

Printed November 2024
ISSN: 2629-4923
Digital ISSN: 2701-0201

E-Mail: satura.journal@uni-muenster.de

Address: Johannisstraße 12-20
48143 Münster
Germany

Instagram: satura_journal

Open Access: <https://www.uni-muenster.de/Ejournals/index.php/satura>

Satura is a student journal of the English Department of the University of Münster.

The individual authors are responsible for the content and accuracy of the information in their contributions to this volume.

All works have been licensed under a Creative Commons Attribute-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Authors and artists retain copyright for their work.

The images accompanying the works have been provided by the respective authors with their permission. The copyright of the cover art belongs to Selena Knoop, the copyright of the picture on the separator pages (p. 8/9; 72/73; 118/119) to Miriam Bell and the photograph 'Pale Blue Dot' (p. 4) to NASA.

Every effort was made to trace all copyright holders, but if any have been overlooked, the publisher will be pleased to include any necessary credits in subsequent prints or digital editions.

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie. Detailed bibliographic data are available online at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

Editor-In-Chief

Verena Meyer

Section Editors

Bethany Andrews, Thea Clasen, Sophie Funtikova

Assistant Editors

Mobina Abasnejad, Yağmur Akdeniz, Yahia Alsallaq, Ibarra Bacani, Daniela Batarilo, Roberta Di Nunzio, Sara Luque Pérez, Laura Ntoumanis, Regina Steitz, Melanie Stenzel, Gemma Tompkins

Journal Layout

Verena Meyer

Design

Özge Kayan

Social Media Editor

Sophie Funtikova

Printed by:

FLYERLARM GmbH

Alfred-Nobel-Straße 18

97080 Würzburg



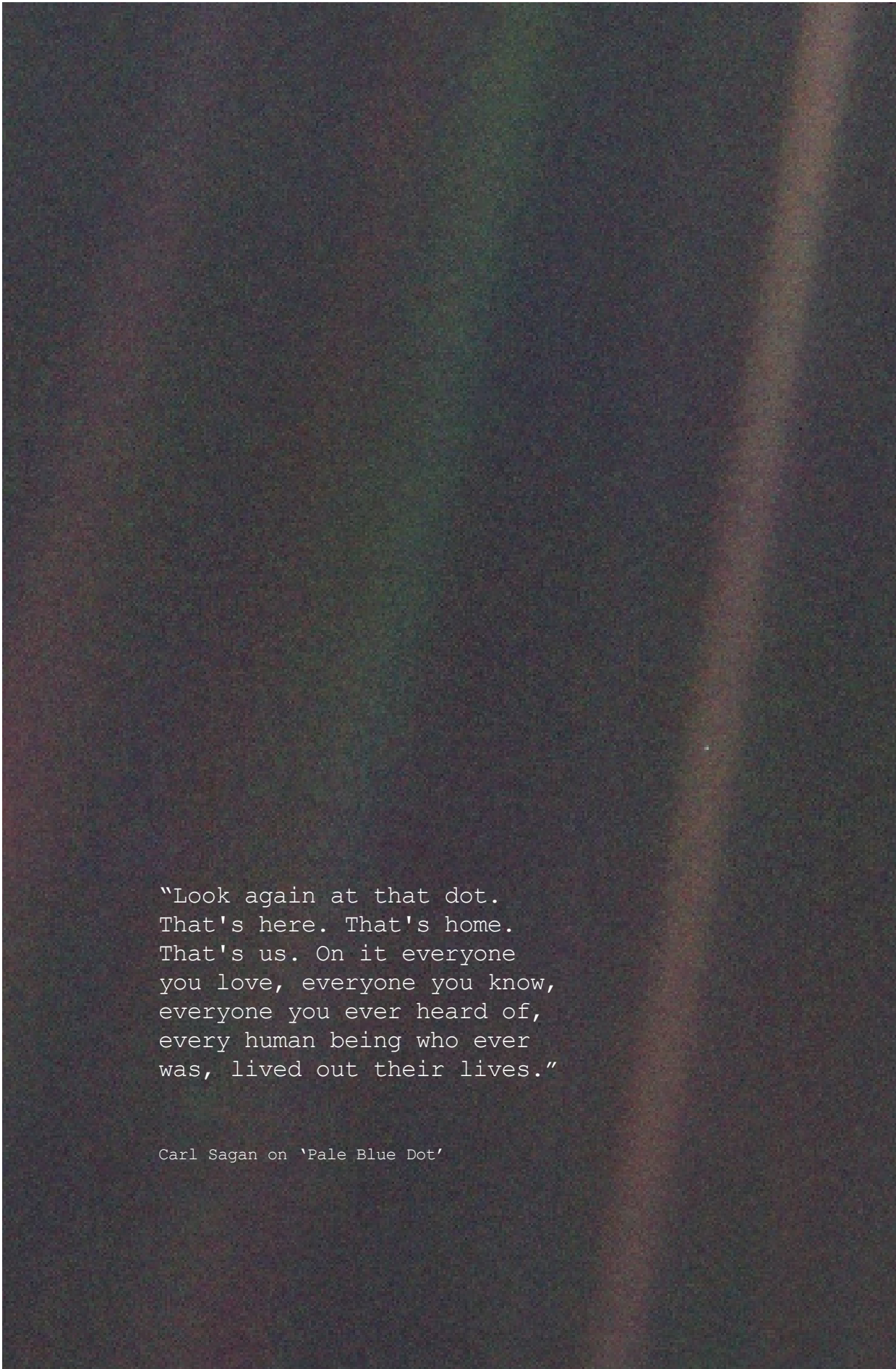
volume 6 | November 2024

on homeness

University of Münster

Literary Journal of the
English Department

*on
home
ness*

A dark, grainy image of a star field. A single, very bright dot is visible in the lower-left quadrant, representing Earth as seen from space. The rest of the image is filled with a dense field of much smaller, dimmer stars.

"Look again at that dot.
That's here. That's home.
That's us. On it everyone
you love, everyone you know,
everyone you ever heard of,
every human being who ever
was, lived out their lives."

Carl Sagan on 'Pale Blue Dot'

Letter from the Editor

When we began crafting this volume, we assembled a new team, envisioned new perspectives, and even coined a new term - *homeness*, an idiom trying to encompass "a plethora of unexplored emotions", exceeding the physical notion of the word "home".

As students of literature and culture, we consider words, books, and imaginary spheres as both a safe shelter to escape to and spaces that help us navigate our reality and make sense of the world around us.

Through these pages, we explore how our perception of home shapes us and how, in turn, we try to shape it: Offering perspectives on homeness as comfort and as discomfort, as a place of belonging and a space of exile, as an idyllic memory, a person, or a lost memory from childhood. For some, homeness carries the warmth of familiarity, while for others, it recalls grief, loss, and hostility.

