



# Momentum

## About the paintings in this volume

When considering what design elements to use in this year's journal, and what kind of cover we would like to have, we decided that we wanted to explore the idea of momentum in art. So we gathered our paints, and a variety of tools including squeeze bottles, paintbrushes, forks, and pine branches, and set out to see what happens to paint when it's dripped, dropped, dragged, and occasionally flung several feet through the air.



The painting on our cover, and all the paintings and painted design elements you see in this volume of *Satura*, are the work of the *Satura* staff during this “action painting day” in September 2023. We hope you enjoy them as much as we do.

Other types of artwork appearing in this volume are credited to the individual artists who submitted them.

# Letter From the Editor

It was an honor and a privilege to be entrusted with the fifth volume of *Satura*. The fifth volume felt like an important milestone when Laura, Natalia, and Rajiv handed leadership over to me, and I wanted to do my best to reflect that milestone in every sense. My plans were not only to publish a fifth volume to be proud of, but to hold events, create original art, and even increase the size of our print run.

I did not carry out these ambitious plans on my own, of course. The journal you are about to read was made by an incredible team of student volunteers working alongside me. They brought a wide range of skills and ideas that have constantly refined and improved my ideas and turned them into more than I could have imagined. This volume that we are now so proud to share with our readers is only possible because of the amazing crew of editors, writers, and designers who have worked tirelessly from day one of our handover.

The theme for this volume was chosen partially as a celebration of *Satura's* trajectory as a publication with six years of history (and counting). It was also chosen as a way to offer students around the world the opportunity to talk about direction, movement, force, and power. The authors and artists featured in this volume have gone beyond all expectations with the many creative ways they interpreted and commented on "Momentum" in their work.

Our contributors have come from all over the world and have a wide range of experiences from which to reflect on this theme. The four pieces in our creative writing section tell us about the things that linger with us as the world changes. Our seven poets observe a remarkable range of broad concepts and the smallest details. And the seven researchers in our nonfiction section bring us a wide range of topics, from empowering refugees, to publishing translated literature, to our complicity in the inequalities of capitalism.

There are so many demands on our time and attention, and it means the world to me, the rest of the *Satura* staff, and our contributors that you are choosing to spend your time reading *Satura*. Thank you.

With gratitude,  
Bethany Andrews  
*Satura* Editor-In-Chief  
Volume 5: Momentum



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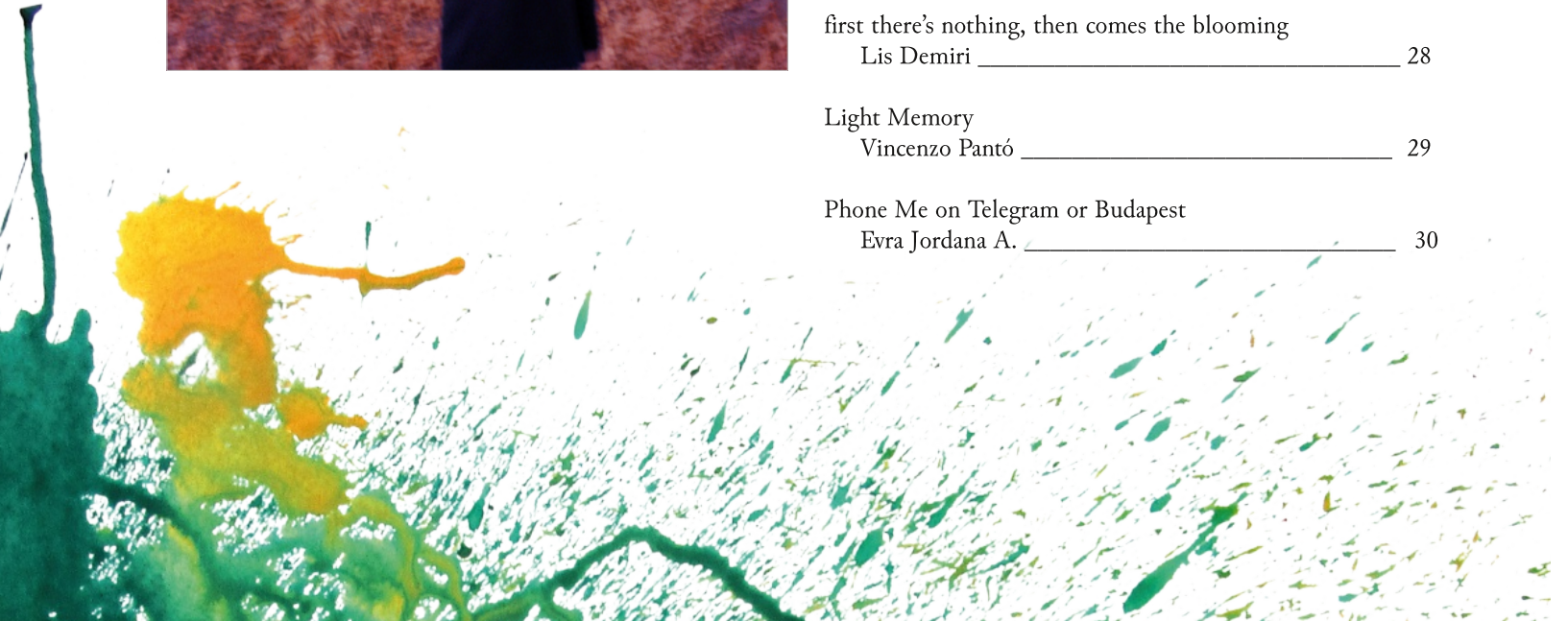
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IAS



A photograph of a sunlit forest path. The path is a narrow, light-colored trail that winds through a lush green forest. Long, dark shadows of trees are cast across the path and the surrounding grass, indicating it is either early morning or late afternoon. The trees are tall and thin, with their canopies visible in the upper part of the frame. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

# Creative Writings

# Death On Sale

Swara Shukla

Don't fight the numbness. It is protecting you from feeling the full weight of a lifetime's worth of his possessions in your bag, the full weight of the scarf you are holding, your fingers tracing the same fabric his thumbs did last winter when he leaned against your sofa sipping his over-sweetened coffee, when he insisted on wearing it despite his glistening forehead to prove his love for your lockdown knitting skills, when he hugged you for the last time before leaving for another crowded ICU. The sameness feels uncomfortable with the absences speckling this marketplace you have forgotten to walk through. There's the signboard announcing *Janpath Market* against the blue that's still as faded as it was the last time you were here, the stained grey path with the same square patterns you had playfully hopped on as he'd obliged you with his fond exasperation. And it's the same process, one foot after the other, one step forward at a time, past the signboard. Don't think about the name, the accuracy-turned-irony of "people's path," just focus on the sameness of the sign and the sameness of your movement past it.

Tighten your grip on the scarf, commit its texture to memory, just like you have done with the route you are taking to the erstwhile Sonu Sweets that you know will be devoid of the din and the fragrance of the jalebis you ended so many of your dates with. You will get used to the inconsistencies of the market; for now, don't lose your pace, you are almost there. Don't look at the missing billboards of the saree shops you had frequented two years ago, remind yourself that the unused wedding paraphernalia piled up in your room is resaleable too. Turn the corner and – don't falter – look at the shanty that those sprawling glass cases of delicacies have been reduced to, still in the same spot at the end of the same route, standing at the precipice of sameness like all the other simulacra populating the market now. Go up to the vendor – the same guy you had haggled with for all those boxes of barfi you had distributed to friends you never saw again – and add the scarf to the piles of trinkets and footwear and clothes that surround him now, random tidbits of pre-apocalyptic lives. Tell yourself it's the mask preventing you from picking up any residual aromas of

the sweets and savouries you had planned to give as return gifts to the guests, that this place is still somewhat reminiscent of the shop that provided you both with those initial stolen moments of privacy that made their way into the pages of his diaries that you finished boxing up this morning. The vendor gives you a ten-rupee-note doused in sanitizer with a finality that closes any potential to bargain, not that you know how to price-tag memories. Step back, put more than an arm's length between you and the scarf. Let it be part of this flotsam.

Take in the scene, observe the clientele of survivors milling about the shanty, the woman dressed in green giving your vendor a few books with tattered binding. Watch him weighing them and throwing them on top of some crumpled shirts, paying her with another damp note. There's a broken remnant of an old "on sale" board peeking out from behind the stall in an unwitting proclamation of human resourcefulness. You have to tap into the plentiful; death is in never-ending supply, survival in never-ending demand. This vendor is a great businessman, repurposing death for survival.

**You have  
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Ignore the strap of the bag cutting into your shoulder, tugged by objects that carry more weight than the vendor's scale can measure. It is okay to hold on a little longer, okay to get used to the loss in fragments. Turn back around, reshape your memory to fit the altered contours of the market, retrace your steps, one foot after the other, always the same movement, past the signboard. Get into your car, back to safety, back to the luxury of unmasking and breathing regurgitated air that continues to protect you, even though it failed to shield him. Take the wheel, start the engine, and keep driving through this war-torn world full of silences you don't remember getting used to. Lock yourself up in your brick-and-mortar bubble as soon as you get back to it, make it more crack-proof. It's okay to be alone, remember that – it's okay to devalue human connections in a world where people are just ephemera wearing clothes for eventual sale.



**Swara Shukla**

I am a PhD student in English Philology at the University of Münster, Germany, where I also teach a seminar on Indian book publishing. I hold graduate degrees in English Literature from the University of Delhi and Creative Writing from the University of Glasgow. I have a background in the publishing sector and have worked with Penguin Random House India. My short fiction has been published by magazines and small presses in the UK; including *Escaped Ink Press* and *Fly on the Wall Press* in England, and *Gutter Issue 18* and *28* in Scotland. I use fiction as an outlet for my reflections on lives on the fringes of India, mostly Delhi. Outside of books, writing and research, my interests include dogs, coffee and Indian music.



“Lineage No. 2,” Laura Nroumanis, 2023

LS

# My Amma, Bhopal

Yash Gupta

17/06/2023

Poison gas leak-out hits 2 lakh Worst-ever tragedy in Bhopal

Fig. 1, FPJ Web Desk

Blowing off the dust gathered on some thirty-nine-year-old newspapers, I could not help

but wonder when someone would rub off the grime that has been settling on Bhopal since 1984. There is too much

rust on tank E610, brittle enough to crack under the heft of piling medical reports.

Poison gas toll 1,200 and rising

Fig. 2, Doyle

human existence. And so, Amma could not walk; a fixture in a small room tucked away in some small corner of Bhopal. This was the only place where I could find my wrinkly-faced Amma, my bent-as-a-bow grandmother.

More MIC stock in Carbide plant than assessed Anderson released

Fig. 3, gv2k; Fig. 4, gv2k

Ramkali Gupta Bhopal, Dec 2, 1984

Some stains are difficult to purge. Haldi. Ink. Methyl isocyanate. I have tried soaking them in the numerous lakes that dot Bhopal; in the several gas scars that flow across my Amma's back, like a river changing states: gas, liquid, ash.

## 25 years and still waiting

The Anderson saga is one more reminder that the powerful can always count on official help.

Fig. 5, gv2k

My Amma was the oldest thing I knew in Bhopal; wrinkly faced, arched body, a smile broken only by customary inhaler breaks; her legs swollen like the fingers of a fisherman returning with toxic catch from a toxic lake – the water deemed “unfit for human consumption” after some tragedy initiated by global figures who died peaceful deaths; a city deemed unfit for

Yash Gupta Münster, May 28, 2023

I did not know much about my Amma, Bhopal. Not the giant Hawelis, or Saanchi. Neither her upbringing nor her life. They have always been a part of my environment – Narbada Restaurant & Sweets, her walking stick, Taj-ul-Masjid, Smile Dental

Clinic, her Urobag – I have never felt the need to know them.

But Amma was very much like tank E610 in her last few years; her mouth left slightly ajar, anticipating water to quench her cracked tongue that had been gathering silences for 39 years. Her responses would rarely progress beyond grunts and looks that would

slide over the contours of my face; so we pretended that her groans, that the silences that accompanied her long stares had some meaning to them.

*Tau*, my father's older brother, had always been a transient being. He was always actively absent from not only our lives but also from *Amma's*. Hospitalisations, festivals, and anniversaries had been celebrated without him. However, in the two years leading up to *Amma's* death, he began visiting her, announced only by his groaning scooter, which would keep coughing long after it had been switched off. Punctually, once per month. His presence was not demanding – no *Chai* or biscuits, perhaps a glass of water. And then, sleep. He would come and sleep next to his mother, possibly exhausted from playing adults. No discussions, no formalities, just a quick nap. His presence was discernible only by the few snack packets he would leave behind for his mother.

## Widespread scare about after-effects

Fig. 6, gv2k

**Ramkali Gupta**  
**Bhopal, undated**

Many seasons ago, *Amma* was the scent of a seemingly unending summer; the thick fragrance of *ghee* that would waft through the whole house, the sharp sting of roasted chillies that would spice giant vats of homemade pickle, and the pungent savour of *Hing*-tinged *Sabzis* that would carry promises of abundance.

I wonder what she would have said if she saw me scrubbing the smell of *Indisches Kochen* off my skin every time I step out of the ten-metre squared room I call home now. Some scents are difficult to carry, no matter how much they may be embedded in your being.

# Exodus from Bhopal in new scare wave

Fig. 7, gv2k

**Yash Gupta**  
**Münster, 19th May, 1999**

Each year, on December 2, the same face – iconic – would pop up on school notice boards. My two eyes, one deep brown, the other crystallised into a lunar cataract, would meet another pair. A child's face suspended in dirt – no body, no hands – another rock that Bhopalis stumble upon in their path towards forgetting. This anniversary, it seems, is the only day when the Bhopal Gas Tragedy crosses the Bhopali mind. The two days or arguably countless years condensed into a two-minute read.

And yet, when I moved to Pune or Mumbai, I found myself clinging to its recognition. The tragedy preceded my arrival, and I was told, as if I was yet to grow into my inheritance, that my Bhopal, my *Amma*, had been decimated long ago. And perhaps I *did* find solace in my city's tragedy. The solace that perhaps I was already known this new city, however distortedly.

Since I was a child, I wished to escape Bhopal – its undulating architecture, its noisy traffic that would customarily flout red lights, its spaces where gas



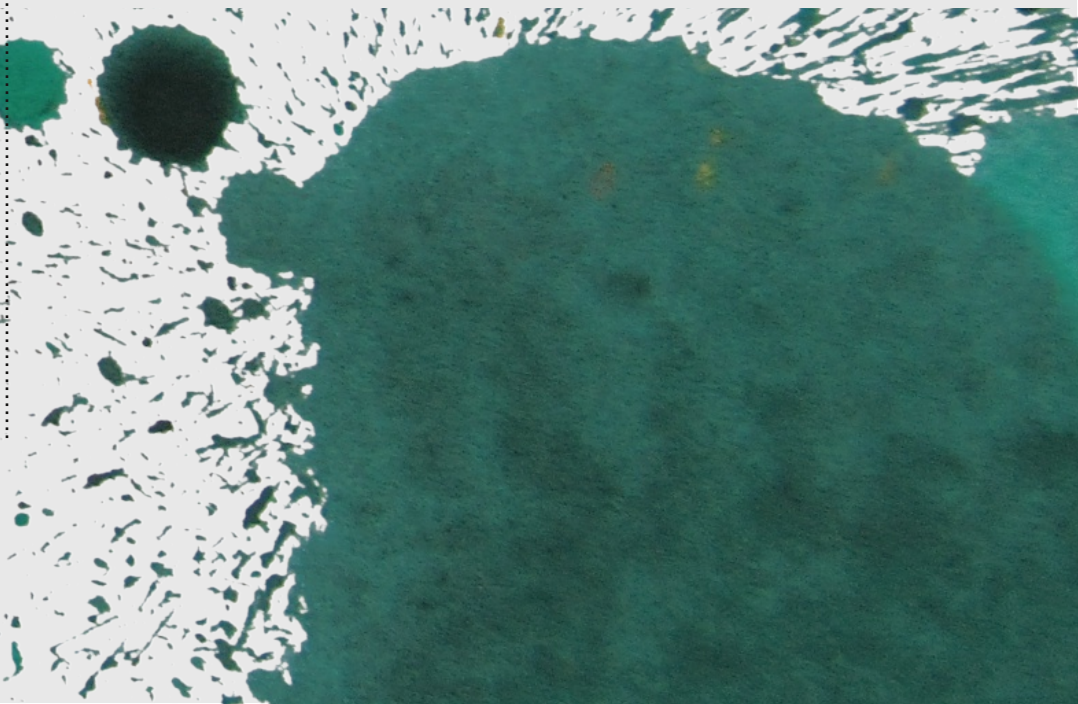
Fig. 8, Deccan Herald

and *masalas* would intertwine. I left Bhopal five years ago. I returned six days before *Amma* left us.

It is uncanny to know a body, but no longer the person who resides in it.

On July 7, 2022, a day before *Amma's* death, her mouth cracked into a smile. Her last word was "Karthik."

*Amma* passed away before her sole dream of travelling in an aeroplane could be fulfilled. *Amma* passed away before I could have stained the geometric streets of Germany with her memories, before I could saturate the clouds from the white of her stark hair, before I could sweeten the first blooms of spring with her stories.



# Gas leak at Union Carbide

Fig. 9, Doyle

**Ramkali Gupta**  
**Bhopal, July 8, 2022**

*Tau* is visibly a decaying man. The tragedy caught up with him much sooner than age did.

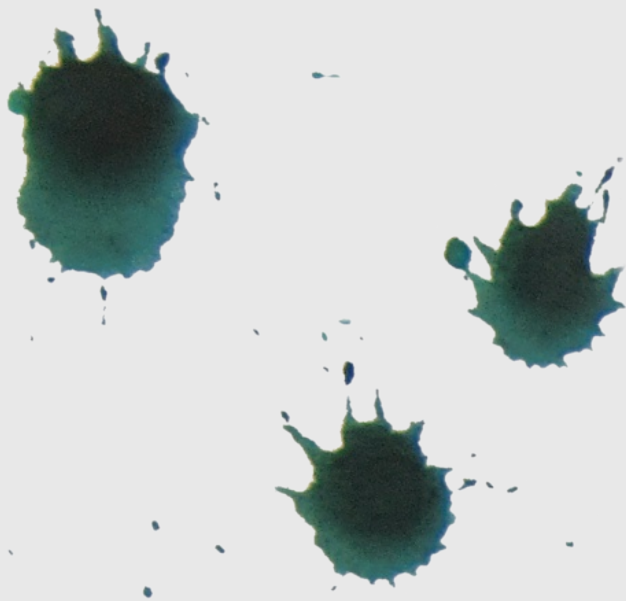
I would often wonder why he sought only to sleep next to his mother while she peered over him as if he was born just yesterday. Maybe if he just slept, ignored all the years, ignored the dust settling on his mother, and maybe if he dropped the reality-affirming chat of, "How is it with

you, these days?" he could ignore the fact that it *was* too late. And perhaps he knew it too. Each time he returned, she was not the same mother. She was older, more decrepit.

*Amma* was very much like the city, ignored. I was very much like *Tau*, late.

I often find myself returning to Bhopal in behaviours, discussions, and making sense of the new. It is often disorienting to wake up and find myself no longer in Bhopal.

Comfort and belonging are tricky things. We assume that the things we cherish, those who raise us, our cities, our *Ammas*, will linger; that their memories are safe somewhere in our psyche, somewhere awaiting a leak, a few drops of water to envelope us. Somehow, the dust on the newspapers does not seem so bad. And for those who have deluded themselves into an eternal *Amma*, like my *Tau* and I, the only solace lies in curling next to her. No discussions, no formalities, just a quick nap.



## Appendix

Fig. 1. FPJ Web Desk, “On This Day in History! December 3, 1984 – Deadly ‘Bhopal Gas tragedy’ leads to death of 3,787 people.” *Free Press Journal*. 3 December 2018. <https://www.freepressjournal.in/cmcm/on-this-day-in-history-december3-1984-deadly-bhopal-gas-tragedyleads-to-death-of-3787-people>.

Fig. 2. Doyle, Jack. “December 5th 1984 edition of The Hindustan Times of India with early reporting on the Bhopal gas leak disaster.” *The Pop History Dig*. 5 April 2019. <https://www.pophistorydig.com/topics/tag/bhopal-disaster-1984>.

Fig. 3. Gv2k, “Bhopal Gas: A Lethal Trade Secret.” *My Take by GVK*. 30 November 2009. <https://gvk2.wordpress.com/category/bhopal>.

Fig. 4. Gv2k, “Bhopal 1984 and Anderson Saga.” *My Take by GVK*. 2 December 2009. <https://gvk2.wordpress.com/category/bhopal>.

Fig 5. Ibid.

Fig 6. Ibid.

Fig 7. Gv2k, “Bhopal Gas: A Lethal Trade Secret.” *My Take by GVK*. 30 November 2009. <https://gvk2.wordpress.com/category/bhopal>.

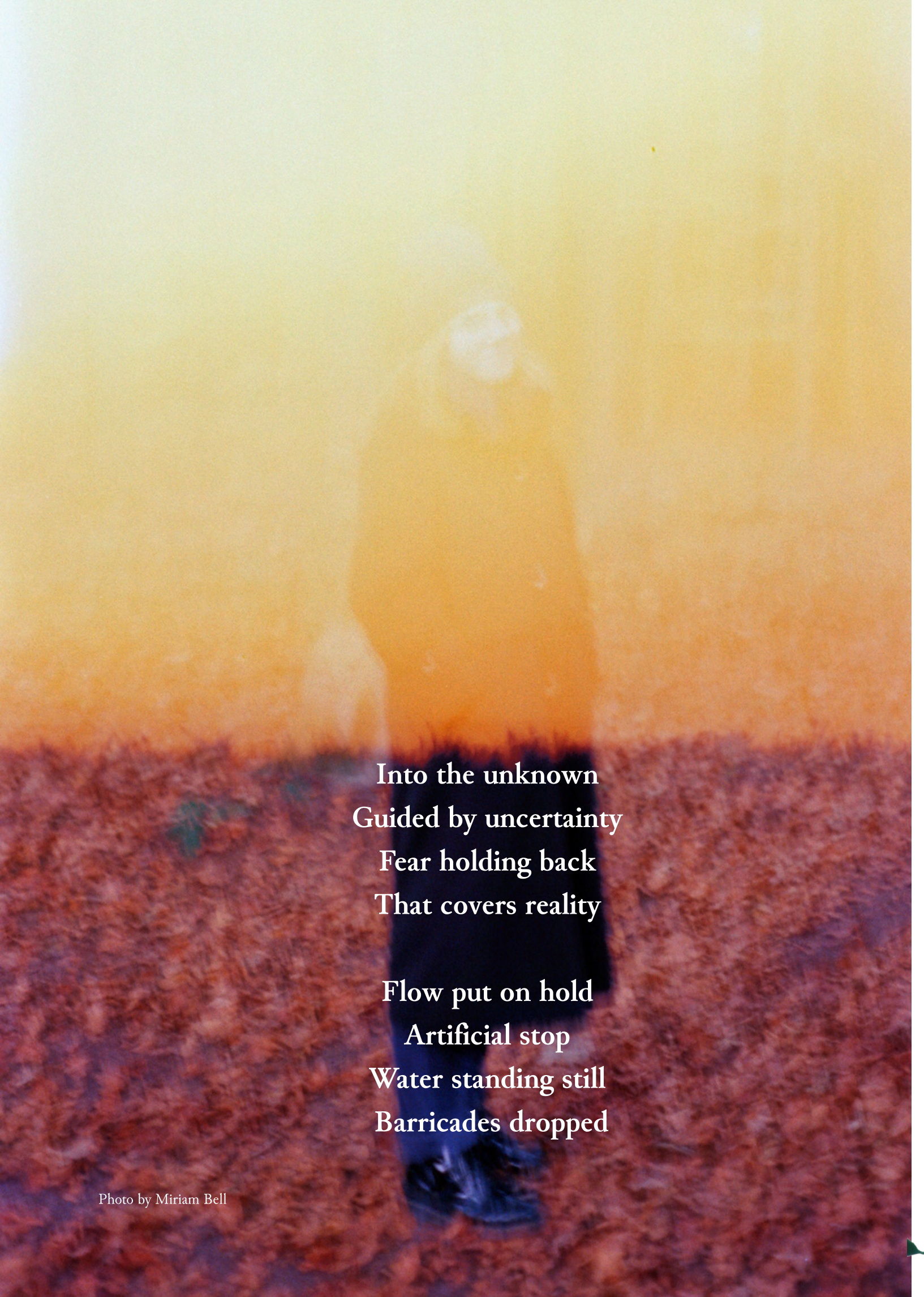
Fig. 8. DHNS. “Bhopal gas tragedy: NGOs cry foul over ‘secret’ waste disposal.” *Deccan Herald*. 17 August 2015. <https://www.deccanherald.com/content/495672/bhopal-gas-tragedy-ngos-cry.html>.

