit like old shoes. I learned to look at the good, to offer people the benefit of the doubt; I let her mold me into something soft, let her shape my rough edges into something sweeter. A little less angry, a little less bitter. I became her project, and I realized in hindsight that that had been part of the problem—she wanted me largely to assuage her savior complex. But at the time, all I saw was love.

God, I loved her as the moon loves the sun, in admiration and awe and jealousy. She knew it, too, because everyone who knew her fell in love with her, they couldn't help it. She was electric, magnetic, intoxicating. She had a vast supply of boyfriends over the period we were friends, but she was also finicky and didn't like to stay still, which meant that any lucky soul had the potential to be her entertainment—whoever she was around most often. Consequently, her insatiable loneliness pointed, for a time, towards me.

I never knew when it would hit. I'd be on her bed, reading whatever magazines she had on hand, and all of a sudden I'd feel her eyes on me, watching with a predator-like focus. I'd notice the heat crawl up my cheeks. Several seconds would pass.

'Hey,' she'd say eventually.

'Hey,' I'd reply, testing the waters.

And then, usually, she'd hit me with a question that initially seemed downright arbitrary, but I'd learn to know better. She'd ask if I'd tried anal, or had ever used a vibrator, or if I'd ever let someone put their fingers in my mouth. I never had, but I would, for her. I did.

You wouldn't know it from just looking at her, but she had so much bottled up inside—when she kissed me she kissed me with everything, months of pent-up anger and lust and restlessness, everything she had. When she reached for me the first time, she was gentle; after that, she'd crash into me desperately, sucking at my neck and yanking my hair, making me cry out from I-don't-know-what. It would happen with such intensity I'd sometimes wonder if she were angry at me instead of the world, but I knew that wasn't it because once, after digging her nails into the skin of my neck and forcing me down with a vengeance, she saw the fear in my eyes and shoved me away, scared of herself, running out to her car and screaming in the driver's seat like the world was coming crashing down around her.

What I did then I did meekly, because I had no experience with taking or giving love, but I knew I needed to do something. So as my hands shook I opened the car door and leaned awkwardly at its side, pulling her to me as the screams turned to sobs, and I did my best to soothe us both as night crept up sneakily behind us. When the moon rose, I gathered her like a child in my arms and carried her to bed, and I held her, steadfast, as she slept her fitful sleep. I felt the waves of her red hair around me, the softness of her hands, the curve of her hips, pale and freckled. Even her girlish scent left me dazed.

But. But, but, but. Then the sun came up and it ended and the world went on, as it does, and we'd have those days from time to time and sometimes she'd acknowledge them and sometimes she wouldn't.

As for me, I tried to keep my eyes forward, even as some poet's words tumbled around in my head constantly, sighing:

sometimes being offered tenderness feels like the very proof that we've been ruined.

When did you know?

Kirsten Sto. Domingo

I knew it when you can't find your black loafers when you're about to go out, even when you were the one who placed them behind the living room door.

I knew it when you keep wearing the same ragged t-shirt, its neckline stretched out like bacon, along with the same faded striped pajama pants, its elastic stretched out too, like a clothesline, even when you have a chest of drawers full of coordinates.

I knew it when you mistake a fried milkfish's silky black fat for its intestines so you refuse to eat it, even when we tell you that it's okay to eat it.

I knew it when you say that your favorite glass mug is dirty, even when Mom assures you repeatedly that she washes it properly.

I knew it when you ask me what month it was, even when we only celebrated your son's birthday that weekend.

I knew it when you can't tell me what my friend's name is, even when you've known him for more than a decade.

I knew it when you tell me that it's the year 2003, even when I'm already turning 25.

I knew it when you assume that people who are engaging in conversations without you are speaking ill things about you, even when they're really not.

I knew it when you scream at us, saying that we have something against you, all because you heard us laughing.

I knew it when you tell them that we wanted you to leave, even when you were the one who kept saying that you wanted to go home.

I knew it. I know it. You don't.

