

Transients Magazine



first birthday

Special Issue I

July 2024

one year
of
Transients
Magazine



Self-Portrait, Samuel Joseph Brown, Jr., c.1941

in this issue:

Editors' Note	02	The Outsider	10
ONE YEAR LATER	03	<i>Mymona Bibi</i>	
<i>Devon Webb</i>		Its Playing Shadow	13
Just long enough	05	<i>Kieran Wyatt</i>	
you were perfect,		Timekeeper	17
<i>Rachel Perkins</i>		<i>Nandita Dutta</i>	
A Celestial	07	The Grief Threshold	19
Anomaly		<i>Cat D</i>	
<i>Romy Morreo</i>		<u>Visual Works:</u>	
trapped in the	09	Unravelling	11
hourglass		<i>Helen Gwyn Jones</i>	
<i>Alexis Cedargren</i>		Dreams	
		<i>Irina Tall</i>	06

Note from the Editors

Transients Magazine was born one year ago on 14 June.

Inspired by our own high school's Lit Mag, where students created and published a beautiful annual journal, and also religiously watched RuPaul's Drag Race in the computer lab after-hours, nadav and I had always liked the idea of having our own magazine.

A few years later, over smoothies at a vegan juice shop in our hometown, the name 'Transients Magazine' was suggested. Transience has defined both our lives, and — having both moved and grown far from home when we were still young — we both identified as transients.

Also, the name was free.

Thus, Transients Magazine was born. And now, a year later, we have published three full-length issues, with over 100 pieces by nearly 100 contributors. We have considered approximately 600 submissions. And we have been inspired and teared-up and in love more times than we can count.

This issue celebrates this, and all that can happen in one year.

To another year of transience, and all the creating it entails.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

Melissa and nadav
Co-Editors
Transients Magazine



This magazine is dedicated to impermanence.

ONE YEAR LATER

Devon Webb

cw: sexual references, SA, slut-shaming, trauma

A year ago the 11th of June was a Thursday, & I sat in the utter devastation of my life as the boy I loved told me I made him feel 'yuck' & that he'd known my abuser longer than me so..... fuck my feelings. He wasn't the main character of my trauma but he was the catalyst, & it went on way longer & cut far deeper than some pasty bitch with bad hair having a psychotic episode & writing WH*RE on all my furniture. I suppose you don't really know how something like this affects you until it happens.

My coping mechanism was masochism. You know when you're having sex with someone just cos you're hurt & lonely & on MDMA & you're wondering why you're having sex with them when it's just kind of painful & then you blink & you're like, dating or something, & you trick yourself into being happy till the sex stops being shit & becomes just plain non-consensual so you leave, feeling even more broken than that Thursday in June, & have a bunch of breakdowns in the middle of one-night stands & get pressured into sex by someone you trusted who blames you for your own abuse & you realise you never trusted them you just wanted to, you just wanted to trust some fucking man cos it seems you never can.

What I am saying, WHAT I AM SAYING IN THIS POEM, (CAPITALS FOR EFFECT), IS THAT I HAD MY SEXUALITY STOLEN FROM ME, MANIPULATED & DEMONISED & APPROPRIATED, TWISTED FOR EVERYONE ELSE'S NARRATIVE, I FUCKING LOST THE THING THAT WAS MEANT TO EMPOWER & LIBERATE ME, I FUCKING LOST IT, & WHEN PEOPLE SAY THE WORD SL*T I STILL FEEL SICK, I GET TRIGGERED BY

03

YOUR OBJECTIFICATION & THE GREEDY SELFISHNESS OF YOUR
LUST, FUCK EVERYONE WHO MADE ME FEEL THAT WAY.

But the actual point of this poem is to cut to one year later, when I am sitting in the first place that's felt like home since I lost mine, surrounded by my beautiful friends who love me exactly as I am, who love my enthusiasm & my poetry, & I'm still lacking in furniture but I'm not lacking in love. & looking back it's honestly ridiculous that I made myself so small for people who hurt me, that I ever let them touch me. I feel strong in my body again & I can talk about that shit again, I can talk about my lust, which is healthy now instead of harmful, I can scream my honesty from these windows at the top of Dixon Street, I can kiss the fucking sky & not apologise.