Fig. 9. Doyle, Jack, “Wire service stories on Union Carbide’s August 1985 gas leak in West Virginia appeared in various U.S. newspapers.” *The Pop History Dig*. 5 April 2019. <https://www.pophistorydig.com/topics/tag/bhopal-disaster-1984>.

**Yash Gupta** is a graduate student at the University of Münster, currently enrolled in the Master’s programme in National and Transnational Studies. He also holds a Bachelor’s degree in Literary and Cultural Studies with a minor in Graphic Design, and a diploma in Fine Arts.

As a first-generation student with multiple disabilities, his work engages with resonances of non/human differences expressed in the disciplines of Death Studies, Critical South Asian Studies, Digital Humanities and Disability Studies, along with Gender & (A)sexuality Studies, practice-based Animal & Environmental Studies, and Oral History; reflected in his chapter contributions in *Literary Representations of Pandemics, Epidemics and Pestilence* (2022), *Media Technology and Cultures of Memory* (2023) and *Asexualities: Feminist and Queer Perspectives* (Anniversary Edition) (Forthcoming, 2024).

As a student of design, his creative works fuse textual and visual components to express concerns of passing, remembrance, and dis/abling inheritance, particularly in the context of lived experiences.

A photograph of a person standing in a field of tall, golden-brown grass. The person is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt and dark pants. The background is a bright, hazy sky, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Into the unknown  
Guided by uncertainty  
Fear holding back  
That covers reality

Flow put on hold  
Artificial stop  
Water standing still  
Barricades dropped

# Galcom

Miriam Bell

**T**ick– tick– tick went the old wooden clock in the left corner of the room next to the door – standing like a chaperon guarding the chaos Dolia had created unintentionally. Flowers she had picked from the side of the road had become a sign of the times. A few leaves had dropped on her desk and were pantomiming transience. Clothes had turned the floor into a sea of colors and textures – with scattered books rising out of it like rocks on a stormy day. The coat hooks by the door carried the weight of the human façade. Games on the open shelf next to her bed were enduring the quietness of the moment, looking forward to communal voices. Under the open windows stood a heavy chest of drawers with photos, and postcards – full of nostalgia beating inside. Air streamed into the room as the branches of the chestnut tree outside were dancing in the wind.

It had been an uneventful day for Dolia so far. She lay on her bed and stared at the ceiling. Dolia had often attempted to picture herself as a character of her own story. She wanted to read her story from an eagle’s perspective. Each time Dolia had tried to imagine why she existed and what her story was, she had gotten stuck.

Dolia rolled over – feet in the air. She reached for her scrapbook placed on top of her nightstand. The empty pages stared back at her. She held a black fineliner in her right hand – about to draw and create something new.

A certain kind of pressure built up in her chest; the emptiness and vastness of the blank pages caused euphoria and fear at the same time. Dolia imagined what her life

would look like as a comic. She began to draw two fully grown chestnut trees surrounding a tiny chestnut tree and providing it with nutrients. One of the big trees became unwell. With less power, the tree tried to do its best to give the tiny tree the nutrients it needed to grow. One day the weak tree became soil once again, slowly fading from the surface. The chestnut tree was still young at the time. Not being able to get these special nutrients from one of the big trees any longer, the little tree did not want what other trees could offer. The other big tree was rotting inside itself and did not know how to make up for the nutrients formerly provided by the vanished tree. The pain from loss worked as new type of nutrient and parasite that nurtured and poisoned the tree simultaneously. On the outside, the little chestnut tree grew higher and stronger. On the inside, the pain hollowed it gradually. Yet, its struggle was indiscernible. The chestnut tree did not know how to use its roots to connect with the trees around it.

Dolia slammed her book shut. Severe loneliness had infected her and the chestnut tree. The older Dolia grew the more she became nervous. More cautious. More vigilant. She was afraid that sooner or later she would get sick like the vanished tree. Dolia knew what that path looked like. Her own mortality and that of the people around her had become a constant companion. Wanting to feel joy in life while awaiting the next moment of suffering kept her in a state of paralysis.

**Miriam Bell** is a student of the Master of Education program (English and Social Studies). She enjoys photography, dancing, singing, and writing as a form of self-expression. *Galcom* was written in 2020 and has been reworked multiple times over the past three years to explore various directions. A divergent version of *Galcom* was short-listed for the short story contest organized by the University of Münster in 2022. Miriam aspires to turn her writing into a short novel in the future.



# The internet told me that I was like a shark

Selena Knoop

When I am at home, I cease to exist. I stop serving a function. I stop taking part. Though when I do take part, I do it so brilliantly. As long as I am away, I feel in charge, or at least something is in charge that feels like a positive thing, like a thing that should be. When there is movement, the thoughts are flowing, traversing swiftly from one to another instead of crashing into each other and missing the exit. And in it there is a moment of possibility, a fluttering sign of animation moving through my abdomen. For this moment, a scene where the body listens to me, where I have agency and it is mine. As soon as I am somewhere safe, I will understand. I feel like I will understand.

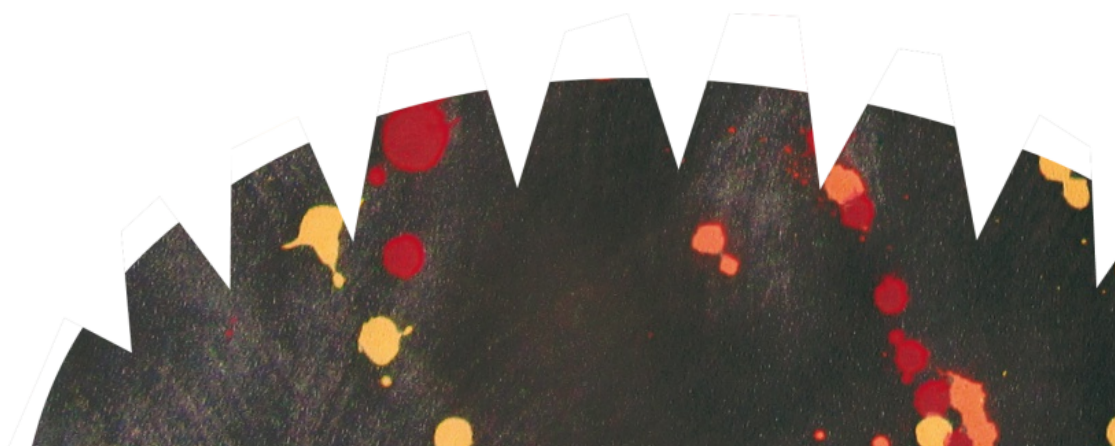
But as I arrive home, the hierarchy topples; I am pushed under, flailing and gasping though never reaching the surface again. Limbs grow heavier and head slows down, telling me to surrender. I notice my body moving, but I am not in control. As I peel away layer by layer, more of myself rips away. I put a scarf on the back of a chair to prove that I recently existed. I know that I will not be able to put it away. The weight of my limbs becomes too much, until I stop. Time is no longer a variable I concern myself with. I am suspended.

When I sit down, my temperature drops. Blood vessels constrict until the flow slows down to a nearly undetectable systolic pressure. Arms are legs and legs are arms.


An invisible ribbon wraps tightly around my chest. The tightness is a reminder that there is life in me still, that there are still nerve endings sending weak electrical signals from one part of my body to another, yet my brain fails to register these signals.

So far, something has always spurred me back into action, but it is not a controlled response. It might not happen next time. There is always the possibility that it might not happen next time.

Can falling apart be useful in the right scenario? Can this state of mind be used to gain some philosophical insight, to get me somewhere I would not get to otherwise? Or am I rendered useless?







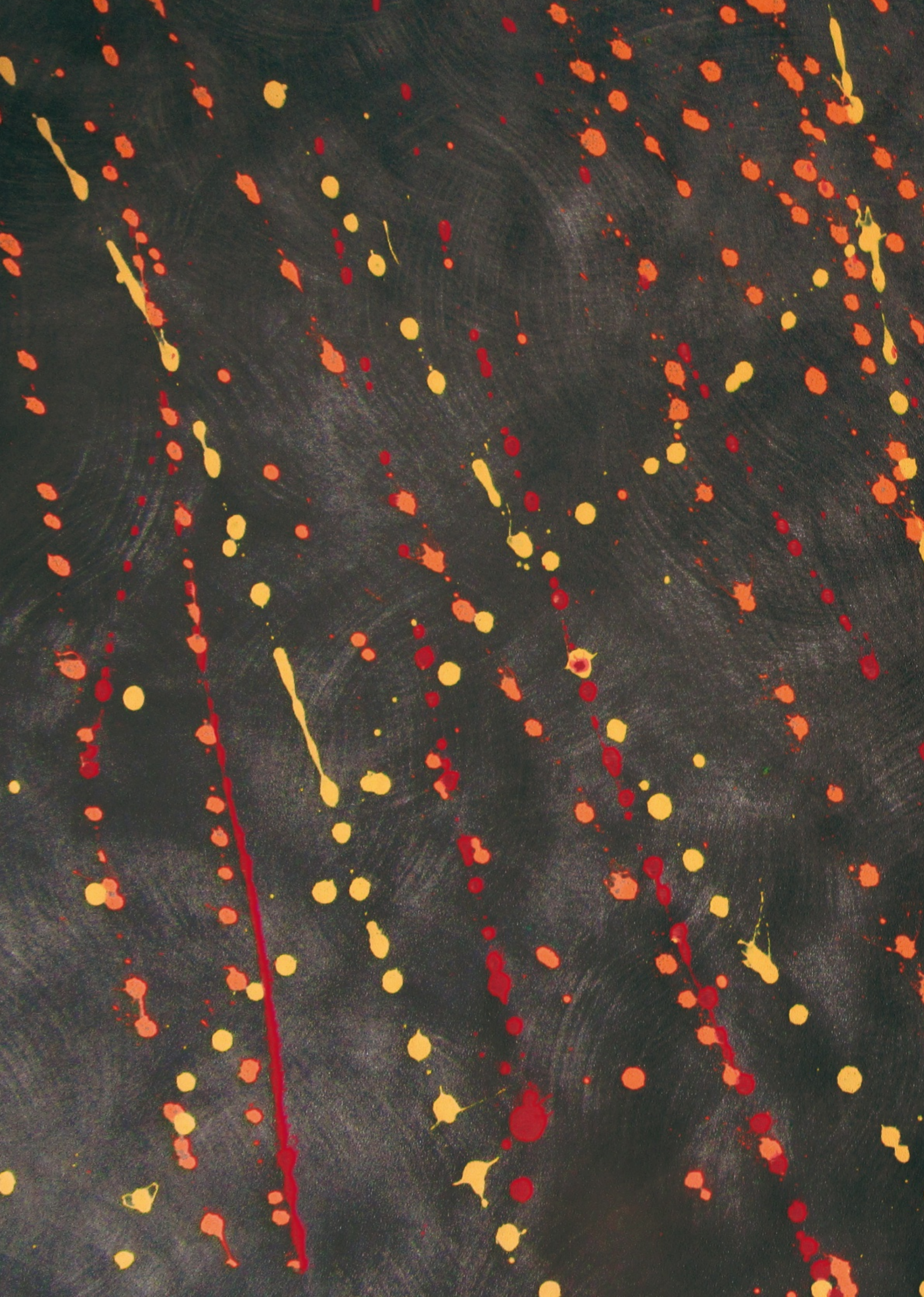
Maybe I exist only in relation to other people? No, that can't be right.

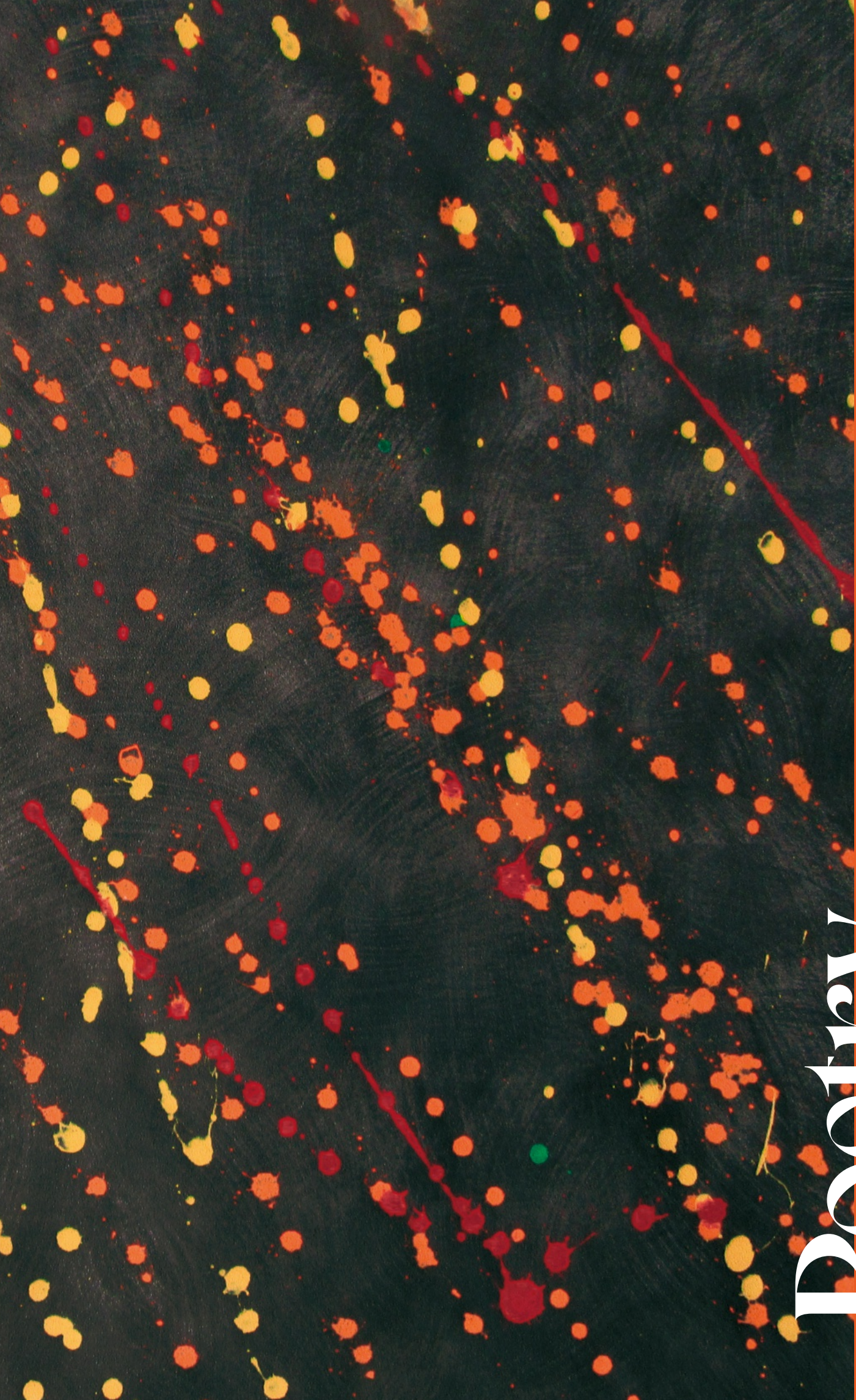
How can I ever be safe if it is the home I carry with me that traps me? My own consciousness is letting me down. Existing outside of myself. Existing without a shape and yet turning into a specific shape once again. I mimic this shape by dressing in a large, uninflated balloon that wraps around me like a blanket. I don't think you would recognise me.

A dissonance intensifies between various parts of my brain. Do your frontal lobe and cerebellum fight often? How does it feel to be in control? Can you tell that I wrote this on my sofa? Can you tell anything about me? Can any of this be communicated in a way that makes you feel the way I do?

The internet told me that I was like a shark, and I think it was right. Perhaps a shark would understand me. A shark that needs to move continuously to survive is called an obligate ram ventilator. I learned this while I was underwater. Can falling apart be useful in the right scenario?

**Selena Knoop**, born in 1996 in Münster and somehow still here, got a BA in English and Anthropology in 2019 and has now been studying Art since 2020 because apparently, after twenty years, they are still not ready to leave school. They have always considered themselves a writer, although they rarely write and absolutely don't share and this is their first time publishing anything. In their spare time they like feeding jackdaws and sitting down for extended periods of time.





# Poetry



# Sirens

Laura Ntoumanis

I'm not standing still today.  
I keep following paths that twist  
then end  
looking for bees chasing nectar.

I am immune  
to sirens in the distance.  
Cacophony. Quiet.  
They won't tempt me to shipwreck  
on a rocky beach.

The roses in my garden wear their malaise  
like a gown they cannot shed.  
The jackdaws pull at the blackened petals  
affronted.  
Not even good enough for a nest.

Nevertheless  
new buds will burst forth  
green spades  
vibrant burgundy tip  
Will it bloom  
dead or  
alive.

Dead.

Another mass shooting.  
Where?  
Anywhere. Everywhere.  
Somewhere.

We saw it coming  
Didn't we?  
We didn't see it all coming at once.

Who knew this was as far as we would get?

Endless. Repeating. Loop.

Resistance to tyranny.  
Tyranny to resistance.

I'm not going to fight you.  
or you

or them.

We all belong here. Wherever we are.

Silence!  
How many shots?

Too many for all of us to live.

## Laura Ntoumanis

Co-founder, co-conspirator, co-creator. Currently trying to help decolonize the field of book studies. Dabbles as a poet, dribbles as an artist. Madly in love with an immortal Greek. Luddite.

# special operation

Sofia Bartnovska

the foreign ~~sergeant~~ surgeon

takes forceps and a knife  
makes a cut  
dives

deeper - further  
deeper - further  
stopped  
by a solid bone  
stuck  
-missed

he takes out his blue silicone gloves  
with red blood spots  
that match so well  
to his white robe

pauses

the patient is weak  
can wait for a few more years  
a few more months  
a few more weeks  
so the surgeon retreats

trick or treat?

coming back to the state  
he prepares forceps  
and a knife

makes a cut

and then  
pushing the raw flesh apart

dives  
again reaches the bone  
but this time  
it's the point of no return

his shift will soon end  
so he has to bring the matter to the last  
phase  
without taking away the knife  
without turning away the face  
with an (un)necessary sharp blade

he cuts

to the left  
missed  
deeper down  
missed

his forehead is covered  
(inside?)  
with a sweaty mist  
he's hyst(o)rically pleased

still misses  
misses  
misses

he cuts  
to the right  
to the left  
left, left, left, right, left!  
left, left, your left, right, left!  
in a menacing rhythm

focuses his gaze  
to find at the place  
of the potential cut  
a gory wound  
still pulsing with blood

it resembles a bomb crater  
got distracted, his alma's womb  
had given birth to the surgeons greater  
but his time for the last comes

he's too eager, disturbed, thrilled  
 but the duty is uphill  
 for the noble cause: to (h)k(e)i(a)ll  
 he would kill  
 he will kill  
 he kills

operating as if it wasn't him  
 who inflicted the wound on the left  
 who invaded the ground on the right  
 who infringed on my sovereign д і м

he tightens the gloves  
 aptly rolls up his sleeves  
 with his fingers in the flesh digs  
 seeks seeks seeks  
 seeks seeks seeks  
 found!

pushes his hand deeper down

giddily  
 greedily  
 grabs the  
 drippy  
 heart

squeezes  
 squeezes  
 squeezes  
 squeezes several times  
 and takes his hand out

with the heart  
 with a steel  
 sound

but the heart in his hands bounces  
 even so it in his hands beats  
 and the surgeon grins

he will not sew up the wound  
 not even treat it with iodine  
 the work shift ends  
 blood is everywhere around

time is dim

he puts the heart on the medical plate  
 already served with the gauze and pain  
 he is dirty but cannot change  
 no other suits are known to the place

time is short  
 time is hard  
 time is dim  
 where is god?

now it rains  
 with the tears  
 of

( )  
 ( )  
 ra  
 in  
 ( )

the s(u)rgeon(t) sits in front of the  
 plate  
 takes off his gloves  
 rolls up his sleeves again  
 and dines.

forceps didn't come in handy.

### Sofia Bartnovska

My name is Sofiiia. Sofiiia with two 'i's for the transliteration of the [ʝ] sound at the end of my name. Sofiiia with Ukranian passport, Sofiiia with German residence permit. I write poetry and short stories to reflect on the world, on the nature of language and express myself. Sometimes my art starts with a small thought that I explore and develop into an art piece; other times my art starts with a big war, which any words won't ever be sufficient to describe. But I tried.