UNCOURSED

Theresah Alimisi

Keeping an eye on the clock
How feeble it looks
How gentle and quiet it sounds
Subtly coursing through time
Drastically stealing away valuables
As the waters churn and turn
Gladly rolling their billows
As the sun shines brighter than none other
Radiating its goodness upon the earth
As the stars twinkle in the sky
Illuminating and competing with darkness
The fawn runs energetically, full of youth
The joey finds refuge in the doe's pouch
The child is tucked into bed with kisses bidding goodnight
Tick, Tock! The clock ticks and runs in milliseconds
Counting days, counting months, counting years
The child is now a seasoned woman
Coursing through the aches of life
The sun accomplishing its purpose
The heavenly bodies their duties
Kangaroos and deer learning to survive
Looking on as the clock ticks a delight
Until years later the young girl who sat watching the clock
And wishing it moved anticlockwise
Is found on the old seat, wishing the same
Her dreams? Left as a virgin, uncoursed
Her life? Wasted on idleness, pitiful thinking and empty wishes

The Long Goodbyes

Carmen Baca

Goodbyes between loved ones last for hours after
The first “bueno pues” and the final abrazo y “adios”
In between the last-minute repartee of mitote y plática.
Kindred spirits, parting ways for maybe days, maybe years,
Promise to return even as life pursuits take them away.

There comes a time when the promise isn't exactly broken,
But more like one-sided if one of us doesn't visit again,
Not in the normal way. Some of us suspect los muertos
Visit all the same, but in an ephemeral, spiritual sense.
The dead come to our thoughts, why not in spirit, también?

I've felt them; haven't you? A sudden chill, a presentiment,
A strange sensation awakens. A whiff of a nostalgic scent,
A fleeting blur in the corner of the eye, a rise or fall of the
Temperature or a breath of wind in the face so sudden
We wonder if we imagine them. Then we know who it is.

The goodbyes take even longer from the other side, I guess.
But los muertos revive the same affection from the memories
They bring. Sometimes given with avisos, omens from beyond.
Visitations increase as we age. They don't like being forgotten,
We realize we don't either. Unwillingly, we say our final adios.

Only it isn't. One fine day, goodbye morphs into hola, bienvenida,
And I find myself kindred spirit to a ghost. No longer corporeal,
I hover over my grave in the camposanto my antepasados call home.
Mist conceals her rising from a sepultura nearby, but bisabuela's arms
Wrap me in her love as she pulls me with her to the other side.

a ghost must be

BEE LB

a ghost must be something loved.

thing or one. object or treasure. beast or being.

a ghost must be something loved. must shine

in the light when there is light, must flicker in the gaping maw

of shadows when not. a ghost must taste hush,

must see sorrow, must be made of

nothingness. a ghost must be made tangible

by fear or desire, inextricably

linked in the body. a ghost must

lick the sweat from your spine. must not

taste the flesh, the salt. a ghost must be something loved.

must be absent. must be missed. a ghost is longing

made manifest. a ghost is always reaching.

a ghost is never held. a ghost is simply loss.

wanderer **Maria Nobile**

Pieces of me

Scattered in the wind

Landing in different continents

Learning local languages

Each shaping my experiences

Molding me into

An explorer of the unknown.

Carving my life into a mosaic of

Beautiful entities.

the empty
SOUM

Walk out the door
Climb into the car
Jump on the train
Board the big plane
Fade into the wall
It's all the same

You're leaving me

The house lies quiet, keys are abandoned
Driving away when the green lights flash
Stations speed by on the railway tracks
Up in the clouds fly away with the birds

The essence of you lingers still in the house

We're a musical family –
None of us plays piano
None of us knows Chopin
But we play the radio
Scratched CDs with fingerprints
and caseless cassettes
rewound with pocket knives
When it comes time to ride in the hearse
to bury Poppa Chuck or Momma Bessie
I'll stop all my sobbing –
If you turn up the radio I'll go quietly
When we part our ways,
me wearied and you wanted,
let's not say goodbyes
They're soft and stupid
I won't sputter some speech
about a crossroads or a grave
There's an easy way out of all that
The James Gang is singing “Walk Away”
from inside the dashboard
If you turn up the radio I'll go quietly

**If You Turn Up the
Radio I'll Go Quietly**
Bud Sturgess

ALTRUISM

Iniubong Bassey

How generous is the candle flame
When it offers its light to the needy night.
How glorious is her charity
When no brighter beam would offer radiance to
the meek night.