Cos it took a year for me to heal from that hurt, from that feeling of having lost everything that made me who I am, but that malicious ignorance isn't worth shit beside my authenticity & I won't let it define me now. Cos I am the thing you wish you treated better. I am the queen making a statement from sincerity & you wish you had this kind of power. I look around me at the life I love to live & I'm glad shit was fucked up enough to make me lose things, cos it gave me room & space
now I'm here

& lessons to step into my own grace, &
I wouldn't wanna be anywhere less, so
thank you for the pain you caused me, it
led me to the perfect place.



2.37.1996
Dahl

Just long enough you were perfect,

Rachel Perkins

An animal
before we met, you were
covered in
dirt, stained by the blood of
every poor thing
found unattended. angels are
going extinct, so in my hour of need god scrubbed you clean,
wove you a
halo from leftover harp strings, and soaked your heart
in holy water, before sending you back to me anew.
Just long enough you were perfect, a sweater
knit with lamb's wool to keep me held in the cold.
Like a surgeon
my friend, you were good with a
needle, knew how to tailor my
open wounds.
Part of me will never cease the
quest to return, to
reverse your sobering up from the
spell. Never cease wishing
to have stopped the clock before midnight, before the magic came
undone. But you were merely a
vehicle to rescue me. Cause
when I could smile without asking for permission, and an
x-ray showed my mind had melded,
you reverted to your squealing,
zealously engrossed in beings that quench.

Irina Tall

Dreams



A Celestial Anomaly

Romy Morreo

Tomorrow marks a year since the winds
stopped.

Earth introduced us to the rapture of stillness,
and the sanctuary of silence;
we cherished them in cupped hands

(when the moon called us 'found family'
nobody objected)

curled protective cradles with our fingerprint ridges;
Saharan dunes no longer metamorphic,
birdsong's clarity
carried

between homes,
how we embraced subdued coastal trails
without salt stinging our eyes;

(while our planet's meditation drifted
from mindful to comatose)

We forgot the names of hurricanes,
sweltered under the breezeless sun as we repaired
fever-dream damages,
and sweat pooled on our lips;

gradually,
the dandelions disappeared;

(watch, laughed Neptune, watch them
suffer without storms)

The bees left our crops to rot,
and our devotion to the gift of unyielding calm made our
muscles atrophy;
humid air sat like stones in our lungs— wet, heavy, bland,
what began as reverence bleeding into contempt;

time stands
still;

(we've begged to be gust-battered
but Earth is unmoved)

We are at the mercy of the absent wind and her whims,
waiting
for next year.



Sir Edward John Poynter, The West Wind, Lynmouth

trapped in the hourglass

Alexis Cedargren

exactly three hundred and sixty-five days ago i decided that the hurt that burned my skin like red hot coals wasn't going to be the locus that my life would orbit that i wasn't going to let my mind become poisoned enough i was destroying myself from the inside out - and the demons that started it just sat back and watched. on that night in march when the air was just starting to turn cold it felt like i'd never be free of the voices, but - the cuts that were once screams etched into skin are now little more than whispers. the coals are buried now, in the sands of time, too deep underground to cause real harm but close enough they're a constant warmth, a reminder. the voices too, they're buried - all their words are muffled. sometimes they go completely quiet, and all you can hear is the steady rustle of the grains that trickle down into the bottom of the hourglass, caressing the curve of its neck. does glass remember being sand? does it, too, long for the life it had before it touched the fire? does it meet the sand's kiss with resentment of its freedom, or with unconscious nostalgia, like we find comfort in warm baths? they're running out of sand in the world out there, you know, using it for concrete, ceramics, computer chips, and glass. how fitting is it that the thing that represents time itself is turned into something so clear it's completely transparent? i look at her through the glass of hindsight - the little girl who, three hundred and sixty-five days ago, was so tired of being the one to hurt herself. she can't see me. she won't hear me. i wish i could tell her it won't always feel like this. i wish i could tell her there will come a day when the sand stops raining from above. that there will come a day when the skies clear, and she finally sees the sun again.