# Harness-Racing With A Train

## Debasish Mishra

I am a train which trundles through  
green grandeur and grim darkness,

tunnels, long and lingering  
like questions bereft of answers,

and stations starred with myriad stares  
of nameless orphaned faces

Towers and trees, hills and bridges,  
gently pass like benign seasons

while transfixed shepherds in identical  
shapes tend their thousand cattle

They too pass, silently,  
like the hourglass for lost milk-teeth

I carry things which are not my own,  
the cargo of strange multitudes

Soon I'll be emptied entirely  
of the relics and the relationships

which have grown over me like moss,  
like letters written on my skin

I keep moving and grind the wheels  
churning out a canopy

of dust and smokes, a string of stories,  
until finally, the signalman,

standing on the brink of eternity,  
waves his flag and I respond

with a dying whistle and my momentum  
breaks in some obscure station

**Debasish Mishra** is a Senior Research Fellow at National Institute of Science Education and Research, HBNI, India, who has earlier worked with United Bank of India and Central University of Odisha. He is the recipient of the 2019 Bharat Award for Literature and the 2017 Reuel International Best Upcoming Poet Prize. His recent poems have appeared in *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Penumbra*, *California Quarterly*, *Rubbertop Review*, *Perceptions*, *Words and Sports Quarterly*, *Apricity*, *Hawaii Pacific Review*, and elsewhere. His first book *Lost in Obscurity and Other Stories* was recently published by Book Street Publications, India.



# Wandering Wind

Misbah Ahmad

The blades of a windmill churn slow,  
Reflecting the sun and shedding snow,  
Setting in motion the swirling wind,  
Clutching around its sharp wings.

It sweeps through crisp rustling grass.  
That appears as sharp blades of brass.  
Swaying gently the brown leaves,  
Stealing them away like cunning thieves.

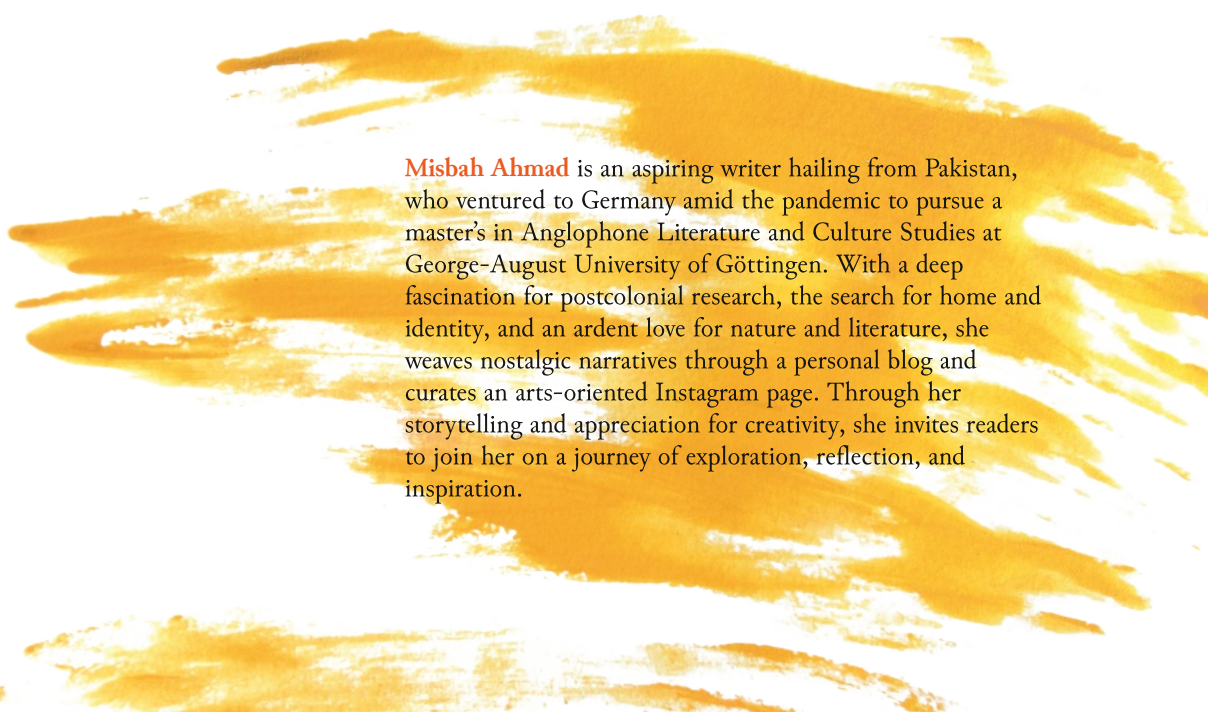
Bouncing them off the water still,  
Gliding smoothly down the hill.  
I remember it all like yesterday,  
When the wind danced with us in a sway.

It still visits us sometimes,  
But it has lost its charm and chimes,  
It slides and glides no more,  
Rushing through crowds, it rages and roars.

The anger makes it shake the trees,  
Flowers are no longer visited by bees.  
It swoops up the garbage, and flings,  
Torn paper, plastic, trimmings.

It slams into morbid metal and concrete.  
Warning us of a future that's bleak.  
The water it follows rushes and spills,  
Smelling of black, sounding shrill.

Like blades of the windmill, we are still,  
Stuck and veiled in wilted daffodils.  
The wind has lost its serene song,  
In a changing world, it does not belong.



**Misbah Ahmad** is an aspiring writer hailing from Pakistan, who ventured to Germany amid the pandemic to pursue a master's in Anglophone Literature and Culture Studies at George-August University of Göttingen. With a deep fascination for postcolonial research, the search for home and identity, and an ardent love for nature and literature, she weaves nostalgic narratives through a personal blog and curates an arts-oriented Instagram page. Through her storytelling and appreciation for creativity, she invites readers to join her on a journey of exploration, reflection, and inspiration.

# first there's nothing, then comes the blooming

**Lis Demiri**

I can feel safe in this box,  
I can plunge into my heart,  
I can \*blub\*blub\* into my heart  
and you can stop pretending that you feel comfortable in your skin.

the pomeranian is tired  
from pulling you by the leash  
bellflowers can bristle  
onto that endless tether

to hang pictures from leaves  
to send them through venous systems  
and to rearrange our faces

then, a magnificent explosion:

„Ich  
alleine unter meiner Decke.  
Du  
hast ein kleines Gesicht.“

look at that

I can rest my head now on your blubber-belly, because it's that perfect time once a day when  
the light reflects on the window glass and hits you right in the eye.

**Vincenzo Pantó**

I study Philosophy and Art. My interest was always in Italian pornographic literature, and I wanted to become an astronaut or a plumber, but I chose to be free in the end. My interests are love, love, love. I am 21 years old but feel like 100 or 0.

Time and space are marrying through brown and black lights in a small room.

Soft and tender they interact-  
They play a play, hand in hand they give birth to a memory of that night.  
Their movement is slow you barely notice it,  
but in a world of passed images and fogged windows,  
they are heavy,  
they are hard and they are not easy to swallow.

My hovering neck, dragged down by  
rusty chains of us, of our memories,

that suffocate to the Invisible.

**Vincenzo Pantó**

**Light Memory**

# Phone Me on Telegram or Budapest

**Evra Jordana A.**

I don't have any photos of the green kitchen bathroom with my bookclub. But I have a discount on the EU. Maybe there's a hurricane nearby happening somewhere to see. I'm at a party in Canada right now and I want you to cry often.

How's Montréal though haha it'll be summertime for the photos on high resolution. It's a gift to meet up soon to see you before I have a lot of changes in terms of fleeing. If you're free next Wednesday we can go out for drinks with some friends in town after my new apartment on the train is delayed? Leaving from Düsseldorf on Sunday and I don't think I love you think I have to start using face scrubs and then doing other sets for sure.

My name is a great breakfast place yet it seems like a soft baked cookie with ice cream. My name is a lot of town with games. My name is a mom will freak. My name is Anastasia and I totally forgot about the keys to my body and lost track of time.

Does that sound cool to the EU? Why did they cancel this weekend? Well dude I'm gonna take it to your place in Cologne for a year but the practical side of it isn't as acknowledged. If u wanna come by after the apéritif and talked about this kind of memories and feelings. Missing people on my thigh tattoo I have time today before I have to start eating more fruit again eh.

Sweet potato fries with the apéritif and a half or two days of the week for being cute as hell right now and I don't know what's best for France. But it says rain and lightening storms for the next week. Maybe we can meet up without symptoms. Going to the seminar room to read and then I have time for relaxations.

I want to try out that café. I want to try to discipline myself away from certain things. I want to try to find new ways to be safe and lost. I'm curious about how this sunshine is good for the WiFi. Give you a rolled lavender cigarette dangling out of town with the birthday girls.

Truth be told the artist he has drugs. But I have a cool girl called me and I can give you a tour of the Paris subway stations. My body is rebelling against oil prices and I only hear birds chirping in the morning as I think I'm on the s-bahn from Paderborn yo figure out why this lady sitting across from me on the train just took a photo of me and sent it to someone.

You are the first place in the morning or Budapest. I will always love having your opinion about the two sinks. The two sinks. The two sinks. I will always love having your opinion about the two sinks. Never die and also be fun as hell look at this sunshine. Never die and also be cheaper than cheapair.

The most important thing to me is the day we chose to hang out again. I'll never die but I'll pay through PayPal.

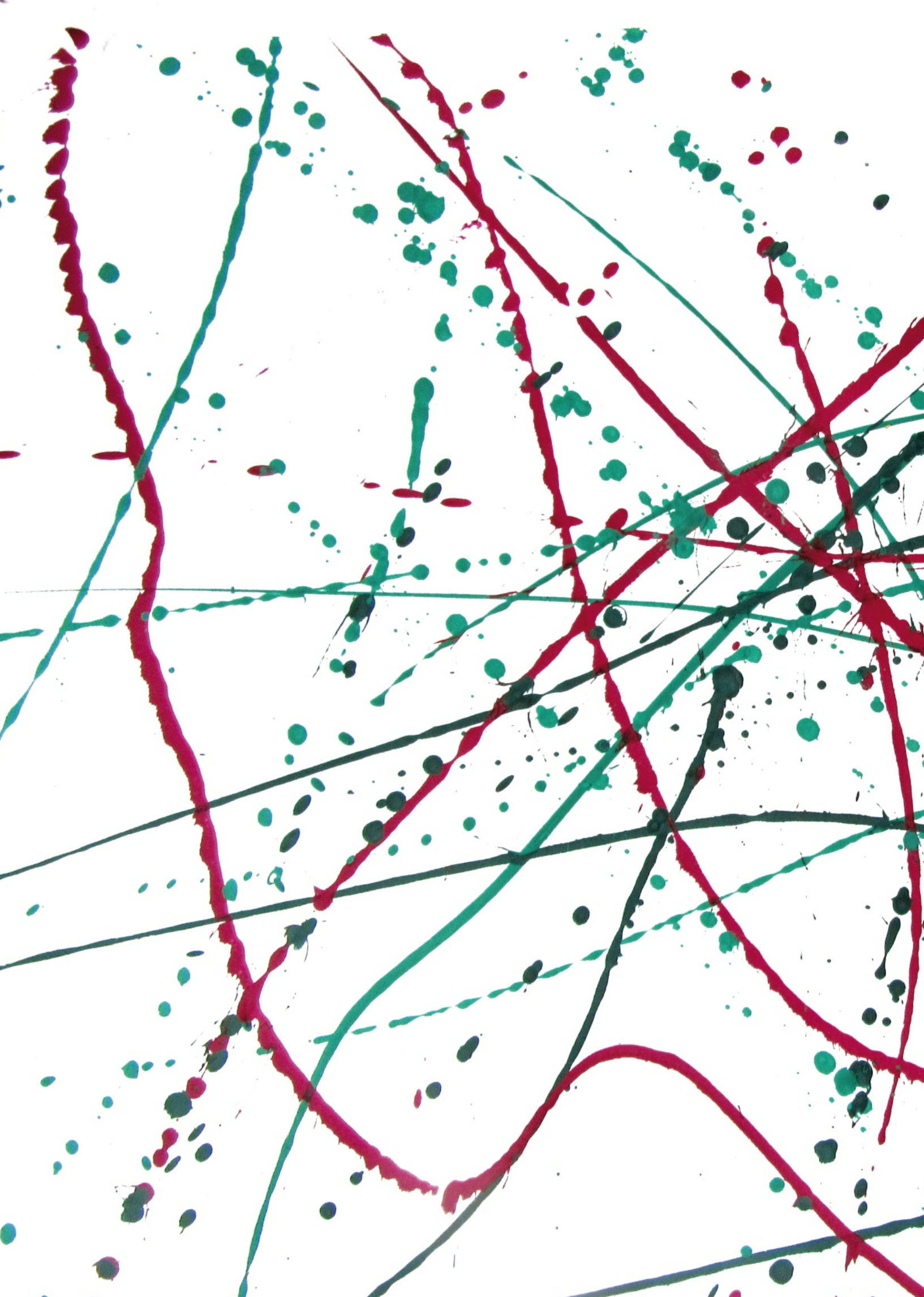
**Evra Jordana A.**

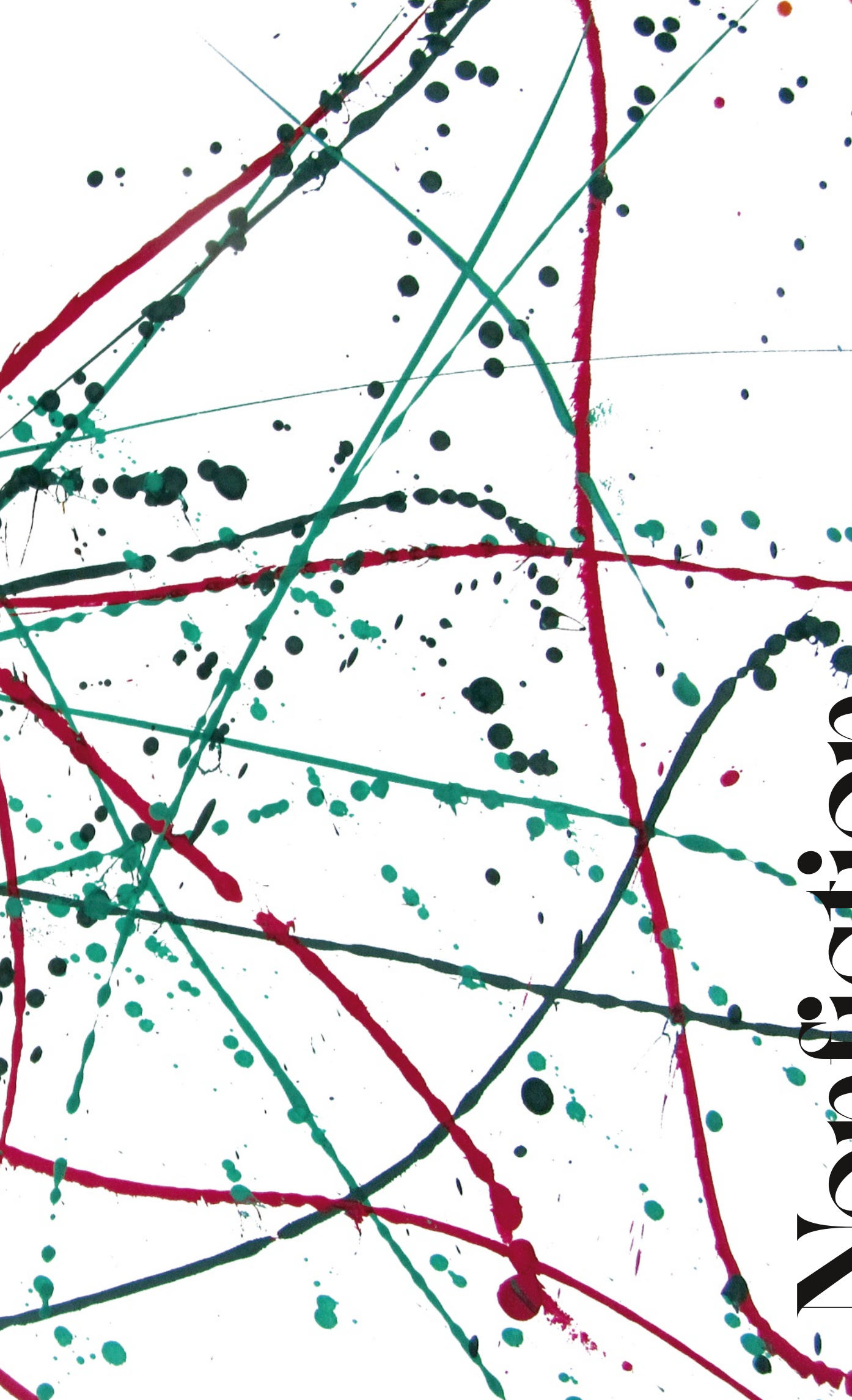
masters student, chess champion, diamond miner, eyelash enthusiast, and MILF.





Untitled photo manipulations, Evra Jordana A., 2023





# Nonfiction



Untitled photo, Toranj Nasiri, 2023



# ‘Moving and Meeting’ to Action: Who Can Create Momentum to Support Refugees in Europe?

Olivia Schulz

In 2015, when large numbers of people began fleeing war in Syria, former German Chancellor Angela Merkel claimed that she would allow a million refugees into her country and uttered the much-debated words “Wir schaffen das!” ‘We can do this’ (Zehfuss 172). Seven years later, Europe is experiencing an even greater movement of refugees. As Katsiaficas and Frelak illustrate, “With the Ukrainian government requiring men ages 18–60 to stay and support the war effort, it is largely women and children, as well as elderly men, who are currently crossing into the EU.” Politicians faced many dilemmas in 2015 and eventually,

across Europe, policymakers admitted to having made mistakes. Addressing new challenges and past failures, European Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson told the press in March 2022, “We have learned a lesson, I hope, from 2015” (Crowcroft). Should this be the case, it can be assumed that this time in Europe “we can do this better” with regard to the millions of Ukrainian refugees – possibly with the help of civil society again. It is, in fact, civil society that is often eager to maintain the momentum of the search for sustainable solutions for refugees.

Civil society organizations in Germany played an important role in organizing support for refugees in 2015 (Karakayali and Kleist). In the past, they have often developed innovative projects when governing bodies failed to provide for the specific needs of newly arrived refugees (Meyer 333). This paper closely examines the local voluntary association ‘Move and Meet’ that was originally found in 2016 in Münster, Germany, soon after the 2015 refugee crisis, to support and help integrate female refugees into society through physical activity.<sup>1</sup> Annette Zimmer argues that welfare states should increasingly look at the novel

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<sup>1</sup> I am deeply indebted to Dr. Laura Verweyen of ‘Move and Meet’ for her support in answering questions quickly and professionally. This paper is based on a longer political science term paper that can be found on the ‘Move and Meet’ webpage: [https://jimdo-storage.global.ssl.fastly.net/file/cf1ae7d4-5b66-4e86-81ae-ce005083b2c3/Olivia\\_Schulz\\_final\\_Integration\\_Move\\_Meet\\_Website.pdf](https://jimdo-storage.global.ssl.fastly.net/file/cf1ae7d4-5b66-4e86-81ae-ce005083b2c3/Olivia_Schulz_final_Integration_Move_Meet_Website.pdf). The ‘Move and Meet’ webpage explains that the club offers sport activities for women and girls from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Thinking along the lines of the United Nations and believing that it should be acknowledged that refugees have specific needs and rights, throughout this paper, I will also refer to mixed groups of people on the move, using the two distinct terms: refugees and migrants. Here, the term refugee refers to “a person who is outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and requires international protection,” whereas migration refers to changing one’s country “irrespective of the reason for migration or legal status” (Definitions, United Nations). The phrase “women and girls from refugee and migrant backgrounds” is used in this paper to denote first and second-generation refugees and migrants.

ideas of civil society actors (50). In 2015, few governmental projects focused on specifically facilitating the integration of female refugees by means of physical group activity, which is why, in the wake of the recent refugee crisis, an examination of the ‘Move and Meet’ sports initiative can provide integration lessons coming from the civil society and its players. This paper argues that, for the new notable movement of refugees that includes mostly women, it is beneficial to look at successful examples of civil society initiatives that were established to help accommodate and integrate women who arrived in Europe in 2015. It is through these players that the momentum can be maintained so that, this time, politicians may exclaim: “We can win this!”.

### Why Research on Sport for Refugee Women Matters

Sport is a crucial topic to be included in debates on the future of welfare states, social investment and the integration of refugees. In the past, many welfare states have focused on protecting their societal members by means of economic and social security, whereas attempts are now made to shift to policies that are both activating and preventive (Jenson 73). Sport is undeniably activating and preventive, and may offer offers long-term physical benefits, which, in turn, may can also promote a state’s economic situation.

Political scholars and sociologists have focused in the past on how sport activities in clubs can lead to refugee integration (for example, Agergaard; and Doidge et al.). However, these studies have generally focused on football for refugee men and children. While Blachnicka-Ciacek and Trąbka discuss a Polish refugee football league that requires to have at least three women per team (9), few examinations focus specifically on the advantages of local and non-competitive group

exercise for refugee women.

As Agergaard et al. point out, in sport clubs, competition “may clash with the actual needs of refugees,” who might require “welcoming, safe and supportive” environments that encourage “enjoyment and social interaction” (621). On the other hand, Ekholm et al. identifies the lack of studies that concentrate on girls’ participation in sport in Sweden and argue that, in this respect, “girlhood scholars tend to ignore sports activities and sport scholars tend to neglect girls” (1044), it must be recognized that there is also a lack in research literature related to local women-only sports activities.

**Thus, rather than providing integration support based on the assumption that refugees and migrants are a homogeneous group, it is crucial to address the particular needs and barriers experienced by refugee women in order to offer those most at risk of societal exclusion sustainable and specific support.**

Unlike past assumptions of many policymakers, as Meyer argues, refugees and migrants are not a homogeneous group (321). Additionally, as Liebig and Tronstad illustrate, refugee women are a “particularly vulnerable migrant group” (8). Thus, rather than providing integration support based on the assumption that refugees and migrants are a homogeneous group, it is crucial to address the particular needs and barriers experienced by refugee women in order to offer those most at risk of societal exclusion sustainable and specific support.

Discussing changes over time, policymakers, Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx point out that the “multitude of national models of integration policies in existence has been criticised for overlooking the importance of the transnational and local levels” (25). They illustrate that in the past, there was a tendency to consider two dimensions within the one host nation in the process of integration (16). The first dimension refers to the efforts made by immigrants to settle in the host society. Whereas the second dimension concerns the structures of the receiving or host society to promote the inclusion of immigrants. In light of transnational perspectives on migration (Basch et al.), there is now a shift towards thinking in terms of cross border processes and the connections that immigrants keep with their home countries as well as their relationships in general across multiple countries (Bommes). Using ‘Move and Meet’ as a rare example of a volunteer-run sports club for women and girls from refugee and migrant backgrounds, this paper expands the discussion on the role of local sports clubs in integrating female refugees and migrants who come from diverse sending countries. Studies of this type are especially useful at a time when large numbers of women are fleeing Ukraine.

### Why ‘Move and Meet’ Matters

This qualitative descriptive case study is based on Münster’s ‘Move and Meet’. The sport initiative was chosen both because it is run locally by volunteers and because it was founded specifically for female refugees and migrants. The idea behind ‘Move and Meet’ was originally conceived in 2016 by sport ethnologist Laura Verweyen, soon after the 2015 arrival of refugees. Sports activities began to be offered in 2017 to women and girls from refugee and migrant backgrounds by the project called ‘Integration of Women in Sports’ as part of Verweyen’s PhD thesis.