What wonder is the courteous nature of a
persevering candle
Who battles with the wind in her lifetime
To bear the burden of the night—
At the time light becomes the pauper's only need.

The candle-flame-love in our memory
When it suffers the windy torments
Is the true picture of love and kindness

From the firmament, imagine,
the steeple looks like a ship
ready to leave the planet decaying.

You joke, "It is the tip of your confession."
My sins laugh aloud. We have buried
silence beneath the bits of the bottles
thrown away. No one steps downhill.
People, even the temple, use it as a bin.

One night the edifice disappears.
The fright tightens its grip.
Is the end nearing? Now that the land
lies vacant will the words hushed
and flesh rotten surface?

Noir Temple

Kushal Poddar

sometimes I re-remember

Alicia Turner

Who I am started with him. My father.
To wish for a bruise was wishing for him —

Once, I extinguished the flame coming from his lighter
with the tip of my finger.
And he pulled me into him,
like I was the fire,
like he was trying to put me out.

Then, I wore a sweater and he wore his skin like it was too tight. And I took
too long to tie my shoes
and my hair
into a knot.

No one cares if you can
tie your shoes now.

Now I tie myself off to objects
or people
who won't let me sink.

Sometimes I look at old photographs and get that sinking feeling.
And I remember to burn this after reading.

Nearly half
of my eye-
sight has,
like what is

left of my hair,
gone gray.
In case
it all

turns dark,
like a starless
night, I am
trying to etch

in my memory
all of it:
the bent
stand of birches

shading
the tender
backyard
grass;

the ocean
waves caressing
and careening
against the out-

crops where tiny
bits of spray
turn light into
rainbows;

and your
eyes. How
they dance
in laughter

Daily Bouquet

Tom Lagasse

only to
widen
in the
light

of your love
and
compassion.
This endless

buffet of
remembering
returns me
to the dining room.

A bowl of oranges,
the centerpiece
of the table, teems
with ripeness.

Peeling one, my thumb
releases a spray
of oil and juice,
which fills the air

with a bouquet
of delight. I
savor segment
after segment.

My fingers
are sticky
with freedom
and happiness.*

*Thich Nhat Hanh, A Pebble
for Your Pocket

Drifting Bodies

Ry Forsythe

CW: Water burial of a dead body, mentions of blood

The water around the boat quaked, like it was excited for what it was about to swallow. However, Seward the Drifter stood firmly in the old metal fishing boat as he wondered if he was shaking as much on the outside as he felt he was on the inside. Cracked buildings breached the ocean's surface, the tallest one towering in front of him and blocking the rising sun from his view. He hoped that there were enough buildings around to hide him from other Drifters.

Waiting for what was about to take place felt like an eternity for Seward. It was inevitable, given the world they lived in. As a young man, he remembered the elders telling stories of prophets who gave warnings about rising tides. But it only started small, so people decided to run from it. They built on top of the buildings that were once thought capable of scraping the sky. Now, though, the water was high enough that the old buildings made of glass were almost fully submerged.

There was no way to tell why the water kept rising. At least, not anymore. That knowledge, if it ever existed, had been taken with the people who had money to go beyond the stars. Meanwhile, those deemed unworthy were left to adapt to the new waters. The remaining islands that had once been called mountains were still shrinking. As their homes were slowly submerged, people tended to get more desperate. That was why so many like Seward abandoned land as their home at all, stole whatever boat they could find, and went to live on the rising tides, drifting wherever the waters took them.

Staying in one place was always dangerous, but Seward felt he was owed one moment. The cracks in his weathered face had dried with tears he let fall during the night. His eyes were beginning to sting again, though he wasn't sure if it meant he would cry more or if it was because of the smell that was seeping from the scraps of sails and clothes he had wrapped his daughter's body in.

He realized, with a start, that he had never thanked her. His daughter was the one who helped Seward realize the resilience of his predecessors. The ones who adapted to the changing environment. It was thanks to that knowledge that he had taught her how to fish, how to read a person, and how to fight in case she ever had to face danger without him.

A lot of good that did, in the end.

Twilight broke through the spaces between the buildings, spotlighting the water on either side of the boat. Seward glanced at the tarp he had fastened at the bow, where one could put their head under after a long, sunny day. Or where someone small enough could curl up and sleep. Like his daughter did when she was just a babe.