The floor, the tables, and the chairs are littered with fabric. Threads twist, turn, and threaten to fray away as if coming alive. You can smell the dust and mothballs tucked away for decades, waiting for this night. You feel the nausea creep in as the sun begins to rise and the buzz still isn't dying down.

As we stitch and stitch and stitch, her falling down puts us in stitches.

Your sickness worsens with fatigue and confusion, how was everyone still talking? Laughing? Still vertical?! Your body contorts in the corner afraid to speak, to walk, to touch. Your questions multiply: who is the leader and where are the rules in this *terra nullius*?

The memory of that overwhelming invitation lingers, the one that made goosebumps feel like cotton candy. What is your purpose in this room? You lift your phone, your comfort, your retreat, your portal out of here. "Phones outside! We have hijabis and privacy in here."

When the sunshine starts to make the lamps redundant, you believe the women will give up. Perhaps your purpose is to tidy up, close up shop, pretend this never happened. But instead, a woman pulls a quilt off the round table and begins beating the loudest beat. Her small, smooth palms made for weaving and caring break down the fibres of the table, the tent, the women.

Your instinct is to put your tired hands over your ears; you wonder why no one is stopping the drumming — surely it is too late, or too early, for such noise?

Suddenly, the beating has stopped, and you notice she is pointing at you, knitting needles tangled in between podgy fingers — and starts laughing.

“Aahhhh, did you think a women’s space would be quiet?”



Unravelling

Helen Gwyn Jones

The cackling spreads like fire and your cheeks burn as if scorched by the sun all night. You want to run but you're sure you would be swallowed up by the howling women and the treacherous patches of wool and cotton.

She gently reaches out her hand and reminds you, "We were all new here once". She tells you that uninhibited laughter can sound pointed, but it's not, it is something worth getting used to. She guides you to sit on the floor and pulls a small table in front of you. "Don't think, don't even listen, just feel, slap the table, whack it, hit it, and take your time." Tentatively, you start tapping the edge of the raw oak whilst she gently wraps a freshly embroidered quilt around you. The fresh edges, yet to be cut, the just-ironed surface of the fabric, still warm, the smooth silk, the grooves of the running stitch; they all glide across your earlobe and your neck before resting on your shoulders.

Before the quilt can rest, you find your palms bouncing off the oak like a trampoline.

The laughter continues, whistles and cries of lost inhibitions, and you realise it is not at you. It is at how smooth the oak is, how rough the beats that meet our smiles, how delirious this sleepless night is. How simple this stitch that runs between us all.

Although you see the sun peering through the tent door, touching skin, fabric and oak, it is still a bit cold.

Its Playing Shadow

Kieran Wyatt

Madrid

I had convinced myself that turning thirty was death itself. Once I turned the big three-oh there would be no turning back. I went into the Bernabéu with this in mind. Claire would have noticed. She read me well. We had been in Madrid for two full days. On the third morning of our holiday, Claire asked if I fancied the Bernabéu. She booked the tickets on her phone, in our hotel room. I had been to Madrid once before on a school trip, when I was fifteen. It was my first time abroad, my first time on a plane. This trip had been mythologised. I had told the story to Claire, so it wasn't a complete surprise when she gifted me a holiday to Spain for my thirtieth. Madrid when I was fifteen was my first kiss, my first week away from my parents, the first time I went out into the city at night with friends. Actually, there was no turning back after thirty. But there was no turning back after twenty-eight either, or fifteen for that matter.