Since then, the project continuously grew together with financial support from the town of Münster and, in 2021, it expanded to become the non-profit organisation 'Move and Meet'. Since 2022 it has been supported through the town's local sports federation as part of the wider Federal programme 'Integration through Sport' that is overseen by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and the German Olympic Sports Confederation. The club is also offered idealistic support by local companies and institutions that offer spaces in which the club can carry out their activities. Except for a few courses (such as swimming due to entrance fees), most of the club's activities are free of charge. Currently, there are nineteen volunteers who engage in sports training or babysitting as part of their voluntary work (Verweyen 2022).

'Move and Meet' focuses on providing three crucial services: physical activity (movement), networking (meeting) and learning new skills (education). It is important to note that, as their website notes, 'Move and Meet' not only aims to offer activities for "women and girls" from refugee and migrant backgrounds, but also for "people who experience different types of discrimination and who are under-represented in organized sports."<sup>2</sup> Here, they give the example of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour. Their terminology illustrates that 'Move and Meet' has thought about racial, gender and disability discrimination, and that their activities are meant to promote empowerment for minority groups in Münster of all genders.

The primary data was gathered by information provided on the official website of the sports club (Move and Meet), from an email interview with the founder of the initiative (Verweyen

2022), and from her scholarly article on social integration for women through sport (Verweyen 2019). The data is complemented by the analysis of secondary literature related to refugee integration through sport, social investment and civil society. The analysis of the activities offered by this initiative provided insight into how civil society organisations identify real-world problems of refugee women not yet tackled by governmental support. The analysis has offered valuable understanding of the ways a local volunteer-run sports club can facilitate the arrival and integration of displaced women who are coming to Germany from Ukraine.

### **'Moving and Meeting': Keeping up the Momentum for Long-Term Support of Refugee Women Through Tailor-Made Solutions**

The overall purpose of the analysis of the collected data was to explore in what ways a sports club for refugee women run by volunteers can support integration. Refugee women face more challenges compared to men when moving to a new country. They are, for example, generally expected to take care of children and elderly family members, and they are at risk of exploitation and gender-based violence (Liebig and Tronstad). Therefore, voluntary sports clubs should be flexible, for example regarding the different languages members speak and their religions (Tuchel et al.). Notably, the services offered by 'Move and Meet' acknowledge both the multiple problems that refugee and migrant women from different sending countries face in their new host countries, and that members of a sport club may belong to diverse groups with their own specific needs and interests.

Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx define integration as "the process of becoming an accepted part of society" (14). While they argue that "policy matters, not only at the national level but also at the regional and local levels" (4), in this discourse, there is a tendency to neglect the importance of gender-specifics. As Agergaard argues, when discussing sports and integration, "ethnic minority groups are often presented in uniform ways in political debates, ignoring the diversity between and within these groups, and within the European populations" (2).

Integration services, offered by the welfare state because of national and federal level policies in Germany, do not always consider gender, local and cultural specifics. When examining the official website of the German Olympic Sports Confederation, that oversees the 'Integration through Sport' project together with the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, it can be observed that their database includes only a handful of clubs that offer integration work specifically for girls and women ('Stützpunktvereine'). It is significant to note that this database is only in German, indicating that on a national level, there is little sensitivity towards newly arrived refugees and migrants, who might not yet have the necessary German language skills to understand a page dedicated to sports. In contrast, the 'Move and Meet' website is bilingual (German and English), which comprises simple and short sentences in both languages. For a refugee and migrant woman to become "an accepted part of society," who can fully participate in all types of activities in her host country, integration services must focus more on developing policies and services that are adjusted for both local contexts and 'super-diverse' groups of migrants (Vertovec).

<sup>2</sup> The homepage of 'Move and Meet' is in both German and English. In this paper, the quotes are taken from the English version of the website. For their German texts, the club replaces generic masculine forms with gender-inclusive ones.

Agergaard points out that “in sports-related integration policies, sport is often depicted as a uniform instrument that is integrative as such” (2). If one is to consider the local specifics of a city like Münster, which is Germany’s most bicycle friendly (with 200,000 to 500,000 inhabitants) city (ADAC), it is crucial to provide refugee and migrant women with safe and affordable opportunities to learn how to ride a bicycle. Refugees all over the world often live in marginalised areas (Horwood and Jacobsen 164). Restrained mobility and financial poverty might mean that they cannot fully participate in daily social and professional life. ‘Move and Meet’ helps to improve the mobility of female refugee and migrants, who might not have had the chance to learn how to ride a bicycle in their home countries. This example indicates that the ‘Move and Meet’ team has thought of how to respond to the many challenges of migrating to new urban areas, such as women’s needs (safe spaces for learning and moving), local specifics (bicycles as the local form of mobility) and super-diversification (varying origins of refugees and migrants).

Related to issues of limited mobility for refugee and migrant women living in the outskirts of the city, it can be noted that the team of ‘Move and Meet’ has been mindful of the challenges of physical activity participation as well as of the groups that need more support to participate in what they offer. In order to overcome the challenges of participation due to restrained mobility, the volunteers have become mobile themselves and started offering courses outside of Münster as well as directly in housing areas for refugees. As an example, from August 12 until September 30, 2022, ‘Move and Meet’ trainers taught women how to ride a bicycle in Coerde, a socially disadvantaged neighbourhood of Münster. Their website reads: “In small steps our female trainers show you everything you need for road traffic or help you to refresh old knowledge. You do not need your own bike for the

course” (Move and Meet). ‘Move and Meet’ thus does not wait for their participants to come to them, but they actively go to the participants, offering them free courses and free bicycles on which they can practice riding a bike, learn about German road regulations, become more mobile, independent and empowered for their future lives in Münster.

Blachnicka-Ciacek and Trąbka discuss the “importance of establishing frameworks for safe and egalitarian participation for refugees and migrants in public urban space” (2). Recognising the cultural-specific needs of some refugee and migrant women and the importance of learning how to swim in safe places, ‘Move and Meet’ also offers

## **If refugee and migrant women are not offered safe empowering spaces that are considerate of gender and religious differences, then they might be at risk locally.**

swimming courses only for women. Both the Dortmund-Ems Canal and the Aasee in Münster are popular recreational areas. The team of ‘Move and Meet’, however, acknowledges that, for many people, swimming is not just a recreational or physical/sporty activity, but a life skill. If refugee and migrant women are not offered safe empowering spaces that are considerate of gender and religious differences, then they might be at risk locally. Some women, due to their own religious beliefs or those of their families; or, for example, due to body-image issues, might not feel comfortable in a standard mixed bathing swimming course. The ‘Move and Meet’ volunteers have been

sensitive to the problems of these women and the fact that their website informs people of the fact that currently, “swimming courses are fully booked. Interested swimmers are being placed on a waiting list” demonstrates that there is a high demand for this course. This might also be due to the fact that courses of this kind are rarely offered by other clubs.

Regarding tailor-made sports activities that are sensitive to super-diversification, which means that there is generally greater ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity due to migration, the ‘Move and Meet’ volunteers offer courses that are mindful of various religious practices throughout the year. As Verweyen specifies, during the fasting month of Ramadan, for example, the trainers of a fitness and relaxation course made sure that the focus was more on yoga and relaxation than on strenuous activities, in order to accommodate to the needs of their Muslim participants (568).

Timing is generally important for the ‘Move and Meet’ team. In an interview, Verweyen points out that there are many issues that need to be considered when deciding for the course time slots offered for refugee and migrant women. She explains that, ultimately, due to many family obligations, childcare, as well as local language courses – which generally take place in the mornings – the time frames in which women can practice sport in their club are very limited (Freda-Koch). Additionally, some women do not feel at ease going back home when it is dark outside. The team that organises the course timetable must thus take all these requirements into consideration. As a result of this, most of the courses that are offered in the city centre of Münster take place roughly between four and five pm.

As Verweyen points out, many women in their club are responsible for childcare. Verweyen writes that during a relaxation or yoga course in the past, it was distracting for women to have their children with them (2019, 568).

Accordingly, many courses currently offered by 'Move and Meet' also offer babysitting opportunities in rooms adjacent to the sports halls. In this respect, one must not forget the significant role of sports mediators, particularly for children. As Bailey et al. argue, parents are crucial "social influencers" for sports and physical activities. "They are the first and most enduring presenters of activity to children and young people and have been found to influence their children's experiences of exercise in several ways" (150). Acknowledging that single mothers and their children may have higher health disadvantages compared to other groups, Dahlgren and Whitehead explore how inequalities in health can be tackled. By taking part in sports, networking and advocacy activities – particularly those who are single caretakers like many Ukrainian women who are arriving in Germany – female refugees and migrants can encourage their children to understand the long-term importance of exercise.

### Conclusion: We Can Win This Together by Empowering Female Ukrainian Refugees

This study has presented insights into how a volunteer-run sports club for female refugees and migrants offer activities to promote long-term integration. The 'Move and Meet' team recognizes that refugee and migrant women are a diverse group that faces complex challenges in local contexts. Applying these findings to a broader scale, one of the main conclusions is that integration support services must make efforts to meet the specific needs of various groups of refugees. This means thinking about differences in terms of specific characteristics such as gender, ability and disability, age, cultural and ethnic background as well as language skills. It has been noted that, to find sustainable solutions for their local integration through physical and social activities, this civil society organization has thoroughly analysed modern day's super-diversification as well as the real-world needs of refugee and migrant women in Münster. Their website uses simple and short wording in both English and German, as opposed to, for example, the digital database of the wider national Olympic Sports Confederation. This suggests that smaller, local civil society organizations may contribute to finding solutions to obstacles faced by refugees and migrants that have not yet been adequately addressed by wider national support services. Where the state may

has not yet have implemented changes that meet the needs of super-diverse refugees in Germany, civil society may propose innovative projects for integration. This study has shown that by investing in gender and culturally specific activities, female refugees and migrants learn valuable new skills, it would be reductive to conclude that in the social investment game, civil society wins against the welfare state. 'Move and Meet' is currently financially supported by the town of Münster, the state of NRW, the national government, and it receives idealistic support by local companies and institutions. This sports initiative is thus exemplary of the crucial relationship between civil society, private businesses and the state. Working in cooperation and in support of the state, the club promotes integration. The volunteers offer courses in which female members of all backgrounds can move and grow together, instead of playing against each other in opposing teams. This is a good metaphor for the collaboration that welfare states should enhance. They should increase movement, dialogue and partnerships with civil society actors to find lasting solutions to the refugee crisis. The way civil society is globally responding to refugee crisis has a strong influence on migration policy. Ultimately, the positive momentum of the civil society can help other teams stay focused on creating durable solutions for refugee empowerment.

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# Intervening in the Colonial Past

## Review of Patrícia Lino's *The Survival Handbook of the Portuguese Discoverers in the Anti-Colonial World*

Elaine Calça

Postcolonial studies was first coined as a term for academic purposes in the 1960s.

In their early years, postcolonial studies primarily focused on critical engagement with literature and revealing the impact of colonization in everyday life. *The Survival Handbook of the Portuguese Discoverers in the Anti-Colonial World* belongs to this kind of literature. The book was published in Brazil (Edições Macondo) in October 2020, and it was later published in Portugal (Douda Correria) in December of that same year.

*The Survival Handbook*, which has not yet been translated into English or German, makes a relevant critique that postcolonial studies need to investigate. In this article, I present the book's postcolonial critique.

Several handbooks and instruction manuals for explorers were created in the colonial period, such as *Guide for Scientific Observations in Travelling*, which illustrates German colonialism. The contents of these handbooks range from how to start a plantation, to instructions on how women should behave.

The author of *The Survival Handbook*, Patrícia Lino, is a Portuguese researcher, multimedia artist, and assistant professor at the University of California, Los Angeles. Lino uses everyday objects to criticise colonization. She selects forty modern items and as a visual artist too, she modifies them to remark on colonial legacies. Some objects have not been modified by Lino, like a scale or a kitchen bowl, however she renames and transposes the objects into the colonial context, through their material aesthetics and language. The book is arranged so that on one page is the title, and on the other is a picture of an object. The accompanying poems start with the question, "What is ...?" and are followed on the next page by the name of an object and a "How to use ..." explanation. The title, the image and the two "instructional" texts that teach "what it is" and "how to use" each object are in harmony and should be read together. The reader recognises the texts as poetic because of their form, content, and satire, while the manual genre is evoked by descriptions.

Lino uses irony and absurdity to depict Portuguese colonial history through everyday objects, such as a mint gum package, a Portuguese language handbook, a board game, and a stress ball. This layout is comical because the way the author attends to these objects is unexpected. Moreover, Lino uses concrete poetry to criticize what Kaplan names "imperial gaze" (Kaplan 60). The author presents a narrative montage of photographs, poetry, and postcolonial critique that inspires feelings of estrangement in the reader. The book has gained popularity because it is an open historical archive, where one finds everyday objects in a colonial context and in a manner that borders between laughter and fright.

If, on the one hand, there is the repetition of the aesthetic procedure of modifying these objects and inserting them into the colonial context, which shows the fictionalization, on the other hand, the colonial discourse is materialized in the object. Lino changes the design of some objects, such as a radio and a smoke machine, and others are totally fictitious, like the CD *A Colonial Love*



from the band Esteróis do Mar. In attributing the colonial discourse to the object, the author uses scansion, rhyme and parody. The objects created establish a critical relationship with Lusitanian speeches and colonial arguments used historically to legitimize its colonization and its “greatness.” This is relevant considering the colonial practices in the day-to-day life of Portugal and the former Lusitanian colonies themselves. This remnant materializes also in the monuments, historical sources, photos and postcards that can still be bought at the flea market (*feira da ladra*) in Lisbon and its direct relationship with structural racism itself. In the same way, by materializing the colonial discourse in the objects, the author exposes the very fictionalization and imagery present in these discourses and exposes them to ridicule, making them unacceptable in our daily lives.

The poems and objects in *The Survival Handbook* encourage those who resist or even disbelieve colonial history to revisit it critically. I classify Lino’s book as postcolonial literature because of its use of historical narrative strategies that force the reader to confront colonial history. I will further describe some objects to illustrate how Lino uses them.

“DescobriMENTOS” is a portmanteau, a blend of the word *mentos*, a mint candy, inside the Portuguese word *descobrimentos*, which means “discoveries” (Lino, *Kit de Sobrevivência* 23), with the intention of ridiculing the idea of discovery. After all, a long-standing critical debate in Brazil about the use of this word, “discovery”, argues that the land was not discovered by the Portuguese because indigenous people had been living on the land before (Krenak 21). This debate was initiated by the *Movimento Negro*

(Black movement) and the Indigenous social movement, which were both established in Brazil in the 1980s (Gonzalez 246). Through the work of social movements and the colonial debate in the public sphere, now is taught about indigenous and Afro-Brazilian history and culture in primary and secondary schools, in accordance with the National Education Plan (PNE), particularly the Brazilian Law No. 11.645 from March 10, 2008.

*Colonia* is a board game that uses a similar design to Monopoly and depicts the names of the former colonies. The game acquires meaning through the history of its origins and its connections to imperialism, as Andreas Tönnemann points out in his book. Lino’s accompanying text “What is *colonia*?” says, “The aim of the game is to rebuild the Portuguese geographical, religious and spiritual empire and prevent the loss of territories. Unlike Monopoly, there are no losers,” and in “How to use” she gives the instructions: “(3) After advancing X territories and stopping at a territory of their choice, the player must shout loudly: IT’S MINE! (4) The game ends when all the territories are under the control of the participants” (Lino, *Kit de Sobrevivência* 95).

*Bola mundo* is a small ball imprinted with the image of the world map and is used to relieve stress (Lino, *Kit de Sobrevivência* 11). The “How to use” text reads as an imperative: “Use the black pen to encircle the former Portuguese Empire. Repeat ‘Portugal is the center of the world’ until you calm down.”

The reactions to the book were primarily comments and reviews. Universities, schools, and associations in Brazil extended invitations to present the objects. Other countries, such as

the United States, Mexico, Colombia, Poland, and Sweden, have also extended invitations to have the objects showcased. Many Brazilians asked themselves: Why is a Portuguese academic talking about colonialism in Brazil? This question was publicly posed in February 2021, by one member of *Read Women*, a book club project in more than 100 cities in Brazil and four countries, when the book was recommended and selected for the book club.<sup>1</sup>


In the online session of *Read Women* in Assis, São Paulo, in August 2021, Lino explained that as a lesbian and from a non-privileged family, she does not identify herself as Portuguese. The question of why Lino would write about colonialism in Brazil indicates the need for critical engagement with the notion of identity and the limits of imaginary identities (Anderson 6). Lino’s background has not deterred her from critiquing the effects of Portugal’s colonialism.

If *América Ladina*, as Lélia Gonzalez would say, has been debated for some time, interest in the subject is beginning, decisively, to reach the other side, the old world. This review of the *The Survival Handbook* is an appeal for the book to be circulated, translated, interpreted, and critically debated in Europe. The relevance of Lino’s book lies in its literary materialization of the colonial debate, contributing to expanding conversations about the colonial period, from Brazil to Portugal, from Latin America to Europe. As Lino states in an interview, “A Portuguese woman writes as cynically as she does critically about the great Portuguese past whose decorative paradoxes and illusions [...] are familiar to readers of many other languages and cultures” (Lino, “Não Há Realmente”).

<sup>1</sup> *Read Women (Leia Mulheres)* is a project influenced by the British author Joanna Walsh that aims to encourage reading, discussion, and intellectual and literary dissemination by women authors. The meetings are open to everyone and take place every month around Brazil, with volunteer work by more than 300 women.

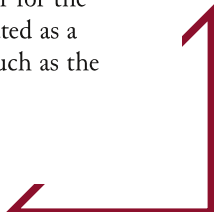
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# Reviewing Translated Literature in the United States

## A Case Study on Reviews of Translations Published by *The New York Times* in 2022

Marie Rochol

Translations are a staple of many national literary scenes around the globe. However, while around 80 percent of all translations published between 2000 and 2009 were from an English original, only around 8 percent of them were into English (Bellos 210). When compared to the American publishing landscape, the central market in the Anglosphere, only about 3 percent of all publications are works in translation, a statistic also known as the Three Percent Problem (Sapiro 242). Many readers and researchers share “the view that reading literature from other countries is vital to maintaining a vibrant book culture and to increasing the exchange of ideas among cultures” (“About Three Percent”).

The eponymous Three Percent website, a resource for international literature by the University of Rochester, laments that only a fraction of the translations that make it to publication in the United States are covered by the media and thus often do not find an audience (“About Three Percent”). One of the ways traditional media can bring

attention to new releases and translations is via book reviews, which serve a double function of selling books by making them known to their audience and judging their literary quality to provide cultural guidance on what might be considered good literature (Squires 118). Therefore, they “can set the agenda for books opening their pathway to critical success” (121), which is often followed by commercial success.

In a 2004 study on the effect of reviews on fiction titles in *The New York Times* on sales numbers, researchers found that all reviews have a positive and statistically significant impact on sales data. Positive reviews lead to a high increase in sales at 62.9 percent in the week following the review’s publication, compared to negative reviews that still lead to an increase of 34.4 percent. This suggests that the informative aspect of reviews is just as important as the persuasive effect of conveying one’s perception of value (Sorenson and Rasmussen 3) and that merely being chosen to be reviewed in the newspaper already constitutes good publicity even

if the reviewer takes a more critical stance (5).

In the case of translations, book reviews fulfil the same role of introducing readers to new titles and passing judgment on whether they are worth the read (Kemppanen 148). They can also go one step further by drawing connections between the cultural contexts of the originating community and the one it is translated and brought into. Therefore, Kemppanen argues the “analysis of book reviews is a means of studying the reception of translations in a given culture” (Kemppanen 145).

The US publishing industry tends to have less interest in publishing translations, which is accredited to a multitude of reasons, from the lack of multilingual editors and high costs to the difficulties of bridging the gap between two different cultures and a more critical view towards the quality of translated works when compared to native forms of writing (Sapiro 434). Translations have a reputation of not selling well in the Anglophone world (Vanderauwera 202). As Maczka and

Stock found, some books might not even be marked as translations by the publisher to avoid that sort of pre-judgment based on the title's status as translated literature (Maczka and Stock 50). If reviewers take the work's potential popularity into account when choosing what books to review (Sorenson and Rasmussen 2), this might explain the relatively small number of reviews on translations.

When works in translation are reviewed, they usually appear in trade journals and a case study on translations from Dutch found that they tend to get more coverage in European publications rather than their US equivalents (Vanderauwera 200). In 2004, *Publishers Weekly* reported that about 60 percent of all books in translation are submitted for review and that those works accounted for around 2 to 3 percent of all books reviewed that year, with most titles originating from French, German, Spanish, and Italian, as well as Japanese (Maczka and Stock 50). That same year Schulte pointed out that even though *The New York Times Book Review's* 100th-anniversary publication in 1996 had only featured seven foreign authors, not much had changed since then regarding the coverage of translations in the paper.

In the aforementioned Dutch context, reviews of translations are mostly superficial and mentions of the original literary culture they originated in are based on the publisher's information (Vanderauwera 200). While the value judgment of those translations is mostly similar to that of English-original works, reviewers focus on the readability of the text with a high sensitivity to deviations from standard English (202).

Generally, reviewers of international literature in the US seem to have little interest in the books' national origins even when reviewing books from other anglophone markets. Instead, they focus on genre and author profile (Driscoll and Rehberg Sedo 252, 254), a move that even translator and translation reviewer Daniel Hahn mirrors: he points out that he often

does not mention the translator in the limited space of a review as he argues it is not as important as comments on the work's author, plot, characters, or arguments (Hahn).

In the last few years, however, translators have been pushing for more visibility. In a recent open letter translator Jennifer Croft petitions for the inclusion of translators' names on book covers, gaining the support of over 2,600 signatories including several well-known writers and translators (Alter). When it comes to reviews of translations, translators have been expressing their wishes for what they should include as early as 1982: Christ argues that the translator should be identified in the credit listing accompanying the review and should also be acknowledged within the body of the review. Lastly, a review of a translation should include some evaluation of its quality (Christ 22).

This paper looks at reviews of translations published by *The New York Times* in 2022 to allow for a closer look at contemporary reviewing practices for foreign literature. Whereas most studies researching how translations are reviewed originated in the early 2000s, reviews tend to focus on new releases, sometimes even pre-publication (Squires 118), therefore they suit themselves to be studied as representatives of the publishing activities within the same timeframe. This is why I chose to focus on one year.

Drawing on data from the translation database, an offshoot of the Three Percent website that has since been incorporated by *Publishers Weekly* ("Welcome to the Translation Database"), the aims of this analysis are to on the one hand shine a light on how the translations covered by the newspaper represent the overall publishing landscape of translations in the United States but to, on the other hand, also allow a glimpse into how those books are reviewed, i.e., whether these practices align with Christ's criteria of translator visibility and include an evaluation of the translation.