Recognizing his moment would pass, Seward checked the rope, tied tight to the bricks that had once been his anchor. Breathing in deep, he lifted the body, sails and all, up and over the side, shaking the boat and making an array of ripples skip along the surface. Her body went down for a moment, only to bob back up. He threw the bricks overboard.

Her body was enveloped by the water's surface and disappeared from his sight. Seward finally let out the breath he forgot he was holding, coughing when he did. For a time, he watched as the remaining ripples from where she was swallowed dispersed and settled. Seward stared back at his dark reflection for a moment. His eyes suddenly focused, and he realized he hadn't gotten all the blood, the blood from the other person, out of his beard. That body had been left floating in the ocean — it didn't deserve a proper sink after what it did to his precious girl.

The boat's port side tilted as Seward reached out for some of the salty water and ran it through the short strands of hair on his chin, getting the last bits of brown crust out. Then he blinked while his reflection's lips moved.

"You couldn't say goodbye," the reflection said, leaving a strong ache in Seward's chest.

The distant sound of an engine pulled him back from his pain. Seward moved to the stern and ripped the cord of his boat's motor to bring it to life. Of course, one tug didn't do it. He pulled it again two more times before the motor finally came to life. He took his usual seat next to the handle, and the one who had been sleeping beneath the tarp stumbled out.

The boy was six now. His rubber overalls were originally Seward's, though Seward had worn them when he was around seven or eight himself, and so they hung low and were rolled up on this little one. But they had made the overalls work for his daughter until she was able to fill them in, and it would be no different for him.

"Aiden," Seward said, like he was greeting a friend and not his grandson.

The boy blinked the sleep from his deep blue eyes, so like his mother's, and yawned, frowning as he looked around for the body.

Seward revved up the engine by turning the handle and moved the boat forward. Aiden almost lost his balance, but steadied himself so he didn't fall. Just like she taught him. Seward turned until the boat faced back the way they came, between the two buildings that had the fewest cracks in their higher foundation. Right now, the priority was to avoid more Drifters and find food to eat or trade.

"Where's mom?" Aiden asked.

Seward shook his head.

"Later," he ordered and kept his eyes forward, searching for a new place they could call home.

At least for a night.

he died in december and

Icarus Grey

CW: suicide

the sea grew hands to hold me
she hung starfish carefully on each alveoli and
made space in my trachea as my lungs filled with saltwater.

he died in december and

the sea braided my hair with sea grass,
wove a bracelet of sea glass and aquamarine for me.
she told me she'd help me find all of my pieces too someday.

he died in december and

the sea sat beside me and my anger
we made smores on the beach while
anger added more wood to the bonfire and told us her real name was grief.

he died in december and

the sea gently told me no. i could not join him.
no matter how much i wanted to, she needed me and wanted me here
and no amount of thrashing on my part would change her mind.

he died in december.

Desperate Measures

Brandon Shane

CW: sudden death

My father lies cold aside a picnic basket.
He reaches for my hand, and is instead,
taken by first responders, like God had
reached through the veil & moved him
with the weight of dust on neglected shelves.

Flocking to the ambulance in stained sangria
dresses, strangers plucked out of their laughter
have come with soft words and eyes magnetically
drawn to the ground, perky grass flattened by boots.

Ducks waddle with their children as tissues streak
make-up across flush cheeks, and everyone's plans
have been upended by this circumstance, parents
talking to their children about suffering for the first
time & all we can do is retreat to the parking lot.

What you didn't know, is that it took twenty minutes
for an ambulance to arrive & my sister is a nurse,
who knew after breaking all of his ribs, an absentee
breath, that it was long over before the sirens arrived.

Despite this, from high above you'd imagine we thought
there was a palpable chance, our dreams cast an illusion,
the paramedics angels, the hospital heaven, and us true
disciples hanging on that wire between magic & faith.

a period is only practice dying.

Joshua Zeitler

The poor birds, they will never know this.
All that wheeling in the sky.
Feathers everywhere, floating down like commas.
We know what we know and nothing else.
Loose change that rattles but doesn't make a dollar.
Buy yourself a bauble from the vendor.
Go ahead. You deserve it.
Inside, a little plastic bird.
Even thoughts have thoughtless wings.
At the end of every sentence, the implicit
question: Are you happy.