Whether you find yourself longing for homeness, fleeing from it, or embracing it, I hope this volume invites you to reflect on the many forms homeness can take. These stories, poems, and academic research texts capture the courage, beauty, and often challenging reality of home in a world that feels increasingly transient.

In times of societal uncertainty and political movements that promote a restricting and nationalist understanding of home, homeness becomes a privilege and a fragile luxury.

May these words offer you a moment of shelter and a place to belong.

With love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Verena Meyer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'V' at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail that extends downwards.

Table of Contents

Fiction

within one's reach <i>Anika Hagen</i>	10	brother, elsewhere <i>Yahia Alsallaq</i>	44
I swallowed a hurricane/ Home is where the heart is <i>Miriam Bell</i>	12	Quake <i>Gülsüm Yağmur Akdeniz</i>	46
Hair Legacy <i>E Kraft</i>	16	Way Back <i>Rifa Abdullah</i>	50
Südstadt Haiku <i>Marcel Wienecke</i>	17	Our future has been taken away. <i>Mariia Karacheva</i>	52
Knock, knock! <i>Julia-Francesca Susan</i>	18	haze <i>Iuliana Obreja</i>	54
Kintsugi forever <i>Laura Braun</i>	22	To the people that I haven't met (yet) <i>Melanie Stenzel</i>	56
The Taste of Language and Home <i>Jamie Jungblut</i>	26	rot <i>Julia Iwanetzki</i>	58
Ode for Summer <i>Regina Steitz</i>	28	If the swallows fly low, they indicate rain <i>Patrick Böllner</i>	60
Something About the Light <i>Bethany Andrews</i>	30	In retrospect there was little left and I could have noticed it sooner <i>Selena Knoop</i>	62
Anamnesis <i>Laura Nioumanis</i>	34	Filename: Whereof one cannot speak, one must feel <i>Lina Laewen</i>	66
Dredging the Thames <i>Hannah Grace Smith</i>	36	the one who stayed <i>Emelie Gerds</i>	68
Redacted <i>Aleksandra Sukhodolskaia</i>	40		

Non-Fiction

<p>“Turning to a color at a particular fraught moment” - Configuring the Affect of Grief in Colour and Form(s) in Maggie Nelson's <i>Bluets</i> <i>Anna Westhofen</i></p>	74
<p>Writing (a) Home in Times of Crisis: A Review of <i>Scattered All Over the Earth</i> (2018) by Yoko Tawada <i>Evangeline Scarpulla</i></p>	86
<p>Subverted and Internal: Portrayals of Home in Women's Refugee Writings <i>Carla Martínez del Barrio</i></p>	90
<p>Challenging the Idea of Europe: Representations of Female Transnational Experiences in Chérissa Iradukunda's <i>Broken Object</i> <i>María Auxiliadora Castillo Soto</i></p>	100
<p>#Bookstagram: Where Readers Connect, Discover, and Belong <i>Iuliana Obreja</i></p>	112

About the Journal

the authors	120
the staff	124
the journal	127
acknowledgements	128



Richardson

within one's reach

Anika Hagen

neat stacks of
nesting thoughts
scrape sharply
on clouded tenderness,
carefully tucked away
in hindsight.

bricks of faint suspicions,
waxing and waning
dusty recollections
of familiar laughter
and forgotten walls,
lingering in summer air.

roughly rubbed eyes
search white cloth on tables.
stale crumbs of memories,
coffee stains on worn-out jeans.
domestic familiarity itches,
reaching fingers flinch.

childish naivety grins,
following parental gestures.
toothless smiles gaze
upon fatherly footsteps.
concrete and stones crumble
into withering petals of youth.