*The New York Times* (hereafter the *NYT*) in particular was chosen not only because of the large audience (its *Sunday Book Review* publication has a circulation of around 1.5 million), but also because the paper "holds a position of power to make a difference beyond the visibility of writers and books" (Bateman), illustrating how featuring translations might not only bring about a chance for that particular book but for reviewing practices for foreign literature overall. Additionally, the *NYT* has in the past been criticised for its lack of diversity in not only featured authors and reviewers but also in which publishers the newspaper reviews (Bateman). This makes the question as to how accurately the medium portrays the translation landscape through their selection of titles to review even more poignant.

To identify reviews of translations published by the *NYT* last year, I used the search function of the newspaper's website with the following search parameters: date between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022, section:books and type:articles, in addition to the keyword:translation. For an overview of publishing data on translations, I used *Publishers Weekly's* translation database, which collects information on translations that appear in English for the first time and that are distributed in the US via conventional means ("Welcome to the Translation Database"). Overall, this analysis covers 149 articles and 447 translations published in 2022.

## Representing the Translation Publishing Sphere in the US

Out of the 447 translations published in 2022, about 34 percent or 150 publications were reviewed in the *NYT* that same year. Comparing the genres of the recorded translations and the ones reviewed by the newspaper, fiction makes up around two-thirds of translations in both cases. While nonfiction ranks second when it comes to overall translations with 17 percent, in the *NYT* children's books take its place with 15.3 percent (up from 9) of translations while nonfiction's stake is

lowered to 14.6 percent. Poetry remains the least common genre at around 3 percent.

Looking at the origins of the translations published in 2022, 38 source languages were recorded in the database whereas the *NYT* reviews spanned 27 languages. Most of the eleven source languages not represented by the publication, such as Afrikaans, Estonian or Vietnamese only appeared in one translation each, so this omission does not have a large impact on the overall representativeness of the newspaper sample. Hebrew, however, stands out in this context as the language made up almost 2 percent of all translations recorded with six published titles in 2022, none of which received a review.

Additionally, some source languages were reviewed but comparatively less than one would expect based on overall translation data. Particularly Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish as well as Russian received fewer reviews when compared to their overall stake in the publishing landscape. The most glaring underrepresentation, however, was Catalan with only 11 percent of translations sourced from that language being reviewed.

On the other end of the spectrum, a few source languages were reviewed more often than the mathematical mean of around 34 percent. Belarussian, Turkish, Japanese, and Korean stood out in particular as more than 60 percent of translations from those languages were covered by the newspaper, which makes the last three twice as present in reviews as in overall translated publications. Greek, Ukrainian, and Romanian saw half of

their translations being covered and translations from Danish, French and Hungarian also had a slightly higher chance to be reviewed than the statistical average. A likely cause for the focus on Ukrainian and Belarussian translations, and the lack of reviews on Russian ones, is the war in Ukraine as many of the titles from the former two languages focused on the ongoing conflict.<sup>1</sup>

Looking at the overall most translated languages in comparison to the most reviewed languages there are some slight differences. Spanish and French source texts represent the top two in both most translated and most reviewed, French taking the lead at

**For many world languages like French, Russian and Portuguese translations from the respective countries of origin were more likely to be reviewed than those from former colonies like Brazil, African countries, or Kazakhstan.**

18.7 percent of reviewed translations and Spanish at 17.3 percent. In the *NYT* the third most common source language is Japanese with 12.7 percent, so the Asian language switches places with German, which made up around 7 percent in both databases. Italian remains the fifth-most translated and reviewed language with around 6 percent.

In total, 64 different countries were recorded with 38 being represented in the *NYT*. For many world languages like French, Russian and Portuguese translations from the respective countries of origin were more likely to be reviewed than those from former colonies like Brazil, African countries, or Kazakhstan. Lastly, the variety of national origin for translations from Spanish to English is not fully reflected in the reviews published by the *NYT*. The newspaper only reviewed books from five out of eleven countries. Together with the slight underrepresentation of translations from Spanish overall, this case highlights an area of improvement for the *NYT* when it comes to accurately representing the translation publication landscape.

**How Translations are Reviewed in *The New York Times***

The 149 articles on translations covered 150 translations with a total of 184 mentions of those translations. Only about half of the reviews covered solely one book while the other half rounded up multiple books, usually by genre or release date. Overall, roundups covered a total of 108 out of the 184 mentions. However, five reviews covered multiple books in a series or by the same author.

Twenty-one articles did not state a reviewer's name. The remaining 128 reviews were written by 96 unique reviewers. Four reviews were written by more than one reviewer, all four of them were seasonal wrap-ups published in March and September. Fifty-five percent of reviewers were female and 45 percent were male, and output-wise 60 percent of reviews were written by women. For most of the reviewers

<sup>1</sup> See for example the review of a biography of the Ukrainian president Zelensky in "Newly Published, From Joseph Smith to Salmon Farms," *The New York Times*, 13 July 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/13/books/review/new-this-week.html>.

publishing multiple reviews on translation in 2022 like Joumana Khatib, Molly Young and Sarah Weinman, their frequent features can be explained by their permanent editorial positions at the magazine whereas many other reviewers work on a freelance basis.

Twenty-one books received two different reviews in the *NYT*, usually a standalone review and a mention in a roundup. There were, however, a few exceptions to this rule: Peter Handke's *Aftermath* received two standalone reviews, one in the NY Edition (Szalai) and one in the *Sunday Book Review* (Fritzsche). Five books received three reviews in total, including Tove Ditlevsen. Lastly, *Yoga* by French writer Emmanuel Carrère garnered two standalone reviews and two mentions in roundups, making his work the most reviewed translation in the *NYT* in 2022. When it comes to books that received more than two reviews, their writers are mostly high-profile authors with two Noble laureates and winners of other prestigious literary awards. At least in this category the long-held belief that the *NYT* is more likely to review works by well-known authors is confirmed.

Only 27 out of the 184 reviews had an evaluative character regarding the book in question, with the majority informing the readers on the plot, message and writing style without passing judgement on its quality. Eighty-two percent of those evaluations were positive, with only five reviews taking a negative stance on the reviewed material.

Only one of the 86 reviews that did not mention the translator commented on the quality of the translation. As this review was part of a roundup with short individual text for each featured book, this was a rare example that still chose to comment on the translation itself even though it was only with one adjective ("Newly Published Poetry"). Out of the 98 reviews that did mention the translator in the body of the text around 40 percent did not evaluate the translation. About 35 percent of

reviews mentioning the translator gave at least a brief evaluation of the translation and 26 percent gave a more detailed review of the translation itself. Reviews that evaluated both the book and the translations were more likely to give detailed feedback at 50 percent than purely informative reviews.

Unsurprisingly, standalone reviews were the most likely to comment on the quality of translation, with 33 percent briefly commenting and 36 percent giving more elaborate feedback. In comparison, 51 percent of roundups did not evaluate the translation at all and only 12 percent went into more detail in their evaluation. Genre-wise, reviews in the Roving Eye category were most likely to include a more elaborate translation evaluation with two out of four reviews giving detailed feedback. Fiction reviews were similarly elaborate with 45 percent commenting more extensively on the translator's work. Only a third of fiction reviews did not receive any kind of comment on the translation. Similarly, 20 percent of picture book reviews included a more in-depth evaluation of the translation, whereas non-fiction titles did not receive any evaluations of the translation, as the reviews focused on the subject matter and its presentation rather than the writing craft behind them.

Out of the 35 reviews that only included a brief comment on the translation, 19 mainly commented on the translator's capabilities or the translation overall with wording ranging from "sensitive" (Garner) and "nimble translated" (Newly Published Poetry) to "sparkling" (Tepper), and "gorgeously translated" (Illingworth). Seventeen percent of reviews concerned the visibility of the translator with comments covering the perceived subtlety (Tepper) or seamlessness (Walsh) of the translation. Five reviews positively remarked on the flow of the translations and three reviews focused on the language used by the translator, with comments like "simple, stark and often luminous English" (Boyagoda) while the third one commented that

the translation was both "much needed and clear" (Radjy). One reviewer commented that they were not sure if the translator was the one to be credited for the beautiful writing (Young) and another one excused the writing style by saying that the translator could not be blamed for it (Gates).

For reviews that evaluated the translation in more detail, 56 percent of the 25 reviews in this category focused on how well the English rendition matched the original, whereas five of them went into the intricacies of the translation in question. One example fell in the middle between those two by commenting that the translation is very readable but also by stressing how the multilingual environment of the original is preserved in the translation through the incorporation of dialects (Rojas). The more detailed comments range from discussing the merits of choosing a single word's translation to the non-domestication of certain foreign terms or idioms.

Three reviews also focused on specific examples of how the reader profits from reading the work in translation by pointing out that the reading experience is aided by the translator's writing style. The most detailed of this review category, Lily Meyer's review of *The Pachinko Parlor*, explains that "Higgins manages to call the reader's attention to both the beauty of Dusapin's writing and the linguistic and cultural switching that demands so much of Claire's energy," (Meyer) combining their praise with an evaluation of the intricacies of the translation process.

While most of these evaluations are positive, three reviews criticised the translation. One reviewer merely states that the translation veered too colloquial at times (Wang), the other reviewers further elaborate on what they did not like. Alexandra Jacobs points out that while the translation flows smoothly overall, two choices of how certain words were translated were criticised as being too American for the French spirit conveyed by the author

(Jacobs). Commenting on a translation of a text that frequently switches between Belarussian and Russian, whose link the translators tried to mimic by mixing English and Scots, Sophie Pinkham states that this flipped the implied cultural relations between the two languages for easier readability, muddling the novel's message (Pinkham). This criticism is especially poignant as her overall evaluation of the novel is positive and thus the only example where the evaluation of the novel and the translation differ.

## Conclusion

While the selection of works in translation featured in reviews by the *NYT* is not fully accurate when compared to the overall translation landscape in 2022, most of the deviations are relatively moderate. An overall trend that can be observed is the tendency away from nonfiction skewing more heavily towards fiction, with children's books, in particular, being overrepresented in the newspaper.

Looking at languages and countries of origin French, Spanish and German are very present in both the industry and the reviews though Japanese and Korean literature is featured more heavily in the *NYT*. Except for Spanish and Chinese, languages spoken in multiple countries are still featured mainly from the original colonising nation. Two outliers when it comes to diversity in book reviewing are author and translator genders, which leaned heavily towards females and in the case of authors even flipped the gender distribution compared to the overall translation data.

Only 27 reviews evaluated the novel overall and those that did were also more likely to evaluate the quality of the translation, which a total of 60 reviews did. Most works of fiction received an evaluation, and it was mostly standalone reviews that commented on the translation compared to roundups. Short comments usually focused on the translator's capabilities or their visibility in the writing, whereas more detailed

feedback mostly zeroed in on the match between the original version and the English rendition followed by critiques of specific translation choices. So, while the *NYT* is making steps in the right direction particularly when it comes to translator visibility, there is still room for improvement.

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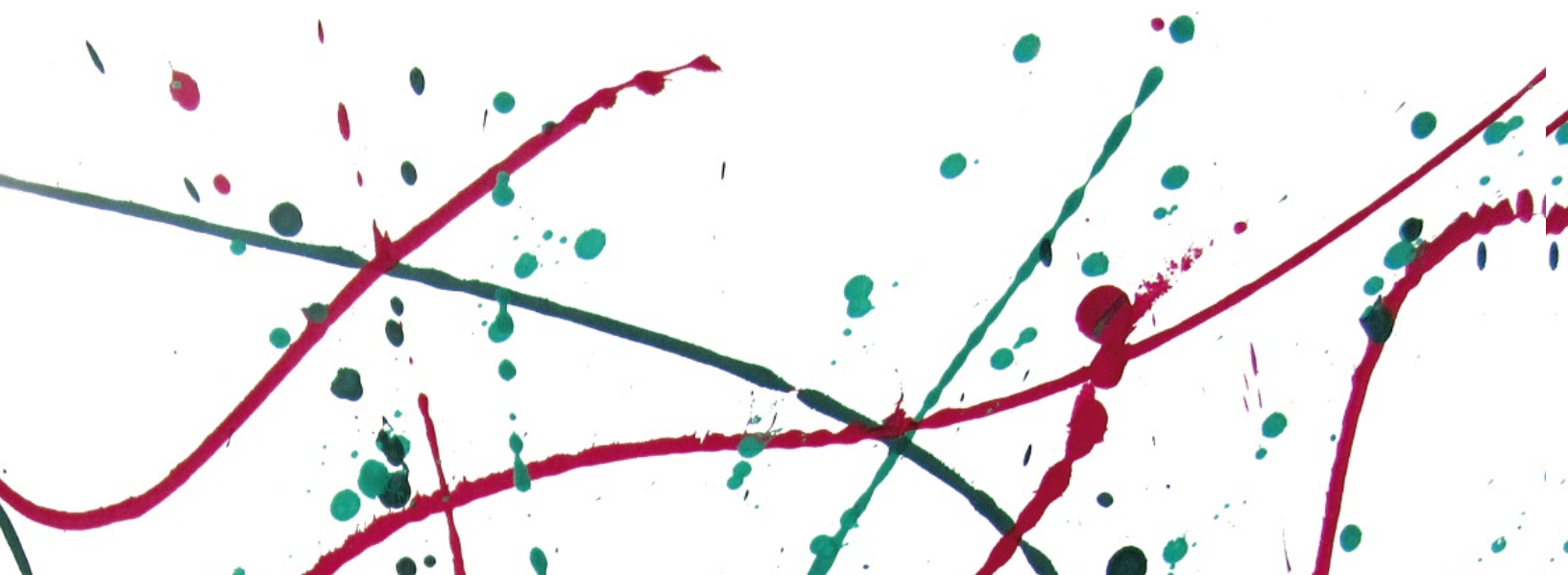
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# *A Moment of Silence:* Individualizing Cultural Trauma

Melanie Munninghoff

How often are comic book readers confronted with the phrase “Aren’t you too old to read comic books?” or with being called “geek” or “nerd” for liking them? Also, in academic circles, even though the numbers of academic studies on comic books has increased in recent years, it is not yet established and unified as a critical field, partially because of its multimodality, but also because of its conceptualization as being a lowbrow genre in the literary field.

However, as with many other artifacts in popular culture, comic books offer great potential in exploring new perspectives into under-read ontologies. Specifically, the literary potential of comic books lies in the fusion of visual and textual elements. Comics are not only concerned with superheroes and ‘good against evil’ plots – they also offer personalized insights into difficult pasts. Crucially, momentum is reflected in both the characteristic genre basics – that is, the mixing of textual and visual elements – and the distinctive mode of reading comic books.

Momentum is defined as “strength or force gained by motion or by a series of events” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*), meaning in this given context that as artifacts, comics have the potential to reframe notions and conceptions of cultural trauma. One apt example is *Maus* (1980) from Art Spiegelman, who explores the horrors of World War II, or *Daisy* (2012) by Reiko Momochi, in which Momochi tackles the life of students after Fukushima’s nuclear disaster. Many more comics have explored the depths of cultural traumas such as wars, disasters, and conflicts. These narratives express the individuality of cultural traumas and give victims the agency to express themselves. Thus, I argue that the comic book medium gains momentum by intersecting grand narratives and creating new points of views, as well as meanings by expressing the inexpressible nature of trauma.

To explore these qualities of comic books, I will analyze the story, “Sick Day” in *A Moment of Silence* (2002) that focuses specifically on two children’s trauma. The comic was

published by Marvel as a reaction to the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 (9/11). Not only does the comic tackle different narratives on the day of the tragedy, but it also turned out to be a commercial success and, at the same time, became a product for charity. As mentioned, *A Moment of Silence* is a Marvel production, which is the biggest operating publisher in the United States’ comic book market next to DC, thus making it truly a commodity of popular culture and impacting a large number of people.

My argument is embedded in a few concepts that need to be explained and brought into context. Firstly, the notion of cultural trauma is widely discussed in academia. However, I will mainly refer to Ron Eyerman’s chapter, “The Past in the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory” because he connects and interrelates notions of trauma, memory, and identity in the context of culture. On the other hand, Hilary Chute’s article, “Comics as Narrative? Reading Graphic Narratives” offers a theoretical framework in which

specific genre notions of comic books can be conceptualized. Thus, she introduces the formal conventions of comic theory.

To support my argument, I draw on articles that already explore the possibilities of comics and show that they are more than just mere entertainment. Joshua Leone's article, "Drawing Invisible Wounds: War Comics and the Treatment of Trauma" offers perspectives on how traumatic experience can be expressed through comics and answers the question of how the inexpressible can be expressed. Barbara Grüning, however, is focusing more on the notion of collective memory in comics in her article, "Educating to Remember: The Public Use of Comics in Germany and Italy." Her article introduces concepts that can help to understand how comics can open up different perspectives regarding difficult pasts. Lastly, the article by John Duvall and Robert Marzec, "Narrating 9/11," shows which long-lasting effects the 9/11 case had on the American nation and, together with Eyerman's chapter, proves that 9/11 can be considered a cultural trauma. I would like to point out that I will mainly explore the possibilities that comics can offer in the context of approaching various implications of cultural trauma. I am aware that there are also concerns that need to be addressed, such as reinforcing stereotypes or re-establishing the distinction between 'us' and 'the other.' However, it would be too ambitious to discuss this particular matter in this essay. Therefore, for further reading, I would like to refer to Jason Dittmer's article, "Captain America's Empire: Reflections on Identity, Popular Culture, and Post-9/11 Geopolitics," which touches upon how comics can also reinforce stereotypes and the 'us'/them' binary.

The tragedy of 9/11 has become a cultural trauma for American society. According to Jeffrey Alexander, cultural trauma is:

*when members of a collective feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories for ever, and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways* (qtd. in Eyerman 23).

It is not only the death toll that turns the event into a cultural trauma because, as Eyerman further explains, the trauma does not need to be felt and/or experienced by everyone but its meaning needs to be collectively accepted by the community (Eyerman 23).<sup>1</sup> However, to establish this dramatic loss of identity and the meaning of the cultural trauma, it needs to be "understood, explained, and made coherent through public reflection and discourse" (Eyerman 23). Thus, the cultural trauma's meaning is established in the aftermath of the event.

For one, the Bush Administration changed the linguistic dialect around the security of the country. They took Orwellian terms such as "war on terror," "preemptive war," or "homeland security" which reshaped not only the political discussions, but also created a greater gap between red and blue states and a greater gap between the US and other nation-states (Duvall and Marzec 381). This political change was so fundamental, it formed a new American identity, which Duvall and Marzec call "Patriotic Correctness" (381), which has been used as justification for the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq (Duvall and Marzec 382). Furthermore, there is an ongoing academic discourse on the significance of the US American trauma, for example, by Roland

Bleiker, Wheeler Dixon, or Jason Dittmer, as well as a continuous attempt to represent 9/11 in the arts by Eric Fischl or Sharon Paz. Ultimately, the public discourse of such a cultural trauma leads to a collective memory which can be defined as "recollections of a shared past that are passed on through ongoing processes of commemoration" (Eyerman 25).

Memories can provide a cognitive map to help answer questions such as "who am I?", "why am I here?", and "where do I go?", which are central to form a collective identity (Eyerman 24). More importantly, those collective memories unify a group by the means of the discursive power of a grand narrative. Here, the grand narrative does not refer to Lyotard's interpretation of the term. Instead, I rely on a more toned-down theorization, which refers to a cultural narrative that orders and explains the knowledge and experience of a community.<sup>2</sup> In the case of 9/11, the grand narrative is formulated around the common agreement that the attack on the World Trade Center was an attack on the United States as a nation. Nevertheless, one needs to view the grand narrative critically, because memory acts, according to Niklas Luhmann's system theory, as a binary code: remembering and forgetting (Grüning 96). It is a selective process in which only elements that favor the grand narrative are remembered. Furthermore, the subjects that remember, and their stance towards the topic, are influenced by the hierarchical system, so those in power have a great impact on how incidents and events are remembered (Grüning 97). This implies that smaller narratives are not part of, or enter the grand narrative and, consequently, the collective memory.

<sup>1</sup> Here I would like to stress that cultural trauma as a concept refers to the loss of identity and meaning of a community due to a social crisis (Eyerman 23). This means the use of the term 'the cultural trauma' refers to the corresponding social crisis of that community – in this context 'the cultural trauma' in the US American context is 9/11.

<sup>2</sup> Here, 'orders' refers to, for example, the historization of a community. Events and experiences are sorted into a linear narrative structure in favor of a grand narrative.

However, some discourses try to give non-dominant narratives a voice. Comic books bear the potential to break through this grand narrative by verbalizing the traumatic experience of individuals, in other words, comics can create “space[s] of possible” (Bourdieu qtd. in Grüning 95). Spaces refers to giving room to other narratives about difficult pasts which can develop through these spaces’ new structures of meaning (or within this context, alternative meanings of a cultural trauma). These new structures of meanings can be defined as other narratives about difficult pasts. These other narratives can create alternatives to the pre-existing structures already present in the dominant narrative (Grüning 95).

Apart from giving minority groups a voice, it also serves as a resource for educational purposes. For example, in Germany, comics have been used to educate people about the atrocities of World War II. One such example is *Maus* by Art Spiegelman. The cartoon represents the brutal historical realities through a coherent narrative (Chute 457). Moreover, comics not only offer alternative meanings to the dominant narrative, but also new structural meanings from the factual and medical narrative. This is important because it gives back agency to the traumatized person and allows the individual to express how they actually experience their trauma. As Leone explains, medical narratives tend to silence personal narratives and become “the spokespersons for the disease or wounding” (257), which is done by turning experiences into facts, numbers, and unfamiliar terminology, which abstracts the experience of the traumatized person and does not necessarily make it more comprehensible.

The Marvel comic, *A Moment of Silence*, is an apt example of how the “space of possible” interacts. It is a collection of four different narratives, each based on a true story that revolves around the cultural trauma of 9/11. The first story follows a victim of the Twin Towers collapse. In the second story, a firefighter helps to locate

survivors. It follows with a story about a family who lost their father in the attack. It ends with a story about a family that was not really affected by the event. Looking closely at the third story, “Sick Day,” one can follow the forgotten narrative of children experiencing the loss of their father.

In this comic, different techniques are utilized to capture the individual experience of the children and the loss they experience. To do this, the artist introduces two brothers, who are relatively young considering the depiction of different toys lying around the childrens’ bedroom. Each boy has a different approach to dealing with the loss of their father. For example, one of the boys, who wears a striped shirt, openly shows his grief by expressing his emotions, whereas the brother who is depicted with a soccer ball throughout the comic internalizes his grief and is not able to express his pain.