I was tired, and probably sulking. After the tour came the gift shop, which was as impressive as anything we'd seen. Standing before the European Cup did nothing for me. It looked bigger in person, but when was the last time I watched a Champions League Final? We didn't have BT Sports, or Sky, or any of those up-charges. For a few years, they showed it for free on YouTube, but not anymore. *Coupe des Clubs Champions Européens*. I was looking at the baseball caps when I saw a young couple next to me. The boyfriend lifted his hand and hit his girlfriend across the face. I saw Claire on her phone, maybe ten meters away. The girlfriend walked away and down the stairs, presumably to find an exit. She was holding her face. He might have drawn blood. The man glanced at me, then he must have realised that I'd seen what he'd done. He said something in Spanish, and I nodded

along, smiling slightly to appease him. He walked off in the same direction as his girlfriend.

Masham

The night before the wedding, I found a way into the house. I was dressed in my joggers and *And Justice for All...* t-shirt. It was high summer, still some warmth in the air, even this late. I climbed up the three flights of stairs to Claire's room. I didn't knock, but I coughed, hoping that this would be enough to alert her to my presence. She was still awake, propped up in bed. She said no immediately, reflexively.

'Why are you here?'

There was something I needed to tell her, I said. It looked for a moment like she was about to cry. Had I been seeing someone and chosen the night before our wedding to confess? I quickly assured her no, it was nothing like that. I got to the point.

'You know in Madrid?' It had been about a year since our holiday. I had been thirty-one for a few weeks. Thirty-two closing in. 'When we went to the stadium,' I said. 'And we ended up in the gift shop and you wandered off. I saw this man hit this girl. They were together – but. There was blood, I think. He had these big rings on. She ran off. He said something to me, and I just nodded at him, like I was agreeing. I didn't do or say anything.'

Claire, in not so many words, asked why I was telling her this now.

'I didn't want anything between us, before tomorrow.'

She said I wasn't making sense, and I agreed. 'You feel

complicit?’.

‘I wouldn’t say complicit. I wouldn’t say I was complicit in it.’

‘James, it had – has – nothing to do with you.’ Claire said this with a degree of venom.

I walked back to my room above the pub. I could hear Daniel snoring in his own room. Our beds must have shared a wall. There were no groomsmen, only Daniel. He was the best man, but he was also the only man. This had long been a point of contention. Claire wanted as many groomsmen as bridesmaids; it would look ridiculous if she had her six bridesmaids, and I only brought Daniel. But Claire had friends. I had Daniel and that was it. This argument won out.

Claire and her family were staying in what we called the Poldark house, because apparently it had been built sometime in the 18th Century. We were in The Bay Horse. I had stolen a Theakston beermat from below and brought it to my room, and now I was picking at the corners until all the edges were smooth. Daniel had been drinking Old Peculiar. I wanted to keep sober for the weekend. I wondered if I was in fact a bad fiancé, and a bad friend. I wasn’t very interested in Daniel as a person. We didn’t seem to have much fun together. Had we ever? There was no spark in the friendship, I found him mildly annoying, a bit boring. Nothing ever happened. Neither of us had ever been in a fight, for example, and I fixated on this as I worked away at the beermat, tearing off pieces.

Everything went well. I danced with Claire’s mum, then went to the bar for a Diet Coke. I took it outside. Daniel was smoking.

To our right, a gaggle of little kids played with a deflated football. I couldn't be completely sure who these children were. Cousins of Claire?

'You know Claire took me to Madrid for my thirtieth last year?'

'Sorry, one sec.' His phone had buzzed, Sonia in Blackburn.

'Going well?'

'Course. It'll be me next.' Daniel wafted his hand in the direction of 'the wedding'. He asked if I'd had a good day.

'Have I had a good day?'

'Yes – are you enjoying yourself?'

'In a way. It's a weird question though, isn't it? Am I enjoying myself.'

'Claire knows you're a miserable bastard, I hope?'

There was something about this exchange – the implied bonhomie – which I found disgusting. Also, something about Daniel's face in that moment. I floored him. His head cracked against the posh decking. I lowered myself. I dealt him one severe slap, catching him with my wedding ring, and then I went back to The Bay Horse, loosening my dickie-bow on the way.