dusty recollections
of familiar laughter
and forgotten walls

stale crumbs of memories,
coffee stains on worn-out jeans

I swallowed a hurricane/Home is where the heart is

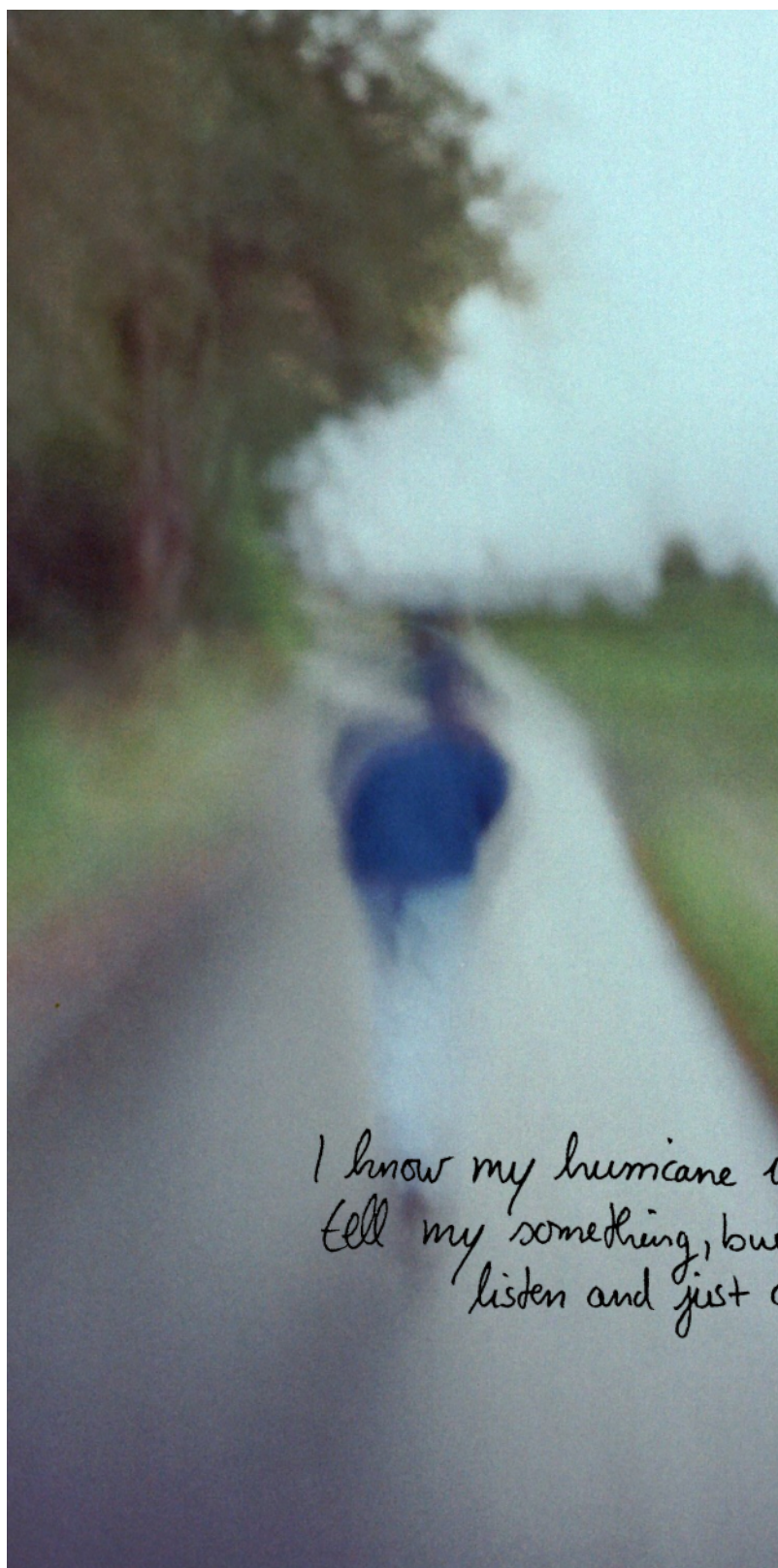
Minam Bell

My left eyelid is twitching barely visibly. I'm frustrated with myself for riding the past's carousel again. I jib at accepting that I was not able to prevent my mother's death years ago. Instead of developing vertigo, I decide to leave my scrapbook behind to hop off and leave the house. Close by, a familiar stretch of land promises to peacefully reboot my system. Walking through the late autumn countryside on a Sunday, wearing my favorite green beanie, could not be more trivial yet fitting the scene. If this day were a page in a picture book, the reader would not be able to find anything unusual in the drawing. Scattered rays of sunlight make their way through the remaining golden leaves of the trees. At the bifurcation still faraway, a majestic chestnut tree has lost its treasures but for a few jewels. It reminds me of the chestnut trees in front of my bedroom window. However, *this page* is bursting with color.

The sky is ice-blue, the air already wintery cool. Small clouds are created by my warm breath but vanish within seconds. A squirrel scurries effortlessly along the branches of the last tree right before the small bridge I'm about to cross. I can hear every step crunching under my shoes as they touch the slightly frozen soil. With my

eyes closed, I turn my face towards the sun and exhale deeply. I can feel my face starting to relax as the lines of worry between my eyebrows soften. My hands, seeking warmth in my coat's pockets, slowly dissolve the pent-up anger having once again resulted in tight fists. I hope to let my thoughts resemble the clouds moving across the picture-perfect sky. While my legs carry me further, body and mind agree to rest for a few minutes. Concentrating on being present, I attempt to enjoy the breezes of calmness rushing through me. Although unfamiliar, I have let go of all tension for a moment.

Suddenly, I realize that my guards have left their post. The surroundings continue to promise peacefulness when I notice a gentle gust entering the stage. It knows its lines by heart as it begins to whisper into my ears: *Will I get sick as well? Will I suddenly lose even more loved ones?* Gradually, the strange lightness turns into discomfort. My own mortality and of the people around me has become my constant companion. The few present clouds have vanished, enabling sunrays to turn the little creek on the left into a sea of glitter. Still, worries gather. I don't know how to control the massive storm that is about to build up within me. Breezes of calmness transform into whirlwinds that trap the air I breathe. Spreading from my heart, I notice the eye of the hurricane turning inside out. The tumult is invisible for the other people passing by who seem to enjoy their Sunday walks albeit I'm internally running on the spot.



I know my hurricane wants to
tell me something, but I don't
listen and just collect rent.

The pent-up weather phenomenon doesn't find a way to escape the invisible duct tape on my mouth that has me choking. My built-in alert system goes off. Fear of losing control transmutes into an electrifying drink that I down slickly to ward off the anticipated deluge of emotions. *Isn't it ironic that hurricanes are known to cause power outages?*, I think and chuckle at my own ability to distract myself from the underlying issue. I feel like 1,500 volts are running through me as I find my shoulders practically glued to my earlobes. It's the power source for a never-ending session of Pinball, the demo version of an old 90s computer game on every Windows computer. It's my task to not drop the ball. Images from the past and future are bouncing chaotically through my mind. I can picture myself fading away like she did. Although not sealed, a certain darkness seems to constantly hover over me.

Since I have become a professional player over the years, I don't even notice the high energy consumption it takes to be part of the game anymore. I tell myself that tension is what keeps people upright. As I use every lever vigilantly to keep the ball from falling into the abyss, my sole thought is *game-on*. I have successfully escaped reality and my idyllic surroundings. I have stopped sensing that I'm hard of breathing. I know my hurricane wants to tell me something, but I don't listen and just collect rent. My redirected mind is occupied with playing a game that leads to nowhere.

Miriam Bell

Hair Legacy

E Kraft

Whispering tales of heritage, resilience
Soft tendrils of infancy transform to silver threads of wisdom
Weaving through the winds of time
Embracing the ebbs and flows of life's journey
Testifying to the ever-evolving nature of beauty and belonging:
An intimate connection to our roots.

Each strand a silent storyteller
Navigating tangles and knots of existence
For in the strands that adorn our heads
Lie the threads binding the rich tapestry of humanity
Lacing our tales between multiple generations
As we stitch our final appliqué into the shared beauty.

*Lacing our tales between multiple generations
As we stitch our final appliqué into the shared*

Südstadt Haiku

Marcel Wienecke

I hear old cars ache
Conjoined with the trucks outside
The noise I abide

When each light goes green
As I open my back door
I hear engines roar

Only at night-time
As I lay in bed awake
Life halts, takes a break

Knock, knock!

Julia-Francesca Susan

She closed the door. She didn't let anyone in.

People were coming in and going out, but she didn't allow anyone in. She was surrounded by familiar faces, eyes she had seen before, mouths she had kissed and hands that had wandered over her skin. But she never allowed anyone in. Some people knew every corner of her apartment, every spider web she hoped nobody would notice. In fact, she was just like her home because everyone who really knew her could see the spider webs and the mess within her, especially in her head, but it was a forbidden territory for every single person in her life. She could clean up herself and never needed anyone else to get rid of the mess. She tried to cover it all and even put up some art pieces she had bought at a flea market, signed by an artist she later looked up on the internet, finding out that he had not a single original idea and was doing everything for the money. She, herself, was a masterpiece, so people would pretend to be distracted by her imperfect perfection. They didn't know they were stepping on a mine field, and she was the ticking bomb.

Now, she couldn't look people in the eye, not even a glance at her own eyes. She shattered the mirror. It was the first thing in her new apartment that reminded her of home. Broken pieces she could see bits of herself in.