## Fragmentation offers many possibilities to express individual traumas

But the question remains: how is traumatic experience verbalized in the comic and how is expression given to the inexpressible and thereby momentum manifested in the comic format? To answer this question, it is necessary to reflect on the elements which make comics distinguishable from other artforms. Comics consist of different panels that are framed by a gutter, which are gaps between the different segments of action. This setup not only encourages the reader to group panels together, but also to fill in the gaps between the segments of action (Chute 452). Furthermore, the panels themselves consist of visual and verbal elements which are nonsynchronous. The combination of the former elements is its most distinguishable

feature compared to other pictorial narratives (Chute 454). This fragmentation offers many possibilities to express individual traumas. As mentioned above, cultural memory maps identity and engenders a dominant narrative, therefore the nonsynchronous form of storytelling gives space to the traumatized person by avoiding mapping their own memory.

Trauma disrupts the way people construct their own pasts and imagined futures, making it difficult to tell a coherent story to others (Leone 243). The psychological implications behind such fragmented identities can be reflected in certain narrative elements of comics, such as words, images, and graphic sequences. Its structure requires a continuous interaction between the reader and the page which makes it generally easier to translate the fragmented identity (Leone 245). Moreover, the reading technique that is used to understand the story is very different compared to film and novels. A common practice is a disjunctive back-and-forth reading between the pages and panels to continuously read and look for meaning and aid the reader to manage the narrative time (Chute 452; Leone 246). Leone adds that comics also give those who are affected a chance to participate in this “reconstructive reading process” (259).

So, coming back to the two boys in “Sick Day”, the reader also needs to construct a narrative between the panels, especially because the verbal element is missing, which refers back to the comic’s title, *A Moment of Silence*. The lack of verbal communication turns the reader’s attention towards the emotional impact and underlines the impossibility to express the pain of loss in words. Explanations are also unnecessary, not only because of the foreword which situates the comic into the given context, but also because the event of 9/11 is a shared memory of the nation. This leaves room to expand and focus solely on the emotional process. When looking at the boy with the ball, the soccer ball already becomes an important item in its first appearance

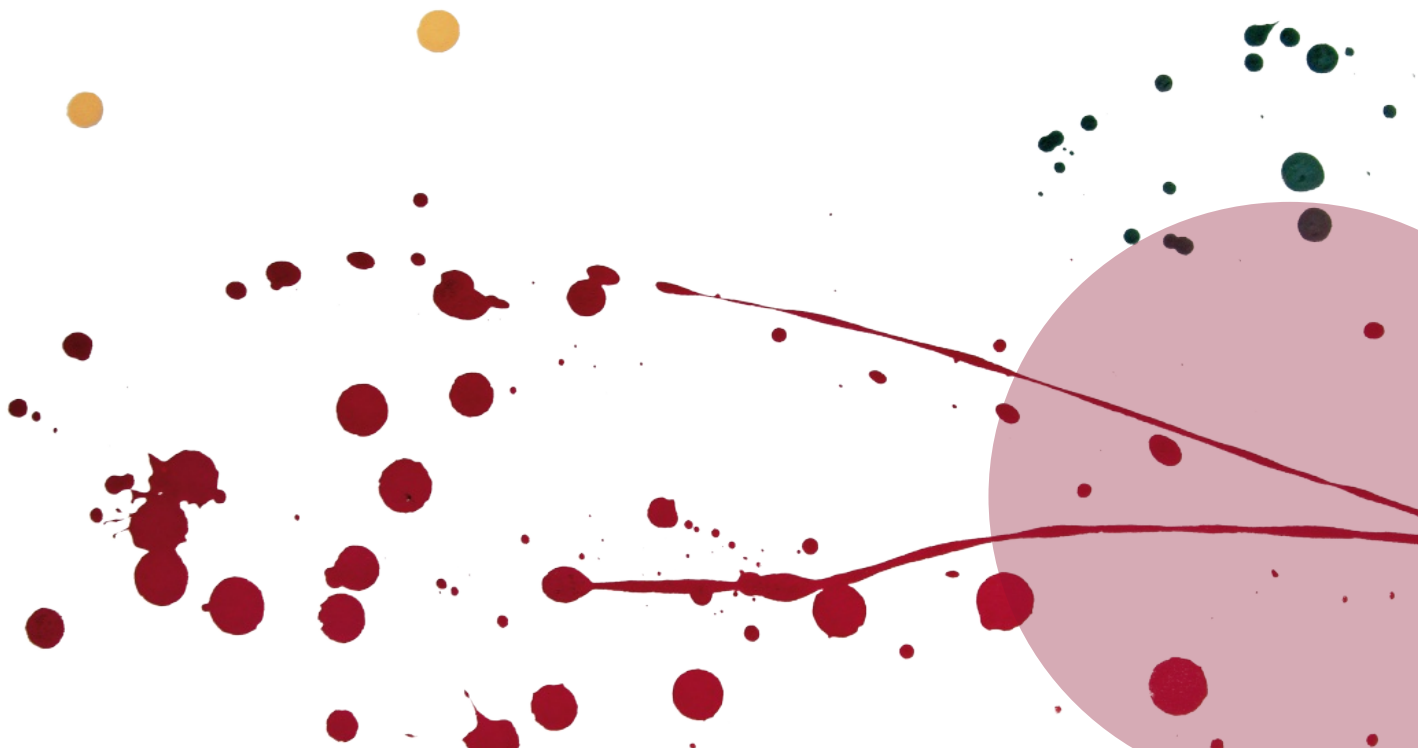
because it signals the boy's close relationship with his father. Throughout the narrative, this is indicated through several details, for example in one panel the mother carries a framed photograph depicting the father and the boy arm in arm, each wearing a soccer uniform, holding the same ball.

Compared to the rest of the family, who always stay inside but openly show their emotions, the boy sits outside on the porch, holding onto the soccer ball, and looks into the distance. Each day that passes, he looks more distressed, which is underlined by the strong shadows on his face. The passing of time shown on each page is important for the reader to signal how long it takes the family to find the strength to clean up and leave the house. But it also signals the effect of pain and the impossibility of following a daily routine. This can be seen in a comparative panel in which the reader sees twice the same point of view on the bedroom of the children. In the first panel, the bedroom is untidy; the beds are unmade, things are hanging from the beds, and a dirty glass is standing around. In the second panel the same room has been cleaned up. The passing of time is enhanced in both of these panels through the digital clock that indicates the physical time and date. The climax of the boy's narrative is when he is confronted with the ruins of the Twin Towers. The boy

finally bursts into tears and leaves the ball behind when he leaves the ruins. This might indicate his acceptance of his loss. However, because of the lack of words and the fact that in comics the reader needs to infer possible meanings the meaning of the ending itself is open for varied interpretations. Therefore, this example shows how comics convey traumatic experiences and create narratives without words.

In conclusion, comics have the capability to be more than just lowbrow entertainment. Texts of this genre engage with highly complex issues of culture. The given example might not critique cultural structures, such as cultural traumas, but it is aware of its existence and makes use of it. This is why each of the chapters in *A Moment of Silence* do not need any verbal elements and are still able to lead the reader through the characters' experiences. The notion of "spaces of possible" underlines the opportunities that can be explored through graphic narratives, especially because comics create meaning differently. There is no necessity for a coherent storyline because of the distinct reading technique that allows the reader to jump back and forth. Through this, it is the reader's responsibility to make sense of the different action fragments and manage the narrative time. Moreover, the visual and verbal elements do not need to relate to one another.

Those aspects open up possibilities to give non-dominant narratives and perspectives a space in which they can express themselves. In this case, it proves that comics give traumatized people their agency back by expressing and individualizing their pain and trauma. The grand narrative of 9/11 is mainly concerned with the attack on the nation. However, *A Moment of Silence* is focused on those who were directly involved and lost their family members due to the tragedy. Through the comic's aesthetic devices, traumatized people can express themselves without using the medical context. The comic book medium does not impersonalize their experience by turning them into facts and numbers. It can also be a means for traumatized people to individually reconstruct their own experience. Thus, taking all of the above into account, comics reshape the meaning of grand narratives and offer the possibility to express the inexpressible of traumas – making the format of the comic a symbol of momentum in the creation of new "spaces of possible."




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# Mirroring Contemporary Society

## A Dystopian Critique of Power Dynamics and Social Injustice in Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games*

Paula Schrieck

For centuries, visions of the future have been intriguing concepts for scholars and researchers alike, especially during times of crisis. Wars, global pandemics, or natural catastrophes can prompt us to take notice of the inequalities still prevalent in the present, to question the status quo and to imagine alternative futures where such injustices no longer exist. Literature is a suitable resource for experiencing contemporary imaginations of the future, set either in a utopian place, where everything is better than in our society today, or one where everything is worse – the dystopia.

Like most dystopian works, Suzanne Collins's bestselling novel *The Hunger Games* is set in a distant future where "the devastating effects of ... war" (Finnsso 15) have wreaked havoc on civilization and resulted in the birth of a new country called Panem. However, despite being a fictional place, the power dynamics and social injustices are all too reminiscent of contemporary real-life conditions. In previous research, scholars like Geir Finnsso or Andrea Ruthven have argued that Panem's society "mirrors our own" (Finnsso 18) and that the Capitol's

oppressive reign does not primarily serve as a warning of what might happen should humans' current behavior continue, but rather as a wake-up call of what is already happening in the present (Ruthven 48). Clearly, this observation is nothing new – and yet, the way *The Hunger Games* utilizes both utopian and dystopian elements experienced through the eyes of sixteen-year-old protagonist Katniss Everdeen is still worth exploring. Although the reader empathizes with Katniss and is inclined to root for her to struggle against the government, to gain momentum among her peers and to disrupt the status quo by reading *The Hunger Games*, the reader subconsciously aligns themselves with the Capitol – Panem's fictional upper class – who take pleasure in watching teenagers murder each other on screen.

### Utopia, Its Origins, Varieties and Implications

The phenomenon of utopia precedes its denomination. Initially, the concept was coined in 1516 by Renaissance humanist Thomas More. According to Lyman Tower Sargent, More's highly influential work *Utopia* (1516) defines the term as a non-existent place in a specific location that is either better or worse than its inventor's place of residence. The word utopia translates to "not place" (Sargent 5, original emphasis). Therefore, More coined the term "eutopia" (5, original emphasis), in popular culture synonymous with 'utopia', to describe a fictional place as a "good place" (5, original emphasis).

The term 'utopia' personifies perfection and happiness for all its inhabitants (Sargent 5). It is a place superior to our current society in the sense that it is "purged of the shortcomings, the wastes, and the confusion of our time" (5), thus enabling everyone to live in perfect harmony. The motivation behind imagining such a perfect place, as Fatima Vieira suggests, stems from the recognition "that the human being did not exist simply to accept his or her fate, but to use reason in order to build



the future” (4). Thus, the construction of a utopian society inevitably reflects its creator’s desires, since it reveals what they believe to be lacking in their current society.

However, “social dreaming” (Sargent 3) does not necessarily have to be read as a critique. It can also serve as a motivation. Sargent, for example, avidly supports the notion that utopia “is essential for social change” (24). For a society to develop and grow, it is vital to question the status quo. Imagining a place with perfect living conditions and ensuring happiness for all, helps to expose the shortcomings of the present and figure out what could be done to get closer to perfection.

Instead of depicting a society free of flaws, a dystopia showcases a place where contemporary society’s shortcomings are amplified and negatively impact everyday life (Langer 171). Even though it appears to be utopia’s polar opposite, its function is similar: both utopia and dystopia express their inventor’s dissatisfaction with the present. However, while utopia can inspire and dazzle by showing how wonderful the world could be if it were purged of all that causes pain and suffering, dystopia serves more as a warning. It shows how current human behavior could lead society to end up in a similarly dreadful place unless people realize their mistakes and learn to better themselves (Baccolini & Moylan 2). In a sense, both utopias and dystopias are designed to uncover society’s deficiencies, how those came about, and how they can be prevented.

### The Literary Genre

As stated by Sargent, each fictional work is set in a “no place” (5, original emphasis) – a place that does not exist in the author’s reality and, in utopian/dystopian fiction, is either noticeably good or bad (5). The worlds in these novels are usually explored in different ways, depending on whether they are set in a utopian or dystopian

society. In utopian novels, the protagonist usually enters the showcased society from the outside and learns from its residents how they achieved and maintain perfect living conditions for all (Vieira 7).

Subsequently, the “utopian traveller” (7) makes their way back home to inform their fellow citizens of “better ways of organizing society” (7). Dystopian novels, on the other hand, usually plunge the reader into devastation and chaos from the outset (Baccolini & Moylan 5). In most cases, the protagonist does not experience their surroundings as particularly jarring. However, as the story progresses, they begin to understand

**Both utopia and dystopia express their inventor’s dissatisfaction with the present. However, while utopia can inspire and dazzle by showing how wonderful the world could be if it were purged of all that causes pain and suffering, dystopia serves more as a warning.**

society’s flaws and feel estranged which prompts them to resist whatever force negatively impacts their life and those of others (5). These forces can range from “government surveillance” (Nyman 1) to “totalitarian regimes, brainwashing, concealing of information, class dichotomies” (1) or “a combination of several [of these] problems” (1). In traditional dystopian novels, such as *1984* by George Orwell, the protagonist’s attempts at defying these oppressive forces turn out to be futile (Baccolini & Moylan 7). However, the sub-genre known as

‘critical dystopia’ seeks to “[provide] a picture of the darkest possibilities regarding social, political, and environmental issues, without losing the spark of hope for a better space-time” (Cavalcanti 72). It showcases bleak times to trigger emotions in the reader, such as fear or outrage in the face of the injustice and hardship the characters have to endure while demonstrating that dark times can be overcome as long as there are people prepared to fight for what is right. Suzanne Collins’s *The Hunger Games* matches the characteristics of this genre in the sense that the actions of its protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, build the momentum to cause a ripple in the government’s tight reign which eventually leads to its collapse in the series’ conclusion.

In general, literary works within the genre of utopian fiction seek to both educate and entertain the reader (Vieira 17). While a utopian novel suggests “projective ideas that are to be adopted by future audiences, which may cause real changes” (Vieira 8), dystopian novels intend to “frighten the reader” (17) in order for them to reflect upon their own behavior.

In both cases, the genre’s “relationship with reality” (8) is obvious: utopian fiction aims at influencing the course of real life by prompting the reader to think about the future and how they can contribute to improve human’s overall quality of life.

In 2009, Mark Fisher introduces the term “capitalist realism” (*Capitalist* 6) to describe the widespread belief that attaining an equally successful alternative to capitalism is virtually impossible. Perhaps this is why, as Darko Suvin examines, capitalism pretends to be “a finally realized eutopia” (192). Since no other functional way of organizing the market has yet been found, capitalism appears to be the best possible option. Although, in reality, the majority of humanity experiences the effects of capitalism as dystopian and unjust (192).

However, due to capitalism's steadfast reign, hopes of a better alternative are diminishing. Fisher denominates this phenomenon as "reflexive impotence" (*Capitalist* 21), a sentiment that describes a person's dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs, but a perceived incapability to improve it. Fisher deems this lack of faith to be "a self-fulfilling prophecy" (*Capitalist* 21): because people view a utopian future as no longer attainable, they see no point in making an effort to change it.

Contemporary literature mirrors capitalism's widespread dominion and the public's general discontentment with its restrictive and freedom-robbing nature. Suzanne Collins's bestselling novel *The Hunger Games* (2008) is a good example. Panem's government, the Capitol, rules over twelve impoverished districts – each of which are forced to specify in the manufacture of a particular good. These products are, then, directly imported to the Capitol. Similar to a worker within a capitalist system, the districts do not own their products, nor do they benefit from their labor. Everything they produce "is owned or perceived to be controlled by the capitalist" (Yuill 135). To keep the districts complicit, the Capitol asserts its power by hosting an annual spectacle called the 'Hunger Games,' a live television show that is streamed nationwide for the enjoyment of the Capitol and that features twenty-four 'tributes' – a boy and a girl from each district, both chosen randomly during a 'reaping' ceremony. After a short training period in the Capitol, the tributes are sent to a computer-controlled arena with the objective to fight each other until a single survivor remains. Upon their return, the survivor – branded as a victor or victress – receives a monetary prize and a house. Tributes from the marginally wealthier districts 1, 2, and 4 use the promise of glory and riches as an incentive to "train for and volunteer for the show" (Cettl 141). Thus, they "readily participate in being framed as celebrities and success stories in a deadly competitive script" (141). Instead of resisting the Capitol, they

decide to take part in their games. Success appears to be their sole motivation, while the costs – namely the deaths of twenty-three innocent children – are being ignored. Morally, killing others to gain wealth should not sound enticing, but *The Hunger Games* demonstrates that this is the kind of society capitalism breeds: humans who stab each other in the back for their own benefit.

As can be deduced, the Capitol holds its districts in a tight grasp that allows no room for social dreaming. However, as Fisher observes: "[c]ontrol only works if you are complicit with it" (*Capitalist* 22). The system does not persist because it is good but because those that suffer have lost hope in the possibility of change and, therefore, cease trying to fight for a better alternative.

### *The Hunger Games – A Critical Dystopia*

#### *The Capitol's Capitalistic Reign in The Hunger Games*

The Capitol's power over the districts is demonstrated in multiple ways, the most noticeable of which is the Hunger Games themselves. For the citizens of the Capitol, the games are framed as entertainment to be consumed without moral qualms (Nyman 2). For the inhabitants of the districts, however, they are not only framed as a punishment, but also as an honor. Narratively, the novel achieves this by employing the traditional journey of the "utopian traveller" (Vieira 7) and inserting it right after the selection ceremony. Once selected, the tributes are sent to the Capitol where, upon their arrival, they are temporarily invited to partake in the Capitolists' luxurious lifestyle. They receive an impromptu makeover, an unlimited amount of delicious food, and spacious accommodation. However, different from traditional utopian narratives, the tributes are not supposed to learn from the Capitol's lavish ways to implement them in the districts. The utopia is

limited to the Capitol and those who are complicit with it. In the case of the victor or victress, they may experience the utopian lifestyle for the rest of their lives. This shows that in a capitalist society a comfortable life is possible if one is willing to cause or accept the dissatisfaction of others – or, in the story world of *The Hunger Games*, their deaths.

In addition to serving as a demonstration of the Capitol's power over their subjects, as well as "entertainment of a bored elite" (Fisher, *Precarious* 33), the games are also intended to keep the districts isolated. According to Rachel Greenwald Smith, the "emphasis on individual competition" (41) is one of capitalism's driving characteristics and it is deeply rooted in the Capitol's ideology. The districts might outnumber the Capitol, but as long as they view each other as enemies, they will refrain from uniting and conquering the government. The spatial separation as well as the act of pitting their children against each other in a deathly tournament results in building resentment between the districts which "keeps them from communicating, organising, and uniting" (Nyman 2).

In fostering sentiments of disunity and antagonism among the districts, the Capitol constantly reminds its subjects of the dystopian conditions they are forced to live under. It robs them of any hope that their situation can be improved as is shown by their inability to stop the Capitol from sacrificing their children. Alone, they cannot conquer the Capitol, so they submit to the inescapability of their lives. Their loss of faith is reminiscent of Fisher's concept of reflexive impotence – the perceived incapability to instigate change. Even Katniss seems to have surrendered to her way of living: "We can't leave, so why bother talking about it?" (Collins 11). However, despite practicing reflexive impotence, Katniss embodies hope. Her actions throughout the novel are not motivated by active defiance against the Capitol, but rather by love. All she does stems

from the desire to keep Prim, her younger sister, safe, which is ultimately what leads to the Capitol's downfall.

### Combatting Individualism

*The Hunger Games* follows the traditional narrative of a dystopian novel in the sense that its protagonist is portrayed as “question[ing] the dystopian society” (Baccolini & Moylan 5), a process driven by her participation in the 74th games. Having already existed for decades, the games are established as a deeply ingrained part of everyone's lives, since the majority of Panem's population may not even remember a time prior to the existence of the games. Experiences from previous games raise expectations of what is to come, as for example, that no one in District 12 will volunteer because it has rarely ever happened. Therefore, Katniss's decision to enter the games for her sister stands out as remarkable. It can be read as her first act of defiance, breaking with the usual pattern of accepting social injustice.

From then on, it can be argued that the majority of Katniss's actions are motivated by sisterly love. Despite having “given up” (Collins 42), Katniss promises her sister that she will try to win (42). It is also her love for Prim that drives her to form an alliance with Rue, the 12-year-old tribute from District 11, who is “very like Prim in size and demeanour” (Collins 52). As Ruthven explains, the games often feature alliances “between the strongest ... to increase their individual chances of survival” (52), but Katniss chooses her ally not based on strength but due to “a feeling of affinity and caring” (52) – a decision that reinforces her compassion.

When Rue is killed by another tribute, Katniss performs a burial ritual, adorning her corpse with flowers. For a long time, the Capitol has succeeded in separating the districts both spatially and emotionally in order to discourage collaborative uprisings. However, in paying her respects to a tribute from

another district, Katniss “effectively brings District 11 to stand in solidarity against the Capitol” (Nyman 3) by showing that the enemies are not the other districts but the all-controlling government that pits them against each other.

### Aligning with the Capitol

As a sixteen-year-old protagonist awaiting the cruel fate of having to fight other teenagers to death, Katniss Everdeen presents a compelling figure for the book's predominantly young adult audience. Catherine McDermott explains that “a reader is likely to desire

## Rather than focusing on the violence the majority of people in Panem face under their capitalist leaders, the love triangle and the question of whether one is “Team Gale” or “Team Peeta” moves to the foreground

a hopeful ending for Katniss” (150), which is emphasized by the use of first-person narration, exposing the reader to Katniss's innermost thoughts, thus strengthening the bond between reader and character. However, despite rooting for Katniss, it is difficult to relate to the injustice and poverty she experiences on a day-to-day basis. Hence, by reading *The Hunger Games*, the reader resembles the citizens of the Capitol, although their behavior might sound appalling.

The Capitol is characterized as a place of lies and deceit. Its citizens dye their hair and skin color or surgically alter their faces, but even beneath the surface, looks can be deceiving. Once Katniss has volunteered for her sister,

she is immediately preoccupied with the image she projects to the world: “I cannot afford to get upset, to leave this room with puffy eyes and a red nose. Crying is not an option. There will be more cameras at the train station” (Collins 39). This shows that she is not only aware of the heightened attention she is given but also how easily the audience can be swayed. The constant presence of cameras forces her to conceal her true emotions. Katniss's internal thoughts revolving around how to best present herself to the Capitol to secure sponsors mirrors the way present-day social media allows its users to manipulate how they appear to the outside world, creating the illusion of perfection by using filters and photo editing tools.

Similarly, the romance between Katniss and her district partner, Peeta Mellark, cleverly adds another layer of social commentary. In the book, Peeta publicly declares his love for her, branding the two as “star-crossed lovers” (Collins 158). Although being hesitant at first, Katniss soon recognizes the pretend romance between the two for what it is: “another way to manipulate her image for the camera” (Ruthven 56), demonstrating that, in a capitalist society, what matters is not what is real, only what is most entertaining.