Do Not Search for Any Meaning, Reason

Kushal Poddar

Yellow ochre soccer jersey,
cheer-friend and sunset
are a few things that plants
a shrub in your chest
that rips apart as it grows
and days decay.

You will never admit,
throw a bottle and crash it.
I shall say some platitude
about sadness, something
psychosomatic. Doesn't matter.

Sun hits the net held by three posts.



Rachel Coyne

casualty of the industrial revolution

Karl Koweski

we struggle to swim with a sense
of urgency
in this sea of stagnation
where every beach head
is pill boxed with the reminders
of our impending cessation
and every day's end brings us
one day closer to paying
another bill
in an endless cycle
of settling debts incurred.

imprisoned by factory drudgery,
we communicate with ennui,
a language of
thought terminating cliches:
and that's life
it is what it is
everything happens for a reason
what will be will be.

today in the breakroom,
the quickest twenty minutes
of our automaton existence,
we set down our smart phones
long enough to voice
our displeasure of
another benefit sheered away
by management.

the one who favors
the Wal-Mart T-shirts emblazoned
with smart ass comments
stands up and pronounces
“our ancestors did not
fight and die in the industrial revolution
so we can be treated like this.”

the rest of us
hunched over our sandwiches
shrug our shoulders.

eh,
it is what it is
what can you do about it?

Scenery

Blanka Pillár

I forgive him for the little lies. The little fibs that slip away and the broken promises that go unkept. He always tells the same lies, and sometimes I believe him because the story paints itself like a vivid oil portrait; first, the figures are painted, then the background, then the corners, edges, contours, and finally, it becomes as if it were a real scene on the canvas of life, but only the immensity of human imagination has made what could never be real. It tells me what I most desire, so I reach for it with all my heart, stretching out my soul's arms to preserve all his lips whisper and hold it within me for eternity. I love him with all my heart, but when my reality is keen-eyed, it sometimes smells like the scratch of jagged-edged infidelities in the dawning light or the wistful night. The cold realization slips into bed beside me or touches me as I walk.

Today we take it into our heads to walk around the riverbank. We get caught in the cool January breeze, and he starts coughing. I take off my thin pink cotton scarf and wrap it around his neck with careful movements. He gives me a weak half-smile and walks on. My chest gets hot, even though my whole body is shivering from the winter's minus temperatures.

Sometimes we stop. We look at the broken-legged seagulls on the slippery waterfront stones, the sloppy sidewalk ahead, and the footprints of giddy pedestrians. He rubs his hand as we spy on one of the old buildings covered in melted snow. His fingertips are almost purple, so I tug off my black fabric gloves and slip them on his frosty palms. He thanks me quietly. His silent words creep into my consciousness like angelically soft notes, wrapping my trembling body in a gentle embrace. Barely perceptible, the milky-white sky opens, and it drizzles, but we are unperturbed. We sit on a stinging bench and stare silently at the glistening toes of our wet boots as they tread the snowy ground before us.

Somewhere in the distance, expensive hand-painted plates clink, light pages of newspapers crinkle in the city breeze, the iron bells of a dilapidated church jingle, and a delicious golden-skinned duck in a warm oven is being prepared. I feel him move beside me, and I put my head down. He sways back and forth with folded arms while tiny particles of dripping snow fall on his knitted flame-red Angora sweater. I slip my thin arms out of my expensive loden-lined coat and place them on his back. He looks me in the eye. My tongue curls and confesses at seeing his delicately delineated perfect face. It humbly admits the truth it has admitted so many times before and hopes. It hopes that, for once, its love's answer will not be a lie. But once again, he replies, I love you too. I-love-you. He utters this gracious lie delicately. The first syllable is trust, the second is passion, and the third is loyalty. He feels none of these, yet he testifies to them. He savours the shape of the voice. First bitter, then sour, then finally swallowed. After all, it's only one word. But for me, it's so much more: I put myself in his hands.