Just as she was thinking that she didn't want history to repeat itself, her mum called. This time it was a new ringtone because the old one reminded her of people she had let in in the past.

"Hi, *mama!*" she said even though she would have liked to listen to the new ringtone a little longer.

"Oh, Em, you sound... How are you?"

"I'm fine, mum. Just a bit tired", Em said when she actually meant to say that she is tired; tired of seeing herself in the broken pieces sitting at the dinner table every Friday evening.

"Just wanted to ask if you're alright with stuffed peppers on Friday?"

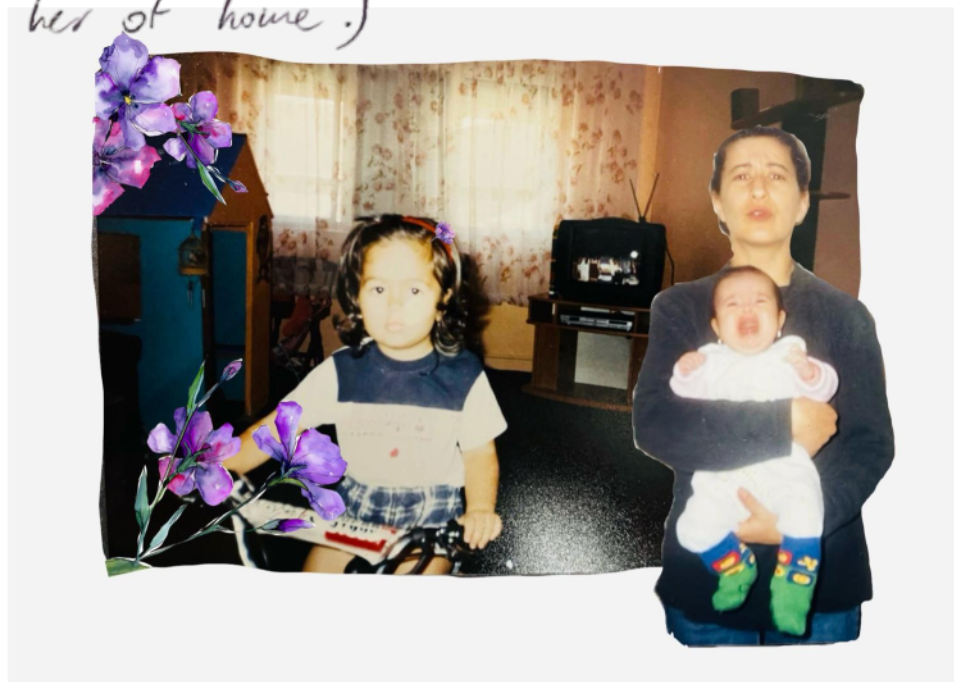
"Yeah, sure mum. I'm fine with that." she said, not wasting her mother's time by telling her that she didn't like peppers. She had never liked peppers. And she had never told her that.

"Perfect, Em! See you on Friday! I miss you!"

If there was one thing she was more tired of than of being reminded of who she was by looking at her broken family, it was the fact that her mum kept calling her Em. Her name was Violet Emaline, but she always introduced herself as Vio. Her mum told her that she loved the violets bejeweling her weekly walks along the river. So, she named her Violet. But the truth was Violet only reminded her of the colour of the bruises her husband put on her body to mark his property. He always said it was an act of love. So, she never called

tired of seeing herself in the broken pieces

(→ It was now the first thing in her new home that reminded her of home.)



her daughter Violet. Emaline means *peaceful home* - her mum looked it up before deciding on a name and that's exactly what she had hoped for after Em's birth. She still hoped for it.

After the call, Vio opened the window because the walls were suffocating her. She wasn't used to being able to open up when she felt her air was being taken away. It was hard for her tongue to carry the weight of her thoughts, so she stayed silent and checked again that her door was locked.

Vio was never told the stories her mum carried with her all along since they never talked about such things. It just wasn't their thing, not only because they were a happy family, but they were a happy family in a happy home, so nobody wanted to destroy that family portrait of theirs. When Vio was little, her mother read bedtime stories to her and sang lullabies. So, Vio never had the feeling that there were monsters living under her

bed. She heard the monster after her mum sang her to sleep and went to the living room, where the monster showed his act of love. The monsters weren't under her bed, she knew for sure. The monster fell asleep on the sofa in the living room every night and made her breakfast the next morning.

When Vio moved out, she felt guilty for leaving her mum behind. But nobody knew that she felt closest to home when she was furthest away. She felt lonely; lonely but safe. She never talked about her longing to share her solitude with someone. Until one day, when looking through the peephole, someone she couldn't recognise was hiding behind a bouquet of violets.

Knock, knock

"Who is it?" she asked, hesitating to even unlock the door.

"It's me, Vio. It's me."

Her eyes lit up and she felt a tear making its way down her cheek. It was the gentlest voice she had heard in years.

She let her in. She let her in, the one who would give her everything her mum never had. Safety. Love. A home. But she didn't know it yet. She didn't know what was to come. For a second, before she opened the door, she forgot about all the happy sad moments and the sad happy people in her life. She felt worthy of her name.
Emaline.

Kintsugi forever

Laura Braun

No matter where my feet touched ground
I felt always rather lost than found
failed to see
that home can be
inside of your skin

if you kiss it good night
and hold yourself tight
maybe bark but not bite
you'll be alright

so I made myself become my castle
I wrapped myself up like a parcel
cause there's fragile things inside
and you should start to treat them right
and if I'm honest - so should I