The first book the trilogy ends with Katniss and Peeta both winning the games after threatening to commit suicide, thus proving to the audience that the games' rules are “an arbitrary construction” (McDermott 142) and that, despite believing themselves to be powerless, the districts do have agency to provoke a change. As a consequence, the romance between Katniss and Peeta is emphasized to distract both the districts and the Capitol from “the emerging social unrest” (Ruthven 57). However, it does not only distract Panem's citizens; it distracts the reader, too, by prompting them to focus on the love story and root for their preferred love interest – Peeta or Gale, her childhood best friend – to end up

with Katniss. Nyman argues that important issues presented in *The Hunger Games* series are often overlooked (3). Rather than focusing on the violence the majority of people in Panem face under their capitalist leaders, the love triangle and the question of whether one is “Team Gale” or “Team Peeta” moves to the foreground, “as if we are looking at the Hunger Games in the same way that the Capitol residents do” (3).

*The Hunger Games* mirrors the conditions of our current society, providing a “horribly compelling ... image of the privation of solidarity in our world” (Fisher Precarious 33). Similar to the citizens of the Capitol, readers consume *The Hunger Games* for pleasure. Even though they might condemn the actions of the members of the Capitol, readers often mirror their behavior by supporting the violence and rooting for the love triangle, thus failing to understand the criticism. Furthermore, this demonstrates how desensitized to brutality and inequality humanity has become. Panem might be set in the future, but the apathy practiced in the Capitol is already a daily occurrence.

Overall, *The Hunger Games* serves more as a wake-up call than a warning in that it demonstrates how apathy and desensitization to violence and inequality are already deeply ingrained in our society. It reminds us that we do not have to look to the future to see a society that values entertainment over empathy, as these issues already exist in our world today. Only by recognizing and addressing these issues can humanity as a whole hope to create a more just and equitable society for all.

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# Feminism and Ethnic Identity in the Paratexts of Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*

Lena Fleper

In 1976, Maxine Hong Kingston published her first book, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*. Born in the US to Chinese immigrants and influenced by feminism, she mixes memories from her childhood with Chinese stories and legends her mother told her. Blending fiction with non-fiction, Hong Kingston cites Walt Whitman and Virginia Woolf as influences on her work, appreciating their inclusive language, which deals with “all kinds of people,” regardless of gender or heritage (Fishkin 784). *The Woman Warrior* became an immediate success, winning the 1976 National Book Critics Circle Award. Journalist and college professor Jess Row says: “When I query my first-year college students about books most of them have read, *The Woman Warrior* falls somewhere between *Beloved*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*” (Row). What puts *The Woman Warrior* in a group with these other famous works? The continuing re-publications and abundance of freshly written reviews show the momentum surrounding Hong Kingston’s work from 1976 to today.

The author saw *The Woman Warrior* as a book of several different categories, listing “the women’s lib angle and the Third World angle, the Roots angle” (Kingston, “Cultural Mis-readings” 55). She recognized her book’s feminist meaning and while she also noticed the importance her ethnic background had to her writing, what she “did not foresee was the critics measuring the book and me against the stereotype of the exotic, inscrutable, mysterious oriental” (Kingston, “Cultural Mis-readings” 55). Early critics did indeed concentrate on the author’s ethnic background and the book’s foreign content. However, the reception through the reviewers has changed over the decades. What has not changed is the framing through the publishers, as the following analysis will show. There have been several different cover designs, and although they contrast, they all underline the author’s identity as an Asian woman.

To understand Hong Kingston’s own interpretation of her work as feminist, I will introduce second-wave feminism and feminist print culture before

applying Gérard Genette’s theory of paratexts to comprehend how the framing and perception of *The Woman Warrior* changed. In his 1982 publication on intertextuality, Genette argues that every text is accompanied by “a certain number of verbal or other productions, such as an author’s name, a title, a preface, illustrations,” (1) which he calls the paratext. According to Genette, the paratext “enables a text to become a book” (1) and is an important tool to research production and reception, as it reflects the circumstances under which the book was published. In this paper, I will perform a paratextual analysis, looking at book covers and reviews from 1976 until today, to understand how the book was framed by the publishers and how the audience interpreted it. I argue that the book’s framing remains the same; but that the reception has changed over time and contemporary readers have a different point of view, shaped by an ongoing fight for equality regardless of race, gender, or ethnic identity, which enables them to see the multiple facets of *The Woman Warrior*.

Hong Kingston published *The Woman Warrior* in 1976, when the second-wave feminist movement in the US was at its height. The 1970s were an “integral decade for the American feminist movement” (McBean 352), which spanned from around 1965 to the 1980s. The addressed issues were broad, ranging from a demand for equal income and equal job opportunities to a woman’s “duty” to take her husband’s name, to abuse and rape in marriage. The movement blurred the boundaries between personal and political issues, bringing personal issues previously not openly discussed, such as sexuality and domestic violence, into the public sphere. The movement was characterised by its structure of small local meeting groups that enabled the phenomenon of consciousness raising: women shared their personal stories and problems, and only talking about it in a group made them realize they were not alone. They learned that many other women felt the same and that their issues were indeed not personal, but political (Evans 3; McBean 356).

The Women’s Liberation Movement is a western feminist movement, since it was not inclusive to issues outside of the traditional western world. The movement initially provided a large variety of members, as many women joined from other activist’s groups, feeling “sidelined” by male group members. However, there was also criticism for its focus on the white middle class (Walters 104). According to Margaret Walters, “Betty Friedan’s 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* exploded the myth of the happy housewife in the affluent, white, American suburbs” (102). Although Friedan’s book provided consciousness-raising moments for many readers, it was also criticised because there were many women outside of the white middle class who were struggling with chores and jobs, not making ends meet. Another critique was that the movement’s leading figures were often quite privileged, and that women who were actually severely oppressed never had the chance to speak up (Walters 102–105).

Struggles were also arising within the movement, because even though the women were united by the cause of fighting against female oppression, sub-divisions with different agendas complicated the matter, and the movement “seemed to be at war as much within itself as with patriarchy” (Evans 1). For example, there was a rift between lesbians and straight women as well as between white women and women of colour, since mostly white women represented the movement.

After the foundation of the Women’s Liberation Movement in the 1960s, the activists gained more attention in the 1970s, which provided “the conditions for the emergence of feminist fiction as a mainstream publishing phenomenon” (McBean 352). Feminist fiction spoke about marginalised issues such as abortion and menstruation and criticised the limits women experienced through marriage and family. Books served as consciousness raising objects, letting readers experience consciousness raising moments. The consciousness-raising novel was an important part of feminist print culture. The act of writing meant claiming subjectivity by having textual authority, which is why many female writers wrote books whose main characters were authors. Literature was seen as “upholding dominant culture (and its limited view of women)” (McBean 359), which is why feminists saw literature as having great potential for the feminist cause. However, books were often disregarded as feminist when they did not “connect women’s suffering to the patriarchal oppression of women” or failed “to register some possibility of transforming this situation” (Elliott 144). Most novels were from and about white women, because the movement saw being female as the key characteristic of being oppressed, which marginalised other issues. Sam McBean claims “there was an insistence that black women’s writing needed its own body of criticism” (360), similar to the way white activists worked. Since the dominant culture did not pay much attention to minority writing, minority feminists saw the development of a critical lens as central to its survival.

Influenced by the movement and its issues, Hong Kingston saw her work from a feminist angle, however, the publishers’ design choices do not reflect that. The book’s original 1976 Knopf edition (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 1976) features the author’s name, the book’s title and subtitle as well as a collage that includes a building, a warrior figure, a bird, and an Asian woman’s face. The depicted bird is a *fenghuang*, an important figure in Chinese mythology, symbolising harmony. Different mythological traditions see the *fenghuang* either as in possession of both male and female qualities, or as the female counterpart to the male dragon, representing marital bliss together (“*fenghuang*”). While the cover focuses strongly on the text’s connection to Chinese mythology, it also includes feminist aspects, of which some are more obvious (like the female warrior) and some more subtle (the meaning assigned to the mythological figures).

When Vintage published *The Woman Warrior* in 1977 (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 1977), it had already received praise, which is reflected in the cover design. The cover bears a sticker marking it as winner selected by the National Book Critics Circle as well as a quote from a review by Jane Kramer, published on the front page of *The New York Times Book Review*. Kramer is quoted as saying “Brilliant ... its sources are dream and memory, myth and desire.” By incorporating the sticker and the quote, the publisher is using the book’s previous success as advertisement. The cover is dominated by textual elements, but also features the drawing of an Asian girl, dressed in western clothes, a dragon wrapped around her. The depiction seems to represent Hong Kingston herself: an Asian girl, living a western lifestyle, entangled in Chinese myths. Overall, the message focuses on the mythical content, considering the dragon combined with the quote, which, using the terms “dream and memory, myth and desire,” is very vague.

The edition of 1989 (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 1989) (again by Vintage) does not feature any praise in form of quotes or mentions awards. The cover's illustration serves as the background and is kept in red and black. It shows the face of a woman (who might be Hong Kingston herself) and several cranes. The cover moves away from the warrior aspect of the title, focusing instead on the woman and her memories of mythology.

A few years ago, Vintage reissued the 1989 version with a new cover (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 1989 [Reissue]). Like its predecessor, the cover mentions the award, and the book is now elevated to a "National Bestseller." Also featured is a quote from *The Washington Post*, saying: "Intense, fierce, and disturbing ... a strange, sometimes savagely terrifying and, in the literal sense, wonderful story." In comparison to older covers, the cover design is cleaner and more abstract. The background photograph is of the lower half of a woman's face, her dark hair and light skin colour suggesting she might be Asian. This edition omits both the warrior aspect as well as the mythical part. The chosen quote is as vague as the one on the previous cover, but it does not allow any conclusions on the book's content.

Vintage published the book again as a paperback in 2000 (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 2000), now displaying a very minimalist design. It shows the upper half of an Asian woman's face, and the only other text apart from title and author's name is a small line about the book's win of the National Book Critics Circle Award.

The most recent edition was published as part of the Picador Classics series in 2015 (Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* 2015). It mentions a foreword by Xiaolu Guo, who is a Chinese author and director. The cover shows a crane, which is an important part of Chinese culture as a symbol of longevity. More specifically, the depicted crane is a red-crowned crane, which symbolises happiness, good luck, a long life, and marital bliss. With this cover choice,

the publisher has returned to framing the book in the context of its author's ethnicity. The feminist aspect does not appear; instead, the foreword by a Chinese author (and its mention on the cover) highlights Hong Kingston's Chinese heritage even more.

There is no discernible change in the covers over time. They look different because they all adhere to the design forms that were popular in their respective time, but they send similar messages. None of them clearly show the "women's lib angle" that Hong Kingston wished for. While some of them feature a female warrior figure, other positive female connotations are mostly hidden in the symbolism of mythological figures. Overall, the publishers' design choices mirror the author's ethnicity and the book's mythological content.

Reviews of *The Woman Warrior* do not mirror the framing of the publishers – at least not all of them. Jane Kramer's review of *The Woman Warrior* was first published in *The New York Times* on November 7, 1976. Kramer starts her review with her thoughts about how Americans see Chinese and American Chinese. She thinks that Americans do not really engage with the Chinese, instead they are fascinated and mystify them. She moves on to Hong Kingston, who she introduces as a "young Chinese American writer" (Kramer) of the name Maxine Ting Ting Hong Kingston. Her review is a very positive one, calling the book "a brilliant memoir" (Kramer). Kramer's review does focus strongly on the book's ethnic components, she likens it to André Malraux's novel *La Tentation de l'Occident* and says that "The Woman Warrior' is about being Chinese, in the way the 'Portrait of the Artist' is about being Irish" (Kramer). She further summarises stories of the book and talks about Hong Kingston's family and upbringing, always keeping the focus on her ethnicity. Kramer also mentions the story of the warrior woman Fa Mu Lan (which is one of the stories in the book), possibly because it makes a nice connection to the book's title.

Earlier the same year, *The New York Times* had already published another review with the title "In Defiance of 2 Worlds," written by a male author, John Leonard. Leonard starts by listing several male authors (Vonnegut, Updike, Cheever, and Mailer) who "will be making loud noises" (Leonard), insinuating that men are loud and women are quiet. *The Woman Warrior*, he says, is however anything but quiet. Could Leonard's review be read as feminist? Not really. Although he praises Hong Kingston and her writing, the reasons he gives why he likes her writing – being "loud," not being sentimental – makes it seem like he admires her because she reminds him of a male author, not because of any feminist qualities. He further focuses on her ethnic background, seeing her struggle as caused by her disruption between the western and the eastern world.

Margaret Manning, book editor of *The Globe*, published a short take on the text under the heading "Mysterious, burning with oriental defiance" on January 30, 1977. Next to the headline, there is the picture of a female Asian warrior. The drawing and the title dominate the page, which features several short book reviews. In her short review, Manning mentions the myths, among them Fa Mu Lan, but also focuses on the women in the book. She starts her final paragraph with "But most of the book is about her family – the women of her family" (Manning) and mentions Hong Kingston's connection between being female and being a slave in Chinese culture. She calls the author by her maiden name Maxine Ting Ting Hong and calls her a "woman among women who has written a brilliant, mysterious book" (Manning).

In "The Woman Warrior at 30 – Maxine Hong Kingston's secrets and lies," Jess Row revisits the text 30 years after its publication for *Slate's* memoir week. His review focuses mostly on the book's genre and narrative quality. While he mentions the stories of Hong Kingston's aunt and Hua Mulan, a distinctive feminist angle or focus on the



author's ethnicity is not discernible. The review gives insight into the book's status today, as Row explains: "When I query my first-year college students about books most of them have read, *The Woman Warrior* falls somewhere between *Beloved*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*" (Row). *The Woman Warrior* has turned into a contemporary classic. Why is that? The review does not provide an answer. It seems curious; the books that Row mentions seem to be grouped together randomly. Is it the author's ethnic background and the books "exotic" content that attracted such a large readership? Or is it the liberal angle that still resonates with readers in the twenty-first century?

John Powers wrote a review of a new collection of Hong Kingston's novels that includes *The Woman Warrior*. He does not focus on her ethnic background, but describes her as "an Asian American writer, a feminist storyteller, a chronicler of immigrant experience and a literary innovator" (Powers). With this description, he acknowledges both her background as well as her intentions and shows that a writer – and her work – do not always belong in just one category. Fittingly enough, Powers credits Hong Kingston with "tell[ing] stories about creating your own identity, not settling for the one the world tries to give you" (Powers). This is exactly what happened to her when she wrote *The Woman Warrior* – she tried to convey a message, but her audience interpreted it differently. Powers includes the stories of the author's aunt and Fa Mu Lan (and credits her for introducing this now well-known story to the West). He also says that "in telling this story she's not supposed to tell us, Kingston underscores a cruel truth about traditional Chinese culture – its oppression of women" (Powers), referring to the opening of the book and drawing attention to the book's feminist issues.

Marisa Jue's review was published online in *April Magazine* on August 26, 2016. The magazine bears the subtitle "Actual Voice of Asian Women," which is a clear indication of its content. The review

includes a picture, which depicts a female warrior and a tiger in front of a city. The warrior's shield shows the cover of the 2000 paperback edition of *The Woman Warrior*. Jue sees Hong Kingston as "a giant within the Asian American literary community" and calls her "one of the leading literary voices of Asian American women" (Jue). With the magazine's orientation in mind, Jue summarises the book and its message without losing the connection to the Asian background, but still focuses on the feminist aspect, saying that "the entire book is full of female relationships, the weak protected by the strong, as Hong Kingston explores what exactly it means to be a Chinese American woman, torn between tradition and modernity" (Jue). She concludes by saying that

**A book's framing and reception influence each other. When a reader picks up a book, they will be influenced by the design choices on the cover, by information they gain from it.**

"Kingston has created a striking portrait of what it means to be Chinese American woman and the dualities of that identity: the damsel and the warrior, old world values and Western social expectations" (Jue). In her review, Marisa Jue applies a modern understanding of Hong Kingston's work: She recognises the feminist aspect while still realising the importance of the author's ethnicity, fulfilling the demands of earlier feminists who claimed not all feminists had the same issues and that ethnicity does play a role in the oppression of women.

It took several decades, but *The Woman Warrior* is now being read the way Hong Kingston intended it to: from a liberal,

feminist angle, the book is now less mystified and exoticised. *The Woman Warrior* has always been popular and has been praised by many critics, but not for the aspects the author wanted to be seen.

A book's framing and reception influence each other. When a reader picks up a book, they will be influenced by the design choices on the cover, by information they gain from it. Their reading will be influenced. In turn, reviews may encourage the publisher to make changes for a new cover design. Interestingly enough, the overall message of *The Woman Warrior's* covers did not change, while the tone of the reviews did. It seems like none of the publishers ever reviewed their reading of the book. The message is simple: All the covers allude to the book's title, including a woman and/or mythical designs that point to the "exotic" content. While the most recent edition is one of the most minimalist, it mentions the foreword by a Chinese author, putting the American novel that Hong Kingston wrote even more into a foreign corner.

Although she wrote the book for an American audience, her readers did not grasp its full meaning in the 1970s. Written by mostly white women, the reviews praised the book, but saw it as a foreign tale and a stranger's experience. That has changed. Modern reviewers include Asian men and women, and they understand what their predecessors could not: feminism is layered and complex, and not every woman is experiencing and fighting the same issues. They experience the book as a consciousness raising text. Hong Kingston's work is a perfect example of a sub-group of feminism, as it connects feminist issues with the struggles caused by her ancestry. The feminist activism that followed in the time after the book's publication allows readers to understand all the facets of the book.

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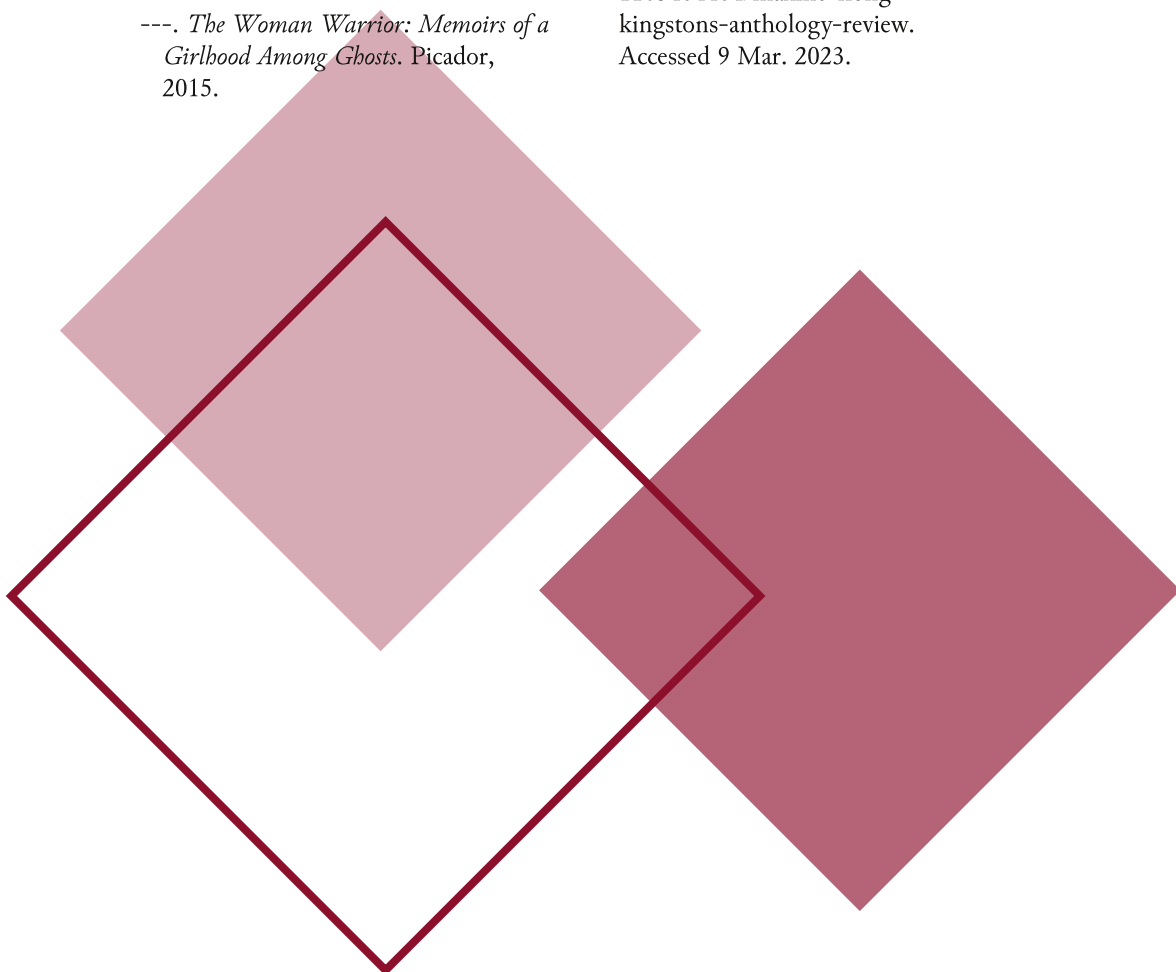
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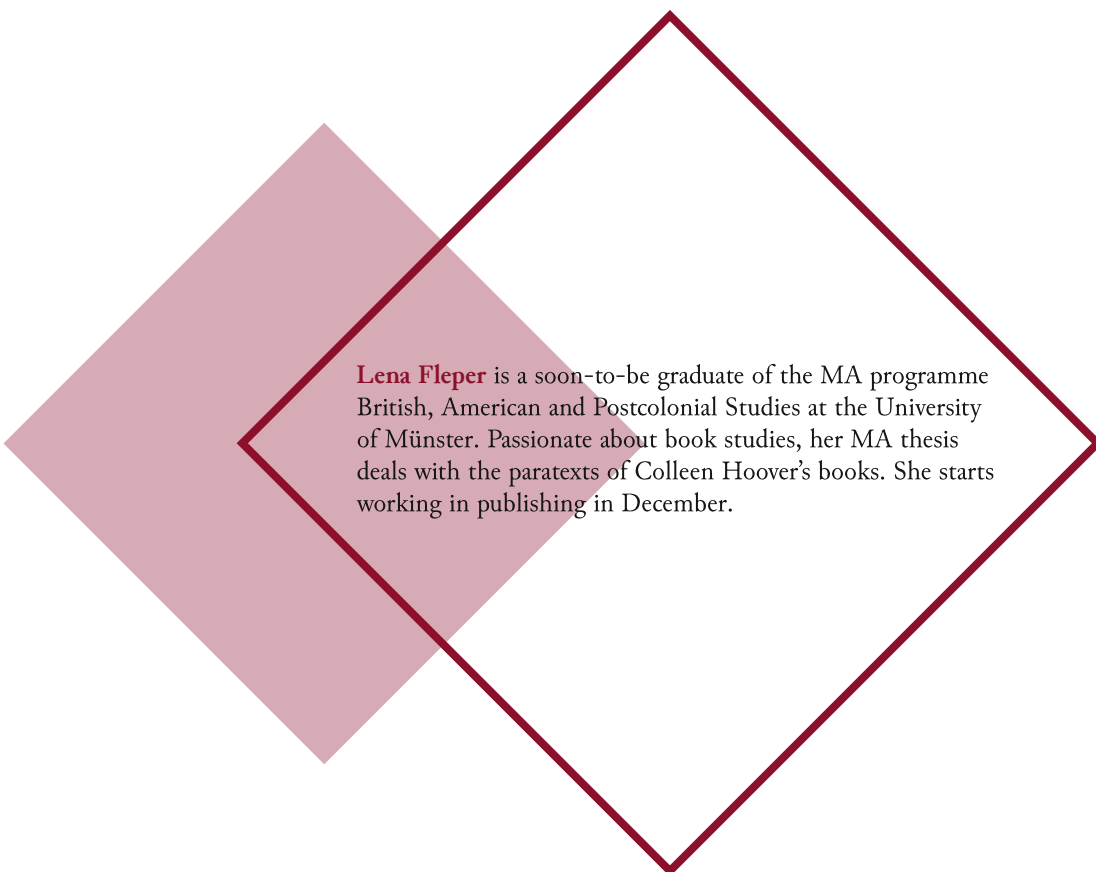
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# With a Grain of Salt

## Concept of Performance and Metalepsis in James Salter's *Light Years*

Aleksandr Rubstov

It is a truth universally acknowledged that having completed a seemingly conventional novel, writers often resort to trickery to keep the readers engaged in the narrative. Whilst some authors may eavesdrop on multiple focalizers, others wallow in a shallow stream of consciousness. The subtlest, however, do neither, and yet exceed all the rest. James Salter, (1925–2015) an American novelist of moderate renown, belongs to the latter category.