Maybe that's not how it all happened. I've been sick for a while now; my lungs are weak from the January freeze. Every time I close my eyes, I try to remember our last story. Embellish it, add to it, rearrange it, change it. Maybe one day I'll grind it to perfection, and that word won't ring so false. Or the memory will turn yellow, like old letterhead, and no longer matter. Or maybe "I love you" will become just another fluffy word to be whispered in the harsh winter, bored, picked up by the wind, carried far away, across the world, to where it means nothing. Far from the eager, greedy arms of my soul.

I've never been good with affairs,
I've never been able to
compartmentalize my emotions,
despite what I say to the contrary
I fall in love easy,
fall out hard.

I'm addicted to the heart sick
enchantment,
excitement and disillusionment,
the hope and crippled expectations
that comes with giving oneself
over unconditionally
to someone
with a list of conditions.

red star descending

Karl Koweski

but don't read this as a warning
or as an invitation
to scorch your flesh
on the heat
of my white-hot obsession.
I'm incapable of burning
anyone other than myself.

beware instead
of the black hole left in my wake,
the implosion of passions
as our shared time and space collapses
leaving an absence so total
not even memory
can escape its allure.

Leather Jacket On a Rocking Chair

Bud Sturguess

This morning a cricket tore a city song to pieces as I stumbled back home
It chirped and scolded me for leaving him to wait for the Revelation all
alone;
I still wore my rock and roll leather jacket though it somehow chilled my
bones

My leather jacket is draped over the front porch rocking chair
The creaking brings the hermits out into the evening air
to tell one another things that ring with their sweet despair

Let the rust that fell from the tractor grace the ground,
an orange baptizing sprinkle; pure rock and roll unbound

CONTRIBUTORS

SHARARE SAMAIE

Sharare Samaie is a writer living just outside of London who is constantly being sabotaged by their cat who will stop them every chance they get to actually sit down and write. Their favourite genre is gothic horror and their current favourite pastime is painting moody buildings and moody people.

BRANDON SHANE

Brandon Shane is an alum of California State University, Long Beach, where he majored in English. He's pursuing an MFA while working as a writing instructor. You can see his work in Acropolis, Grim & Gilded, Livina Press, Bitterleaf Books, Remington Review, Salmon Creek, Discretionary Love, BarBar Lit, among others.

Socials: [Twitter.com/ruishanewrites](https://twitter.com/ruishanewrites)

SOUM

SOUM is an acronym for Screams Of Unfettered Minds, a collective of 3 women who write together under the cloud of preferred anonymity. Their writing style leans towards the unpolished, unfiltered, cheeky but always heartfelt. They champion mental and social issues.

social media links:

Email: screams@gmail.com

Twitter: [@SOUMpoetry](https://twitter.com/SOUMpoetry)

Website: www.unfetterednfts.com

KATHERINE SCHMIDT

Katherine Schmidt's poetry is published in Full House Literary, Rejection Letters, Roi Fainéant Press, Unbroken, and elsewhere. She is a co-founder of Spark to Flame Journal and a researcher primarily based in Washington, D.C.

Twitter/X: [@ktontwitr](https://twitter.com/ktontwitr)

ABDULBASIT ADAMU

AbdulBasit Abubakar is a passionate writer, poet, and storyteller who is dedicated to creating unique works of art that express personal emotions and self exploration. He tweets his random thoughts on Twitter [@abwordsmith](https://twitter.com/abwordsmith)

MARGARET UPTON

Margaret Elysia Garcia is the author of the short story collection Graft (Tolsun Books, 2022), the poetry chapbook Burn Scars, and the debut poetry collection the daughterland (El Martillo Press, 2023). She's the co-editor of the forthcoming Red Flag Warning: Northern Californians Living with Fire and teaches poetry with Community Literary Initiative. She's currently working on her second collections of poetry and stories.

IG & Twitter X, Threads [@writerchickmama](https://twitter.com/writerchickmama)
Fb: [margaretelysiagarcia](https://www.facebook.com/margaretelysiagarcia)

RACHEL COYNE

Rachel Coyne is a writer and painter from Lindstrom Mn.

JOSHUA ZEITLER

Joshua Zeitler is a queer, nonbinary writer based in central Michigan, pursuing an MFA in poetry at Alma College. Their work has appeared or is forthcoming in Cutthroat, The Bluebird Word, Do Geese See God, Aquila Review, Black Fox, Wireworm, and Dark Onus. They can be found on Twitter/X [@thejayestofzees](https://twitter.com/thejayestofzees).