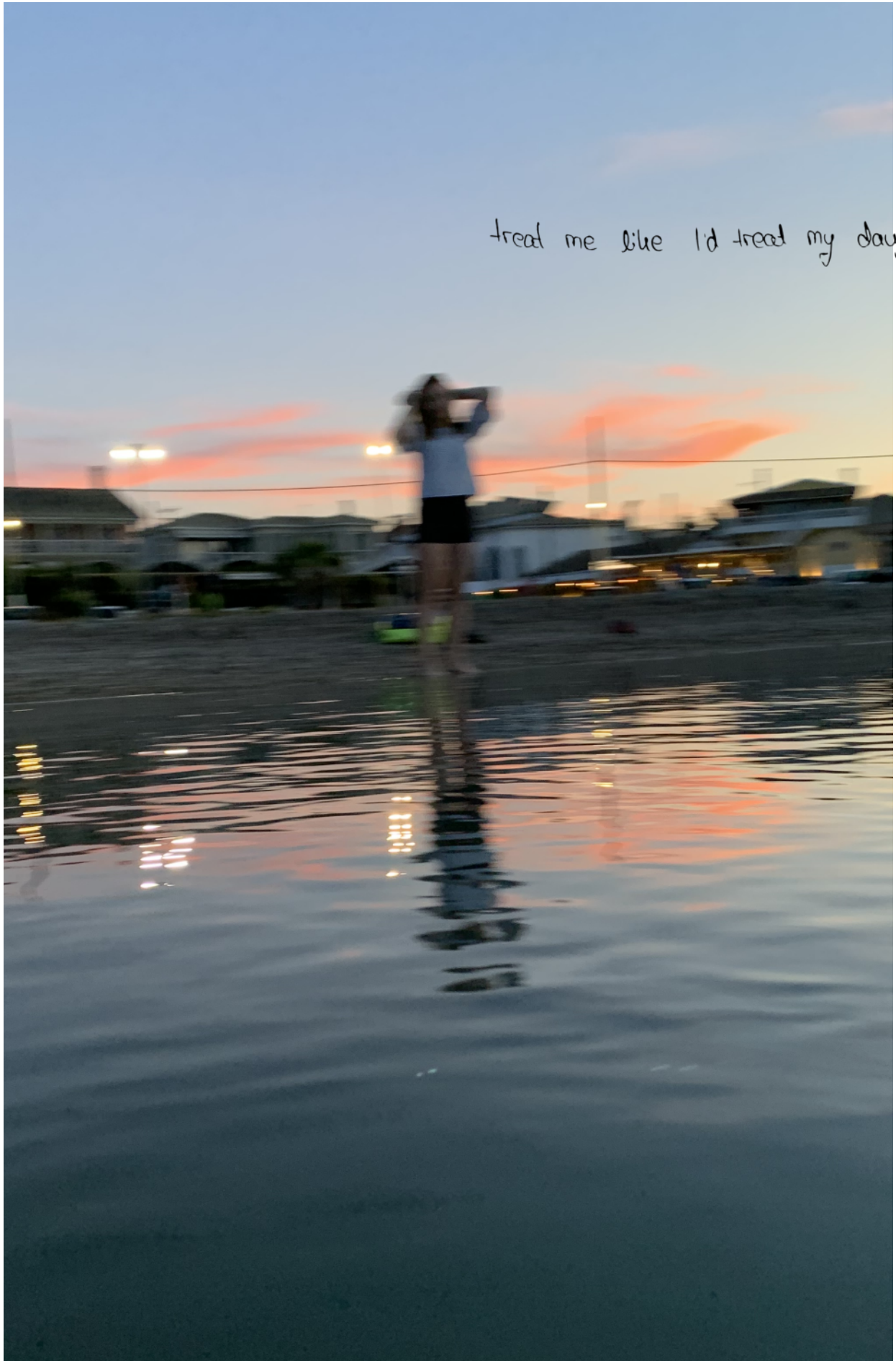
so recently

fresh out of the ashes

I apply all the sunscreen
to keep all the sunbeams
from burning my precious skin
and you might say that I'm too thin
but I eat and eat and eat
to stand safe and sound on feet
that take me everywhere I want to go

I drink all the water
treat me like I'd treat my daughter
buy me flowers
and at night I sleep a solid seven hours

treat me like I'd treat my daughter



cut the red wine and I still don't smoke
even though I love the aesthetic
I keep my bad habits in the attic
and you see me hit the gym
see me not drown but swim
so strong my demons can't beat me
they once used to eat me

alive

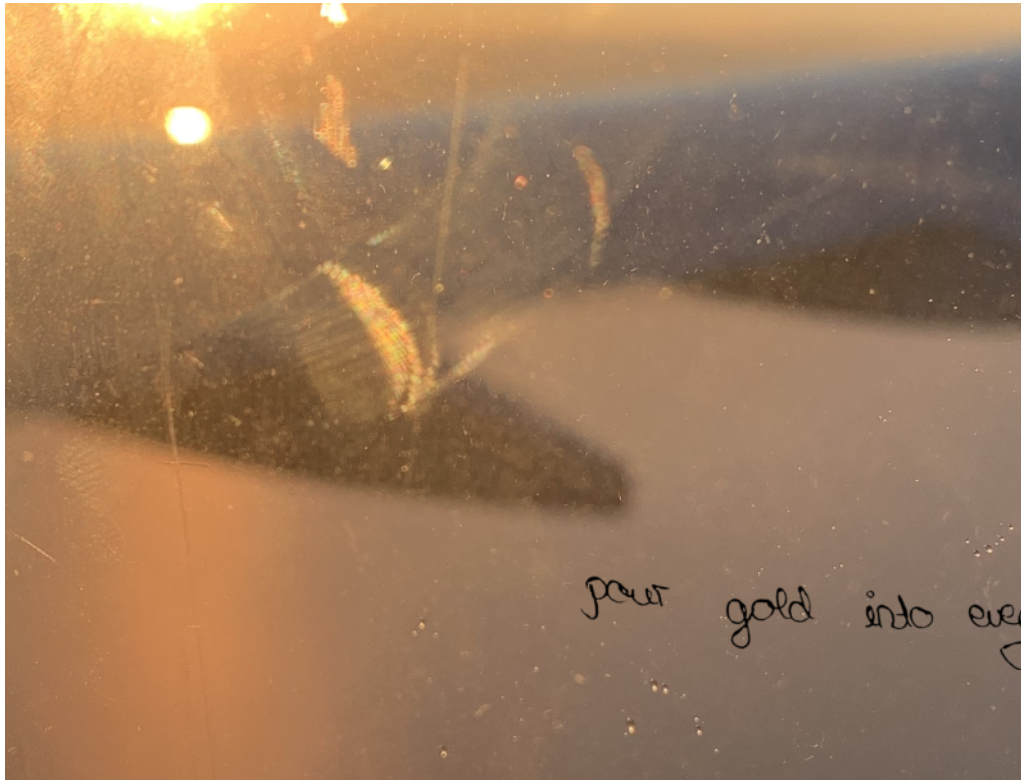
watch me clean the sheets
and give me all the things I need
still working on not crying every night
and not crying when I write
but one step at a time
being sad is not a crime

I don't deserve prison
and neither do you
for taking some time to understand
how to water a sensitive plant
with a gentle hand
and caring words
doing nothing that hurts
the blossoms or the leaves and roots

I take the glass out of my boots
and the pain is now receding
it was time to stop the bleeding
if you want to reap some good things
you have to start with seeding

you should care for your body and soul
pour gold into every hole
Kintsugi forever
I became clever
at least I am better

than before



I want to catch the boulders
that all the people threw at me
I want to lift the ones that I once tied to my feet
hold them over my head
and tell them I'm not dead
even if that's what they read

if I am a phoenix
fresh out of the ashes
and I've healed most of my gashes
don't treat me like a bird
who is broken and is hurt
even if that's what you heard

so don't believe everything you hear
objects in mirror are not as bad as they appear
and there's a chance you can patch up your soul

you are in control

and there is nothing that you lack
but some gold inside a crack

Laura Braun

The Taste of Language and Home

Jamie Jungblut

I feed on language.