Timekeeper

a year in a boy's life

Nandita Dutta

Now words are photos
The days are long, but the years are short, they say
Since you were born, we don't measure time in our years,
but yours
Before you, and after you
You are our time capsule, ruling the camera roll,
our attention span, the counting of minutes,
art on our walls, calendars, and notes
Earlier and earlier alarms, shorter and shorter snoozes
The number and strength of the bear hugs and butterfly kisses
the sizes of our closets, laundry, homes and hearts
Zero to twelve in a matter of seconds.

How did you bend time to your will, and make it play tricks on us
That we remember nothing at all, and
then everything all at once?

I don't quite remember my terror when you refused to take a
bottle
and I thought I can never leave the house again or you'll starve
And now I can almost see into the future, when you will leave
home
I remember your first hospital stay,
the cannula thrust into the back of your tiny hand
your first stitches on a tiny forehead,
blood gushing from between your eyebrows
and I saw red it nearly killed me dead
that I broke you and now I can't fix you back

Your first nosebleed, your first scraped knee
but I have no recollection of the giant needle
in my own spine, or a month of recovery
Isn't time supposed to go straight at the same pace
but you make it rush like a bullet out of a gun, how do you make
it so?

Crossing the road by yourself?

No, you are just a child.

I see myself in you sometimes, and at times your dad
And then I see only you, only your own good and bad
we see our childhoods through you
you stop our time and frame us in a mirror
hold up our baggage for us to see.

You make time both pivotal and peripheral, eternal and
ephemeral

you twist it, bend it, and turn it back
forcing it to face forward

docking it into place like your Legos

fold it and press it into origami shapes

breaking and making the jigsaw till the picture forms

Is it time that plays the tricks or do you play tricks with time,
just making it into your sport, rewrite, redefine, replay it?

I need you to let it free, because I need to see who you become,
what time grows you into - where we go, you and me

But sometimes, I think, just maybe,
you can stop it too.



The Grief Threshold

Cat D

I always think of grief like a lemon, a thick rind one into which you stick your canines in the middle of the street. It is summer and you finally realize that the scrape in your stomach is hunger and your mind has space to interpret it.

There are rituals about dying because in the days after death they will prevent the bones from freezing and growing into stone, will keep the flesh moving, touching other flesh. I remember no one from when you died. Just your thick green autumn sweater, the knitted one, as old as I could remember. I don't think I have ever seen you without it, or maybe the memory of your death has superimposed it on every other memory of you. I remember it from when I walked into the room, while arms were lifting you up from the bed, laying you down. Kindly. I remember that sigh when nothing and no one could convince me you were not alive. And how easy it will always be to remember that the body, after dying, lets out one more breath.

I lie. In fact I do remember grandma wailing. Not that you died, but that you died cussedly, alone, in the minute it took her to cross the threshold into another room to get a candle, to make sure you didn't die in the dark. I remember her too, like I remember you, faceless, just her brown housecoat, once velvety, now scraped to bare thread on her hips where she rubbed her palms dry when she cooked. You were always cold, just like me. It was you and I together, in the middle of summer, in socks. I remember her calves where her housecoat ended. I cannot remember the kind of nightgown she used to wear any more.

And suddenly our house had become a house of mourning, and I remember almost none of that, though I was there. Not your body spending its three days in the coffin, waiting for visitors, not the vigils. I do remember the cooking. The kitchen full of relatives and neighbours, the rush to buy candles of all the required dimensions – large for the priests and deacons, and for the vigil, so they wouldn't have to

be changed constantly. There were candles that sat in flat spirals next to the coffin, with newspapers under them. Even in mourning it will not do for the dripping wax to leave a stain you would later have to clean off the floor.

I remember the wheat grain cake we made, the one only made for the dead, with fondant covered candies lined up on its margins like an art nouveau mirror, and a cross rendered three-dimensional with one layer of powdered sugar and one of cocoa on top.