ALICIA TURNER

Alicia Turner holds an MA in English and is an English Instructor, poet, & storyteller. She believes that writing is welcoming yourself back home. You can find her jotting down confessional, conversational tidbits of every-day life somewhere in WV. Her work is featured or forthcoming in Four Lines (4lines), CTD's 'Pen-2-Paper' project, Voicemail Poems, FreezeRay Poetry, Drunk Monkeys, Luna Luna, Defunkt Magazine, Sybil Journal, The Daily Drunk, ExPat Press, Rejection Letters Press, Screen Door Review, J Journal Literary Magazine, Sledgehammer Lit, Taint Taint Taint Magazine, Cartridge Lit., Space City Underground, Anti-Heroic Chic, Pink Apple Press, Luphyr Magazine, The Expressionist Literary Magazine, The Expressionist Magazine, among others.

MARIA NOBILE

Maria Grace Nobile is from New York City. Her work has been published in Agape Review, Livina Press, and Poetry as Promised Literary Magazine. Jaden Magazine, and Juste Literary and it also appears in the anthologies, Inked with Passion, and Love Letters to a Thousand Yesterdays, and Fate. She is currently a university lecturer of modern languages. She loves writing poetry, both spiritual and prose, and in various languages. You can find her on Twitter: MariaG.Nobilepoetry@gnovb2 She is also found on Instagram :<https://www.instagram.com/marianobilepoetry/>

SONA POPAT

Sona Popat (she/her) is a writer of poems and short stories living in London, UK. Previous works have been published in Off Menu Press, The Willowherb Review, and The Mays 28, among others. Sporadically on Twitter at @sona_popat.

CARMEN BACA

Carmen Baca taught high school and college English for thirty-six years before retiring in 2014. A native New Mexican and regionalistic author, she incorporates elements of her Hispano Norteño culture into most of what she writes. She is the author of 6 books and over 70 short publications to date.

<http://plu.us/cbacacreations>

TRENT BROWN

Joshua Trent Brown is a short fiction writer from Raleigh, North Carolina. He has previously been published in JAKE, God's Cruel Joke and The Holon Project, and has work forthcoming in The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature. You can find him on Twitter, too often, @TrentBWrites.

KIRSTEN STO. DOMINGO

Kirsten Sto. Domingo is a disabled writer from the Philippines. She mainly writes with themes such as nostalgia and memory. Her work has been published in Honeyfire Literary Magazine and Do Geese See God, and is forthcoming in Moonbow Magazine. In her spare time, she enjoys watching sitcoms and reading fiction. You can read her poems on Instagram: @fromthepsyche

SHAMIK BANERJEE

Shamik Banerjee is a poet from India,

POOJA KISHINANI

Pooja (she/her) is a writer, wanderer, and dreamer based in Bengaluru, India. She loves — and struggles — to narrate stories that explore the joys and complexities of lingering in the unknown.

Twitter and instagram: @poojakishinani
Substack: poojakishinani.substack.com

ROSE MCCOY

Rose McCoy is a poet and writer from West Virginia. She has been published by OutWrite Journal, Graphic Violence Lit, Moonbow Magazine, Passionfruit Review, and more. Her debut chapbook, Sink or Swim: Reflections on an Ending, was published in 2023 through Bottlecap Press. She can be found on Twitter @24hrmccoy.

THERESAH ALIMISI

As an avid reader, Theresah Alimisi has always loved the imagery and emotions writers add to their writings and has since dreamt of bringing imaginations to life. She started putting pen to paper in middle school. She is a Ghanaian reading Physician Assistantship at KNUST, Ghana.

MERE JACKSON

Mere Jackson is a lover of all things freakish and philosophical. She writes miscellaneous, marginally interesting stories and articles. This is her first published piece. She lives in Uruguay.
Twitter and Medium: @mcjwriters

RY FORSYTHE

Ry Forsythe (they/them) is a genderless human living among the trees in British Columbia with a degree in pessimism (aka: Sociology) from Simon Fraser University. They mainly work within the genres of fantasy, sci-fi and speculative fiction. They share their art and story ideas on IG and Twitter via @ry_writes_art.