Early on, I grew fascinated with the different sensations words create, when they roll off my tongue or onto paper. I adored the diversity of effects I could achieve with every bite full of meaning. But it was not until later that I realized how different every language tastes. It was only logical that, after this discovery, I developed a new hunger. A hunger, somewhat less urgent than that for food, community, or intimacy, but present without pause.

Spanish was the first flavour I actively sought out. It smelled of sun and velvet, a scent that gave me a tugging sensation, which I followed. However, the sounds would not fit in my mouth. I could chew and taste them, but not swallow them. Too full. Too soft. They melted on my tongue. I could not spit them out either. They clotted my mouth... and finally, muted me.

That is when I learned to taste English.

I had known this language for some time but I had never chosen it. English was first to bite me and tore out a good piece of flesh. When I bit back, my mouth was filled with sand. It crunched between my teeth, but I swallowed it anyway. Naturally, my whole throat started itching. The sand crumbled. Grained. And sanded.

I rinsed my inside with water. In the process, the sand became mud and the mud found its way into my stomach. Inside of me, the loads of clag piled up until, slowly, a sand castle grew. Each new bite of English sand was another tower and on its way down, every bite continued to mould my throat. My interior became as smooth as one of those round stones on the beach. More suitable for swallowing sand. The language no longer scratched and grated. It began to taste.

To me, English is round and blue. Like the small globe that I put on the windowsill in my student dorm. Or like the blueberries sold at Tesco. The ones I would buy downhill after my walk through the botanic garden. An addictive taste of freedom and discovery.

I ate it again and again. Blueberries became my favourite food, my only food. I refused to eat anything else and believed that nothing could fulfil me better. Unfortunately, I was eating them too long and too much. The blue lost its flavour. It became a chewy gruel that nourished, but did not satisfy or even please me. Not anymore. While I was living in England, I was drowning in thick blueberry jelly like I was trapped in a swamp. Until my sister visited and brought a feast with her.

For the first time, I actually tasted the German in my mouth. I had not previously realised that German had a taste. I had grown up with it, had always perceived it as pure neutrality. Rich in nutrients, but a little bland.

After the endless blueberries, that had changed.

German is my sister's warm pastry. My mother's orange hug. Chocolate, apple, and salt. Most of the time, German is liquid. I cannot chew it but I can let it wash through my mouth and warm up my insides.

Today I am swimming in this language again. I am full and sated, I feel at home.

Nevertheless, I know that one day German will lose its flavour again. One day, this language too will turn into jelly that sticks to me and in which I slowly drown. But I know what to do then. I will eat blueberries. Or maybe I will try to bite into sun and velvet again. Maybe I will follow another scent and find a new language that fulfils me. For a while. Because my home is not what is familiar. My home is what satisfies my hunger.

My home is what satisfies my hunger.

Ode for Summer

Regina Skib

I used to dream about summer,
the sweet smell of flowers blossoming from carefully tended earth,

plunging into the still water to cleanse my skin from the sticky
film that clings to my body like my leather jacket after a sudden
downpour
to breathe again.

Inhale,
filling the lungs with crisp air,
Exhale,
releasing my body from blistering heat.

I dream of the soft sound of crickets accompanying me on my way
home,

eating fresh strawberries and ripe peaches on our balcony,
paired with the lemon tart we infused with the lemons from our
carefully tended
tree.

But one year has passed,
the seasonal change has brought us to a halt,
the electric encounters we felt, the tingling whenever I was
hearing your voice,
turned into a breakdown.
We are not in sync with each other anymore.

I am dreaming of summer; I am doing all these things I have longed
for after a long
winter,
as I am sitting here,

I watch people plunging peacefully into the tempest sea,
picking flowers to make flower crowns,
eating fresh strawberries.

But as I am biting into the peach that has finally ripened, I find
it tastes too acidic
my lemon tart has turned out too sour,
the acrid fruit burning my tongue,
leaving a trace of bitterness

and as I watch the sun hiding in the distant horizon,
embellishing nature with its last rays, before the cold air of the
night restores the world from sultriness

I think
maybe I have not dreamt of summer,

I have dreamt of you.

Something About the Light

BETHANY ANDREWS



Today is a perfect, sunny 22 degrees Celsius. The clouds are wispy and cotton-batting-like, so thin they're not even white, more of a film over the blue behind them than anything else. The sun falls in perfect slanted squares over the floorboards, the dog sleeps, sighing at my feet, and I should be content. I should love it in this strange land of peace and safety.

Should is a heavy word to carry.

Instead, I'm homesick.

How do I convey what that means, to someone who doesn't already know? I want to romanticize the way it feels, but I also want to warn you. There is a sprawling island of a city that every year spreads

further into the endless expanse of desert around it and it's what some part of my soul refuses to let go of. The defiance of foreign trees where saguaros should reign; building canals and skyscrapers and sporting arenas in this land of extremes feels like hubris akin to Babel. How can a place feel like home when it's so openly hostile?

It's something to do with the light. It's so *much* - so bright and so relentless - the kind of light that you could call holy. A harsh glare that makes you squint your eyes until it all becomes a shimmering, washed-out haze. There are no shadows to hide your exposure to heaven. The sun has no mercy, and the breeze offers no relief. The heat is under your skin and baking everything around you until you can't even remember what "cold" means. You must always carry a bottle of lukewarm water with you, a sort of talisman that never lets you forget that this place can kill

you. Even when you try to escape into the dark of your house, crouched in hiding like an animal in a burrow, it's waiting for you just outside the windows.

It feels like truth or eternity. Then, abruptly, comes the rain. The rain is an absolute, and there is another holiness found as it bears down on anything left out in offering. You stand in it for mere seconds and are wet down to your skin, feeling the rumble of thunder behind your ribs, blinded like a prophet by the flash of lightning. It is immediate and roaring and demands all of your senses. The retribution of flooding on all the roads is swift and certain. You forget that there is anything but your feet on the

soaked earth and the sound of the sky echoing in your chest. You feel baptized and utterly, wholly alive.

It is over as suddenly as it came, and the petrichor smells like mesquite and creosote and hot cement. The fragrance of this incense is unlike any you will ever find anywhere else and which you will never forget - even ten years later and thousands of miles away, you will half-wake from a dream with a lingering sharpness in your nose. After the rain, the mountains in the distance are bluish in the new air, and tomorrow, there will suddenly be wildflowers at the edge of the abandoned train tracks.