I was a child the first time we cooked it for a funeral at home, not just for Saturday church, and I went into the kitchen asking for a candy. Someone tried to shoo me away. And then you, or maybe grandma, I don't know any more, told them to give it to me. I was a child. The dead were speaking through me. The dead were speaking through me also when we passed by the house where Uncle Mihai had just died, and suddenly I was so thirsty I — the child who never asked for anything, who peed on their aunt's sofa for fear of interrupting her mid-sentence — asked grandma to stop and get a glass of water. And everyone then said Mihai was thirsty.

The dead kept speaking through me.

Your name was also Mihai, when you were born. But you were a sickly child. Your mother, whose other children had all died before you, was terrified. So she gave you away, grieving like you'd already died, to a stranger. You were barely one year old. She grieved like I grieved years later, body taking in only snippets of the life outside. And then she received you again, across the window. A stranger child, not blood of her blood, not yourself. You were Ion. But I don't know what everybody called you. I never called you. I just looked up at you and your eyes lit up.



Contributor Profiles

Kieran Wyatt

holds a degree in Creative Writing from Edge Hill University. He lives on the Fylde Coast, Lancashire.

Mymona Bibi

is a Bengali-British writer and teacher based in Newcastle upon Tyne. Her writing is featured in the Ilkley Literature Festival and was longlisted for the Butchers' Dog. She has performed at events such as the Newcastle Fringe Festival and NOVUM and she's a core member of Brown Girls Write. You can find her on Instagram @wordsbymymona

Cat D

is a queer trans* feminist reader, writer, editor, and teacher who lives in Ahmedabad, India, and is a member of the collective Hasrat-e-Zindagi Mamuli. (@madcatterin on Insta)

Nandita Dutta

is a freelance communications professional by day, and coffee-addicted writer by the rest of the day. She is a returning writer to Transients Mag, and has appeared in reflections.live, HotPot magazine, Bitter Melon Review, and has upcoming pieces in Outland Magazine, and Bridges not Borders - an anthology of South Asian writers. Look her up on @thepseudohousewifewrites (Instagram) and @TPHwrites (X).

Rachel Perkins

is a writer pursuing a BA at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. In persuasion and prose, they've earned semifinalist and finalist awards at the NSC National Speech Championship. She's also served as an editorial assistant for Ninth Letter and appears in Montage Arts Journal. Twitter: @perkinzithink, Instagram: @rachelperkinz

Romy Morreo

is a queer writer who completed her MA Creative Writing at the University of Chichester. She enjoys dark fiction and poetry, with a particular love of fairy tales. Her work has been published in Transients Magazine, and she received an Honourable Mention for the Dark Poets Prize 2024. Instagram and Twitter/X: @romymorreo

Alexis Cedargren

is a postgraduate physics student based in Auckland, New Zealand. Outside of writing, she enjoys reading, knitting, and watching figure skating championships.

Devon Webb (she/her)

is an award-winning writer & editor based in New Zealand, with work published extensively worldwide. She is a founding member of The Circus (@circuslit), a collective prioritising radical inclusivity within the indie lit scene. She can be found on social media at @devonwebbnz.

Irina Tall (Novikova)

is an artist and illustrator. She graduated from the State Academy of Slavic Cultures with a degree in art, and also has a bachelor's degree in design. Her first personal exhibition "My soul is like a wild hawk" (2002) was held in the museum of Maxim Bagdanovich. She can be found on Instagram @irina.tall111

Helen Gwyn Jones (she/her)

A Best of the Net finalist 2024 (thanks to @Acropolis Journal), Helen Gwyn Jones (she/her) started recording and saving the past in real and photo form at 8 when she bought a Brownie camera from her sister. Other esoteric interests include rust and Welsh grammar. Instagram / Twitter @helengwynjones

Other Artworks

*all artworks listed here were obtained from The
Met Museum Open Access Collection*

<i>Self-Portrait</i>	<i>01</i>
<i>Samuel Joseph Brown Jr</i>	
<i>A man holding an oar</i>	<i>04</i>
<i>Johan Christian Dahl</i>	
<i>The West Wind, Lynmouth</i>	<i>08</i>
<i>Sir Edward John Poynter</i>	
<i>Carriage Clock</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Boston Clock Company</i>	

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