In the introduction to the Penguin Modern Classics edition of *Light Years* that I own, Richard Ford wrote: “It is an article of faith among readers of fiction that James Salter writes American sentences better than anybody writing today” (Salter, v). Having for two consecutive years perused *A Sport and a Pastime* and *Light Years*, I can testify that the quality of Salter’s prose is unmistakable. Although nowadays, his austere style might not strike one as something original, nor do metafictional techniques excite the reader’s jaded appetite. However, Salter’s writing

produces the same effect as a Bresson film, and his use of metalepsis invites the reader to unravel the confusion of suppressed emotions his characters often experience.

It is not by chance that readers and reviewers alike link Salter’s style to the impressionist tradition in cinema and visual art. This fitting comparison is especially apparent in the paragraphs where he sets up a scene or concludes it. There, each of his sentences function as a precise brush stroke or a single frame. Though they often lack action verbs, the text comes to life in unity; it ripples like a Monet pond. Such a narrative technique simultaneously performs two functions: it effaces the narrator from the text and invites the reader into it. In fact, Salter’s prose also resembles a carefully directed play: it inexorably moves to a predetermined conclusion, whilst detracting nothing from the casual fluidity of action.

The overarching concept of playacting compounds this feature of his oeuvre. In *Light Years*, multiple chapters are

structured according to the same pattern: Salter uses short sentences to compose the first and last paragraphs. Like stage directions or opening and closing shots, these short sentences establish the scene and set up where the action is to take place, or fade into black along with it. For example, the first chapter of the second book begins thus:

*In the morning the light came in silence. The house slept. The air overhead, glittering, infinite, the moist earth beneath – one could taste this earth, its richness, its density, bathe in the air like a stream. Not a sound. The rind of the cheese had dried like bread. The glasses held the stale aroma of vanished wine* (Salter, 67).

From a broad picture embracing the scenery at large, the narrator proceeds to welcome the reader into the house, points out minute objects, makes them palpable, and almost handles them. The chapter ends like this:

*She would make dinner after a while. They would dine together, something*

*light: a boiled potato, cold meat, the remains of a bottle of wine. Their daughters would sit numbly, the dark of fatigue beneath their eyes. Nedra would take a bath. Like those who have given everything – performers, athletic champions – they would sink into that apathy which only completion yields* (Salter, 71).

This scene is also remarkable because the narrator compares the characters to actors that give their utmost to the play and impart to it a sense of reality. Nothing could better characterize the structure of the novel, the narrative technique it utilizes, or the characters that populate it. The novel bristles with words that refer to cinema and drama. “Performance”, “act”, “actor”, “actress”, “theater”, “theatrical”, “stage” – the list could go on, given that some scenes feel scripted. The narrator readily admits it, as in the following scene of the mugging:

*He stumbled, trying to grapple with the rain of grunting blows that was making him wet. He was trying to run. He was blinded, he could not see, lurching along the plank of legend, ridiculous to the end, calling out, his performance faltering in the icy cold, his legs crumbling* (Salter, 169).

Note that the narrator uses the word “performance” to describe what is happening. He also alludes to the inevitability of an outcome, as if the character acted according to an established “legend”, i.e., an explanation accompanying a pictorial illustration. It seems that for this novel, Salter borrowed both the structure and style from drama.

Given all that has been said before, I now turn my attention to the second salient feature of the author’s grand design – metalepsis. Modern theorists define it as a shift between the levels of the narrative, i.e., between the world the narrator inhabits and the world they describe (McHale, 120). As a concept, it originated in classical Greek drama, where gods habitually appeared onstage and the chorus directly addressed the audience, thus effectively

breaking the boundaries between the realms of fact and fiction. In the twentieth century, Gerard Genette, the narratologist responsible for the term focalization, appropriated metalepsis for his own uses. He mainly concerned himself with two types of transition between the levels of the narrative: the author either explicitly orchestrating the progression of the events or making away with the necessary time gap between what is being narrated and the act itself (Genette, 234–236). Since then, the term has been considerably refined and in 2003, Monica Fludernik distinguished four separate kinds of metalepses:

- 1) authorial, i.e., a strategy that foregrounds the inventedness of the story.
- 2) narratorial, i.e., the narrator urges the reader to take part in the story.
- 3) lectorial, i.e., the narratee’s implicit participation in the story, or the character’s implicit participation in the act of narration.
- 4) rhetorical, i.e., simultaneity of the time of the telling and the time of the told. (Fludernik 2003, 388).

Exploited fully, metalepsis allows any of the triad ‘author-reader-character’ to move between the narrative levels. It blurs their boundaries to such an extent that each of the actors acquires an agency independent of their former director.

In *Light Years*, three kinds of metalepses play a prominent part, namely authorial, rhetorical, and narratorial. In the following passage, Salter’s narrator personally intrudes upon the text, thereby creating an instance of authorial metalepsis:

“I suppose I was waiting for you, amore.’ Should one describe the act of love which united them, it may have been this night?” (Salter, 276). Making use of transposition (employing an affirmative sentence as an interrogative one) and the conditional clause, the narrator foregrounds the inventedness of the text. Reading the novel, one cannot help noticing such passages as they are indeed numerous.

The fourth book opens with a textbook example of authorial metalepsis: “They were divorced in the fall. I wish it could have been otherwise” (Salter, 203). Here, the narrator ironically implies that the events could never result in any other way. Yet the dramatic impact of this passage depends entirely on the reader’s awareness, and that it is only the narrator who determines how the story should progress. The next passage can be regarded either as a case of authorial or narratorial metalepsis:

*Passing through the doors of the store she looked at those going in with her, those leaving, women buying at the handbag counters ahead. The real question, she thought, is, Am I one of these people? Am I going to become one, grotesque, embittered, intent upon their problems, women in strange sunglasses, old men without ties? Would she have stained fingers like her father? Would her teeth turn dark?* (Salter, 173–174).

On the one hand, it can be argued that the passage is focalized internally. The character, then, is looking at herself, as the shift from “she” to “I” and free indirect discourse signify. However, the last two sentences seem to be focalized externally, but not by someone who knows less about her. On the contrary, this being knows her completely, and even controls her. In this case, the conditional mood in this passage produces an effect similar to what we saw in the previous extract: the narrator has not chosen how the story is to continue, and they present the reader with the thoughts of an aging woman to disguise their indecision. If this is true, then we are dealing with another case of authorial metalepsis.

As for rhetorical metalepsis, let us turn to the first chapter of the novel: “We dash the black river, its flats smooth as stone. [...] The sea birds hang above it, they wheel, disappear. We flash the wide river, a dream of the past” (Salter, 3). It should be noted that here, as in the rest of the chapter, the narrator uses the present indefinite tense. Nowhere else in the novel do they resort to it again: all the other

chapters are written in retrospect. Due to zero focalization, the narrative instance and the things narrated coincide, hence a case of rhetorical metalepsis.

The pronoun the narrator chooses in the above passage is also quite perplexing. Does it imply “the character and I”, or “you and I (the reader)”? Certainly, it can be dismissed as the writer’s laziness, but then “lazy” is the last epithet one would use to describe James Salter. The first-person point of view makes for another possible explanation. But then, it is uncharacteristic of the *Light Years* narrator to follow the character to the bathroom. Thirdly, the narrator can be diegetic, rendering the query irrelevant. But to settle it is crucial as the answer would give us a vital clue as to the author’s plan.

Let us consider the sixth paragraph of the same chapter: “We strolled in the garden, eating the small, bitter apples. The trees were dry and gnarled. The lights in the kitchen were on” (Salter, 4). For the same reason, these sentences stand out just like the ones I cited earlier. Considering the context of the chapter in question, this passage utilizes zero focalization: we as readers know that no one is strolling in the garden at that moment. The only character we have met so far comes home only in the next paragraph, and his family is inside. Consequently, we infer that only the narrator could venture the remarks above. This logical conclusion resolves the “we” ambiguity: in the absence of any other physical being that the narrator could form this duet with, only the reader can be the second component.

Narratorial metalepsis is the hardest to detect, not least because the shift occurs not between the level of narration and the reader, but between the level of the narration and the story they narrate. The following passage illustrates such a case:

*Winter comes. A bitter cold. The snow creaks underfoot with a rich, mournful sound. The house is surrounded by*

*white. Hours of sleep, the air chill. The most delicious sleep, is death so warm, so easeful? He is barely awake; he emerges for a moment at first light as if by some instinct, buried, lost. His eyes open slightly, like an animal’s. For a moment he slips from dreams, he sees the sky, the light, nothing is moving, nothing is heard. The hour that is the last hour, the children sleeping, the pony silent in her stall (Salter, 21).*

Short sentence by short sentence, the reader accompanies the narrator as they approach the scene in their customary manner. At first, the narrator is impersonal, and the reader observes the action (or lack thereof) from the wings. The third sentence already gives the narrator form, and the fourth walks us into the house. Tenderly, they observe the sleeping person; they vaguely muse whether sleep is like death. Then the shift occurs: although the narrator describes the events in the third person, one understands that the character’s and the narrator’s focalizations merge. The latter supplements the former’s perception, speaking of the sleeping man slipping from dreams. An immaculate rhetorician, the narrator develops the topic of sleep-death relationship with participles “buried” and “lost”. The last sentence, much like the first, describes the consciousness split again.

The final extract I provide below neatly summarizes what I believe to be the two most commonly used techniques that make Salter stand out from other authors:

*He talked as well. He explained too much but he could not resist. One thing led to another, inspired it, the story of Stanford White, the city as it once had been, the churches of Wren. He invented nothing; it poured from him. She nodded and answered with silence, she drank the wine. She leaned with her elbows on the table; her glance made him weak. She was absorbed, hypnotized almost. She was intelligent, that was what made her extraordinary. She could learn, comprehend. Beneath her dress, he knew, she had nothing on; deBeque had told him that. [...] She*

*closed the door behind her and turned the lock. From that first moment, that cool and trivial act, it seemed a kind of movie started, silent, almost flickering, a movie with foolish sections which nonetheless consumed them and became real. [...] He started her bath. In the dimness he saw his reflection like that of another man, a triumphant glimpse that held him as water crashed in the tub. His body was in shadow. It seemed strong, like a fighter’s or jockey’s. He was not a city man; suddenly he was primitive, firm as a bough. He had never been so exhilarated after love. All the simple things had found their voice. It was as if he were backstage during a great overture, alone, in semi-darkness but able to hear it all (Salter, 46–48).*

Almost the entire first paragraph utilizes the external focalization. What the narrator does is use the character as a lens only, as they evince a subjective inference “extraordinary”. This evidence does not give us license to argue that we are dealing with narratorial metalepsis. Such an argument can be refuted by saying that the first paragraph is focalized differently to faithfully render the character’s mounting desire. No shift occurs, nor does the reader take part in the narrative. However, the simile the narrator uses to open the second paragraph has “movie” for its vehicle. Two separate focalizations begin to freely supplement each other with the word “consumed”. Although the reader readily believes in a vain man appraising his physique in the mirror, they should not share in his exhilaration further on. One has to possess Hamlet’s capacity for self-reflection to assess oneself on the spot accurately and with as many similes. What the narrator does here is lend this capacity to the character, expand their consciousness and give them a fuller, more resonant voice. The last simile again alludes to drama as the narrator uses the words “backstage” and “overture”. Thanks to the narrator’s intrusion, the character steps aside and watches themselves as an observer would. The reader sits beside them and watches both the narrator and the character.

In conclusion, let us go back to the structure of the novel and say a few words about how it corresponds to the concept of drama and metalepsis. Gustav Freytag, the German drama critic, developed Aristotle's ideal model for a play and expanded it. What he ended up with was what is known as the "five acts structure" (Freytag, 195). *Light Years* is made up of as many books, with each performing a function identical to its respective dramatic counterpart. Thus, the novel incorporates this structure, the central concept of performance, and metalepsis into a tight single body. At first glance,

while it amounts to a mere assortment of disjointed scenes and sheer drivel, the novel morphs into an immaculately crafted work of art.

Choosing a particular concept of drama for the novel's foundation, James Salter stylizes it accordingly. With a tried set of tools and solid scaffolding, he constructs what can be duly regarded as a metafictional novel with several framing narratives. Due to metaleptic shifts, the reader becomes immersed in it. Moreover, they allow all the narrative agents to constantly exchange their roles. Perhaps that was what

Richard Ford meant when he wrote in the same introduction: "*Light Years* [...] transacts a constant negotiation with the reader to render these citizens as complex as they are, but also to exhibit the Berlands (and their friends) as types ..." (Salter, vii). Only the influence of metalepsis allows James Salter to typecast his players without making them renounce their individuality.

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**Aleksandr Rubtsov** is an assistant lecturer at Ryazan State University named for S. Yesenin. Despite receiving his degree in Teacher Education, he went on to specialise in English literature and stylistics. His current research focuses on narratology and the effect of phonoaesthemes in metaphysical poetry.







# About the Journal



# satura

## Laura Ntoumanis Natalia Tolstopyat

Founding Editors

## Bethany Andrews

Editor-In-Chief

Journal Design & Layout

A returning MA student in the British, American and Postcolonial Studies program at the University of Münster, specializing in Book Studies. Award-winning playwright and occasional freelance editor. Traveller of many places, tryer of many things, and TTRPG enthusiast. Passionate, but never pedantic, about the written word.

## Ibarra Bacani

Assistant Editor

Writer

Ibarra Bacani is a master's student in the British, American and Postcolonial Studies program at the University of Münster. He holds both an associate degree in Arts, Media and Cultural Studies from the University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKU SPACE) Community College and a bachelor degree in Journalism and Media from Middlesex University through the HKU SPACE International College. He joined *Satura* in 2022 as an editor and writer. He wrote a short piece about the student journal for the *UniKunstKultur* magazine in 2023. Before joining *Satura*, he was a freelance writer for the Philippine-based digest magazine *Tulay*.

## Nima Behzad Avval

Assistant Editor

Nima Behzad Avval is an MA student of British, American and Postcolonial Studies at the University of Münster. He found his love in Poetry and its relationship to music and wrote about it for a magazine during his BA years. He is also a musician and bass player and does editing for *Satura*.

## Aline Franzus

Assistant Editor

Social Media Content

Aline Franzus is a soon-to-be graduate of the MA program British, American and Postcolonial Studies and an MEd in German and English studies from the University of Münster. While procrastinating to do one of her one-too-many tasks, she watches her plants die while thinking about which new ones to plant. She recently changed rainy Münster weather for similarly rainy days in Seattle, where she hopes to be a tad more successful at indoor gardening. Academically, she is interested in many intersections between literary, cultural, and book studies, including memory and censorship studies. In her MA thesis, she explored some of the implications and ramifications of contemporary US book banning, and she would like to use this bio statement to recommend you read a banned book once in a while.

## Madeline McNabb

Assistant Editor

Social Media Content & Engagement

Madeline McNabb is an MA student in National and Transnational Studies at the University of Münster. Her research interests are always changing, but currently include gender and sexuality studies, contemporary literature, and postcolonialism. When not showing off cute pictures of her cat Celia, she likes to sit outside on a warm summer day with a good book.

# staff

## Lena Mrotzek

Assistant Editor

Lena Mrotzek is a second-year undergraduate student of English and political science at the University of Münster. Since getting over her teenage reading slump, she has decided to broaden her literary horizons and try her hand at writing and editing. Her interests include anything to do with language, making the perfect cup of tea, and scouting out cool work experience opportunities. Thus far she has enjoyed all of them, even if she cannot decide what will end up being her career. (She is only a handful of long forest walks away from finding out, though.)

## Toranj Nasiri

Social Media Designer/Specialist

I don't believe in choosing a path and sticking to it – that's why writing, business, fashion, photography and social media are all a part of my life! I've studied literature for most of my life, and started writing at a very young age. Now those years and my Business of Fashion degree are all helping me run *Satura's* social media.

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## Revathi Sasikumar

Assistant Editor

Revathi Sasikumar is a postgraduate student in National and Transnational Studies at University of Münster and has a bachelor's in English Literature and Communication Studies. A huge part of her work with *Satura* was concerned with the poetry section; she also worked with social media as well as layout and design for the magazine. She has always loved books and is currently specializing in Book studies, with an interest in contemporary trends in publishing and marketing of translated books. Besides academics, she spends her free time taking long walks, painting and indulging in books and movies.

## Tanne Stephens

Assistant Editor

Tanne Stephens completed her MA in National and Transnational Studies at the University of Münster with a focus in linguistics and pragmatics. Growing up in a bicultural household, she has long been fascinated by the science of human interaction: the ways sociocultural realms impact an individual's psychology and how they connect with people around them. She is currently exploring the art of connection through language as a PhD researcher in Kiel.

## Aleksandra Sukhodolskaia

Assistant Editor

Social Media Content

Aleksandra Sukhodolskaia is an editor and social media content creator for *Satura*. She holds a linguistics degree from UC Berkeley and has been working in journalism for over four years. Aside from editing, she loves writing poems and short stories. Her previous monolingual poems have won contests in Russia, yet currently, she explores the effects of multilingualism on her work. In her free time, you can find her hopping on and off German trains, discovering new bookstores, sipping boba, and learning languages.

## Anna Westhofen

Assistant Editor

Anna Westhofen is currently studying for a Master's of Education in German and English studies as well as a Master of Arts in British, American and Postcolonial Studies at the University of Münster. In her studies, Anna focuses on literary and cultural studies and her main research interests are contemporary anglophone literature and gender studies. Outside university, Anna enjoys bookshop browsing, reading, painting, and travelling.

# About the Journal

*Satura* is a student-edited journal founded by students of the English Department of the University of Münster to allow an open ended discourse on subjects in the Humanities. This broad scope allows us to consider all fields, with the potential for further issues to focus on a singular theme viewed from the perspective of a variety of research areas, including linguistics, literary studies, book studies, cultural/political studies, theology, philosophy, and history; as well as perspectives in teaching English as a foreign language. The addition of creative writing to an academic journal allows students to explore additional means of expression. We are proud to publish poems and short stories from students with a broad range of cultural and literary backgrounds. They are carefully crafted pieces that look deep inside human nature and cover the expanse of the world around us.

The purpose of *Satura* is to provide students at the English Department of the University of Münster the opportunity to have practical experience in working for academic/creative journals, as well as offering a space for students of the Humanities to submit academic papers and creative writing in English for publication. Another aim of *Satura* is to develop a wide readership, with a further goal of attracting submissions from students outside of the English Department and from universities around the world.

*Satura* would like to maintain itself as an annual (for now) journal, produced entirely by students, with an online presence via Open Journal Systems as well as a small print run. This serves the purpose of not only preserving the cultural memory of a printed text, but also of reinforcing the role of the book in academic life. It gives Book Studies students in the National and Transnational Studies and British, American and Postcolonial Studies programs the opportunity to play with formats of printing and hands on experience in the material production of texts.



# How to Contribute

There are numerous ways you can help *Satura* continue to grow in the future, no matter where in the world you are!

If you are a student at the University of Münster, we'd love for you to become part of the staff. Most staff members only volunteer during the production of one volume, so we are always looking for new people who have new ideas for our next volume. If you have a passion for editing, for design, for event planning, or you just have a brilliant concept for us to try in our next volume, please join us. We are already looking for volunteers who are excited to be part of Volume 6. You can check our Instagram to find out more.

You can also contribute by submitting your writing or art! We accept submissions from any student of any university, anywhere in the world. We try to find and publish a wide range of art and research each year, and you can help us with that by sharing your work. Watch our Instagram or our webpage for announcements about when we are open for submissions.

We are also very grateful to all those who are not students but who show their appreciation by reading our journal, telling friends about us, and spreading our yearly call for papers far and wide. *Satura* wouldn't be what it is without the people who have championed it in their university and at cultural institutions in Münster.

And of course, if you feel so moved, you can make a monetary donation to help us cover our costs. *Satura* is produced by a volunteer staff completely for free, and we are always looking for additional funding for our printing or other expenses such as advertising materials, our launch party, and smaller events throughout the year. We have a GoFundMe you can donate to here:

[gofund.me/5d39663a](https://gofund.me/5d39663a)



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We would also like to thank Freya Morisse and the LWL Literaturkommission für Westfalen for their incredible invitation to include our founding editors in their recent "Walk like a [female\*] poet" audiowalk in Münster. Your support and engagement with us has given us even more enthusiasm to continue our work.

Many thanks go out to Gesine Heger and everyone at the Kulturamt Münster. Thanks to their invitation, some of our Volume 5 creative writers had the chance to record their work and have it featured on Literaturline in their November 2023 release. Literaturline is a truly special way to share the creativity and culture of Münster with our community, and the world. Thank you for including us.

We also want to thank the university's American Studies team and AmerikaHaus for their generosity in having Jennifer Reimer lead a creative writing workshop for our staff and other students in July 2023. We are so glad that the creative community of our university felt nurtured and encouraged by this workshop.

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Our most important thank you is to our readers – we hope you enjoyed this volume, and we hope you'll continue to read and support *Satura* in the future.



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**KULTURFONDS**  
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Walk like a [female\*] poet

[literaturkommission.lwl.org/de/online-projekte/walk-female-poet](http://literaturkommission.lwl.org/de/online-projekte/walk-female-poet)