But I am not there anymore. I don't know the ways in which my new land might kill me. I have not found my talisman in this place where God seems to incomprehensibly choose to stay in hiding, here where everything is so green and the light so gentle. The rain is only wet. The trees are casting long shadows on the sidewalk.

even ten years later and thousands of miles away
you will half-wake from a dream
with a lingering sharpness in your nose.



Anamnesis



A blackbird sings,
perched on the tree outside my window.
He's disrupted my work,
again.
Charmed, I'm lost in thought.
Ahead, a doorway looms -
a behemoth, beckoning me towards something forgotten.
Despite its drooping hinges and the rusted, broken screws
I step through, longing for a glimpse
of something past.
Glancing back, the image blurs,
receding quickly.
There's something there
but not what was there before.
I rub my eyes and
all that remains is empty space,
a charnel echo -
is it bone dust, or memory?

My heart expands and stretches
like a universe.

There was a big, red door
and cages filled with blueberry bushes,
lest the birds and the rabbits find their way in
and stuff themselves on the tempting fruit.
They always did, anyway.
Our own faces dyed blue
as we delicately pluck the fruit
and bite down on the fragrant sweetness.

I've lost something in transit.

It's spring and
 the cherry blossoms fall like snow.
 I faintly recall the smell of honeysuckle and pine needles,
 the latter smoothing out like a rotting mattress
 under the small copse of trees
 in the front yard.
 Another memory of early summer, the staccato song of cardinals
 ringing through the trees
 as if the world belonged
 only to them.

There is something I've forgotten.

I gaze up at the mist-covered mountain,
 the zenith forever draped in a cloudy haze,
 holding fast to its secrets.
 I turn my head and look with wonder
 at the Mediterranean stretched below.
 On a clear day you could see the entire universe.
 Dreaming of mountain and sea,
 the sounds of artillery fire wake me.
 The soldiers in the army camp
 testing never-used weapons,
 never-needed,
 I wish. I wish. I hope.
 I shut my eyes again.

*I turn my head and look with wonder
 at the Mediterranean stretched below.
 On a clear day you could see the entire universe.*

The memory is obscured.

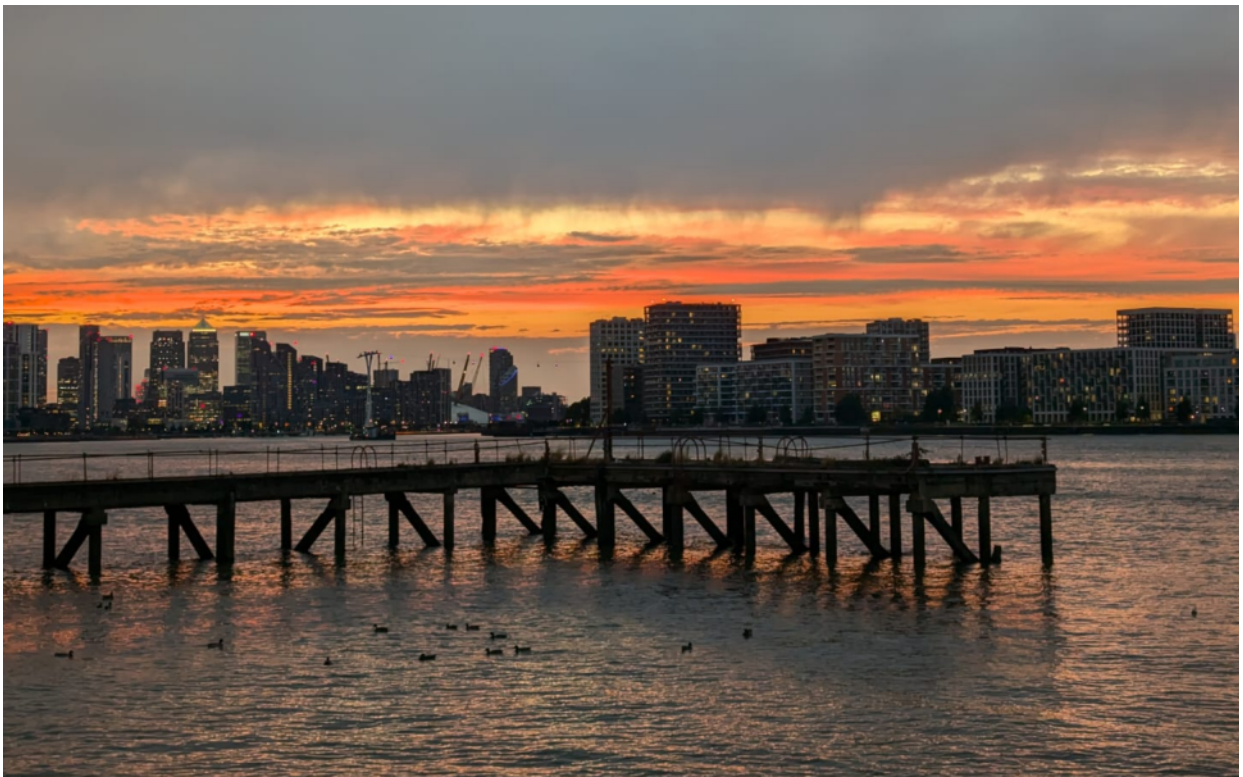
The images swirl around and blur together.
 I stare out of the window
 observing that damn blackbird pulling at my succulents again.
 If only I wasn't so enchanted by his song.
 Another moment gone and I'm looking out of the window at a
 different place.
 Sea.
 Mountain.
 Pine trees.
 Blueberries.
 Blackbirds.

I'm not sure anymore where I don't belong.

Heimat.



and full of ghosts
no one wants to buy
her father couldn't see



Eels inside you

bottles and hands

green under
the swell

perhaps fragile

like weak hands,
stained with blackberries,
red and shaking

like boiling water,
cut with leaves,
steeped and muddied

drawn and quartered

no one wants to buy this

Redacted

Aleksandra Sukhodolskaia

"Good afternoon, passengers. This is the pre-boarding announcement for the flight to *redacted*. We are now inviting those of you with screaming little creatures and anyone battered by life to begin boarding. Please have your boarding pass and identification ready and make sure to look as devastated as possible so we can identify you on your ID. Regular boarding will begin in ten minutes, but your fellow passengers will ignore our announcement and start lining up right now, so feel free to be pressured into joining the line to stand for 30 minutes more until your group is finally called. Thank you."