JAMES PENHA

Expat New Yorker James Penha (he/him) has lived for the past three decades in Indonesia. Nominated for Pushcart Prizes in fiction and poetry, his work is widely published in journals and anthologies. His newest chapbook of poems, American Daguerreotypes, is available for Kindle. His essays have appeared in The New York Daily News and The New York Times. Penha edits The New Verse News, an online journal of current-events poetry. Twitter: @JamesPenha

BUD STURGUESS

Bud Sturguess was born in the small cotton-and-oil town of Seminole, Texas. He has self-published several books, including the novels Sick Things and Saint Calvin the Cannibal. His poetry and fiction have appeared in Ekstasis Magazine, Longleaf Review, and New Pop Lit. Bud's Twitter/X handle is @SturgesVerses.

BEE LB

BEE LB is an array of letters, bound to impulse; a writer creating delicate connections. they have called any number of places home; currently, a single yellow wall in Michigan. they have been published in FOLIO, OxMag, and Landfill, among others. their portfolio can be found at twinbrights.carrd.co

ELIJAH WOODRUFF

Elijah Woodruff (He/Him) is a high school English teacher who doesn't do it for the money but wouldn't mind being paid a little more. He spends his free time drinking way too much coffee and hanging out with his fiancée. You can find him on twitter: @Woodrelli

BLANKA PILLÁR

Blanka Pillár is a seventeen-year-old writer from Budapest, Hungary. She has a never-ending love for creating and an ever-lasting passion for learning. She has won several national competitions and has been a columnist for her high school's prestigious newspaper, Eötvös Diák. Today, she is not throwing away her shot

NUALA MCEVOY

Nuala McEvoy has made homes in England, Spain, Romania, North Africa, Turkey and now Germany. She is familiar with both the excitement and the difficulties involved in moving home. Nuala has had poetry published in several journals and finds that writing is a comfort when she is on the move.

@mcevoy_nuala (twitter)

KUSHAL PODDAR

The author of 'Postmarked Quarantine' has eight books to his credit. He is a journalist, father, and the editor of 'Words Surfacing'. His works have been translated into twelve languages, published across the globe. Twitter- <https://twitter.com/Kushalpoep>

INIUBONG BASSEY

Iniubong Bassey is an inspired poet and a contributing member of The Writer's Manger Network, whose vision is aimed at promoting literacy worldwide. His works are published on The Christian Literacy Network official website and thedailypointers.com entitled "Truth and Grace", and "Rivalry" respectively.

KARL KOWESKI

My name is Karl Koweski. I'm a displaced Chicagoan now living on top of a mountain in rural Alabama. My poetry has been published and collected throughout the small press in places such as Nerve Cowboy, Chiron Review and Evergreen Review. My latest full length collection Under Normal Conditions is set to be published in September by Roadside Press. <https://www.magicaljeep.com/product/normal/145>

TOM LAGASSE

Tom's poetry has appeared in numerous literary journals, both in print and online, and anthologies. He lives in Bristol, CT.

Socials:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/tjlagasse>

Twitter: @tomlagasse

Instagram: @tom_lagasse

ICARUS GREY

Icarus Grey is a Saami poet, artist, and editor at Periwinkle Pelican. Find their work in Empyrean Literary Magazine and the Afterpast Review. When not throwing words together and hoping for the best, they dream of learning to play the banjo. Find them on twitter @astridethesun or @peripelicanlit.

OKORIE DIVINE

Okorie Divine is an undergraduate student at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. A fiction writer and reviewer, his works are available on Brittle Paper, Fiction Niche, African Writers Magazine, Fiery Scribe Review and others. He emerged the winner of Abubakar Gimba Prize for Creative Nonfiction 2023. He can be reached on Facebook at Okorie Divine, on Twitter (X) at OkorieDivine9.

PEACE AMOS

Amos Peace Temitayo is a young lady with a passion for writing. Her writing ranges from poetry to stories, articles and quotes. She has three published poetry collections on Wattpad. She considers writing to have a voice that cannot be ignored. Peace is a Law student at Obafemi Awolowo University.

**THIS
MAGAZINE
IS
DEDICATED
TO
IMPERMANENCE**

**TRANSIENTS
MAGAZINE**

ISSUE 1

OCTOBER 2023