If I had any advice for immigrants who travel, it would be to never engage in conversations with prying ladies at airports. One moment, they smile at you, and the next, they dissect every bit of your sense of self, chewing onto the leftovers of your

already shabby self-esteem. These pseudo-psychologists are easy to recognize by the look in their eyes. There, in the corner, barely hiding under the saggy eyelids, is the desire to pity a stranger. I believe they are born to smell outsiders and people pleasers. If this applies to you, I advise you to always pretend to be very busy or, at least, pick a point to stare at and don't look around. These women are everywhere. If you meet one - run in zig zags.

Once, I fell prey to one of them. It was as pleasant an experience as hearing from your crush that they like you for your personality and really want to stay friends. I remember it vividly. It was a warm day at the airport. People were rushing by, yelling, throwing themselves at passport control administrators, overall having a great time. The stewards announced the start of boarding. I, a member of the fifth group, instantly joined the standing horde of

passengers. As I assumed my place in a mess of a queue, I noticed her. There she was in her wrinkled grace. Sitting a couple of steps away from me, unaware of our soon-ish acquaintance. As she started raising her eyes, I rushed to look at my phone, which, on the other hand, decided that my moment of need would be a perfect opportunity to dramatically pass out in my hands. The traitor left me aimlessly staring at the floor.

"We are inviting the first group to board," announced the steward tiredly, and I, foolish as I was, looked up.

Our eyes met. She locked in on me. Smiled. Her cloud-like curls bounced as she nodded at me. Charmed, I smiled as well — my mistake. I had nowhere to escape to anymore. I successfully got people pleased into the conversation.

The old lady widened her face into a smile.

- "Are you going to *redacted*, for the first time, honey?" She began her interrogation.

I quickly shook my head, hoping to crawl out of the trap, leaving at least some limbs intact.

- "Oh, me too. Why are you going there?"

- "Ahm..."

I looked around, hoping to find something to distract her with. My mind was empty. She continued staring at me, waiting.

Eventually, I gave up. "I am a student."

- "How wonderful! I used to be a teacher, but now I am visiting my son..."

She went on and on talking about her family history, tracing all the way back to the days of Abraham Lincoln. Immersed in her monologue, she cheerfully spilled the tea about all of her relatives. Her dandelion curls hypnotised me. My body relaxed. People were passing us by. Her voice enveloped me like a rope, tightening. I smiled as she compared her grandson to a



waddling octopus. Then, her question cut through the illusion.

- "I can hear some kind of accent when you speak. Where are you from?"

I drew in a sharp breath. Maybe the address where my parents lived would satisfy her curiosity.

- **redacted**.

I forced a smile.

"The fourth group, welcome on board!"

Just a little bit longer.

- "Oh no, where are you really from?"

What does she want to hear from me? I remember telling her that I am a student. Maybe she'll like that answer instead.

- "That small place in **redacted**."

- "Hmmm."

She frowned.

- "But before that, where did you live? Where is your home?"

I looked at the steward. They looked back at me. But they didn't call for my group yet. The old vulture was still waiting for my answer.

What could I say? Which place did she expect me to say? Did she want to hear about that one? The scenery of which I was not able to recall anymore. The one whose smell has weathered away from my mind a long time ago. The one whose shadow still looms somewhere in my voice, evident to the stranger but already invisible to me.

The steward was quiet. She was quiet. I was quiet, too.

I cannot call it home anymore.

I cannot admit I don't remember my home anymore.

She kept staring.

The steward kept staring.

But I guess for her, I cannot be without a home.

I guess this void in my mind is *the home*.

"I am from... **redacted**..."

The woman grinned, satisfied.

She liked my answer.

Aleksandra Sukhodolskaia

brother, elsewhere

Yahia Alsallag

after Agim Shala, before Alan Shenu, far from the World Trade Center

my brother loved watermelons, our home
was modest, with praying rugs. we locked
our doors, our eyes bound by ropes; the sun
could never seep
in.

my brother slept with tealights scattered around
our home. we'd walk carefully, afraid to
disturb their flames, our shadows flicker
in distress, a lighthouse devoured by
our fears.

my brother spoke of our childhood, a whisper
lost in the roar, shockwaves, broken
glass. family portraits on the
wall, the windows blown
off.

my brother learned how to swim, he'd
dream in strokes, burying a
friend, imitating the butterfly
he caught in a jar, last
July.

my brother grew his hair out, he touches
his split ends, weaving towards
the tips, he inherited father's
love, but not, his bald
spots.

my brother touches his curls, remembers drones
humming, memorizing the smell of
missiles, thermally guided
our cold feet tread *another*
day.

Quake

Gülsüm Yağmur Akdeniz

Everybody knows, including myself – from day one – it is just the tremors occurring naturally. Maybe we get used to it in our new daily rush of relocating for a safe shelter.

where I am from

day one

It took me one delayed ticket from the capital “grey” city to reach the apricot land. Just a week ago, I was home alone, half-covered in flour and kneading my heart out for a cinnamon roll, while we were wine-drunk and uncontrollably laughing with my favourite cousin. Suddenly, with a confused mind and a wounded heart, I waited for the first flight of the day. Although I have never lived in my homeland longer than three months, many lifetimes of my ancestors built and fell there. If my anger had faded away as it did this winter, I was to stay put for the new underpaid job. Yet, I failed, and my brother gave me a ride to the airport amidst a snowstorm. This is a calling from the homeland and I am answering it, even if it is mildly boring to stand by for an extra five hours. I felt under pressure to make sense of it when the earthquake hit. I was there, at the right time, in the right place so I named it “Calling”. As blood relatives of mine get used to landslides, I can get used to quakes in a heartbeat.

day seven

Up and down one time on a plane to get right where I am from, it snows for fifteen hours straight as predicted. “Cyclones”, the bulletin said, brought icy storms. What a time to be alive when we sit on a plastic sheets to slide down the slope with my mother. All of us celebrated the 54th birthday of my father with chocolate



"Cyclones brought icy storms."

For some people, it takes a lifetime
to find home



cake, no balloons. Life doesn't feel like a big to-do list anymore because I was here for an ancient purpose. Nevertheless, this is what they believed, because I had a dream of a disaster before it happened. It should've been the exhaustion from pickling red cabbages for the rest of the winter, and nothing more.

the night

If my memory hasn't been deceiving me, this is what memories are famous for, I remember every second. I was awake all night, thanks to my new playlist. I was reflecting on a great day I had with my cousin. I woke up unexpectedly as soon as I felt the tremors beneath me. It had happened to me before, so I thought, and I immediately knew. I walked on and got down. Nothing worked. I kissed my mother's forehead thinking it was the last time I'd see her. If the inherited landslide syndrome didn't end my lineage, shaken ground would've done it for them. It felt like true revenge. The statement comes from stuck-up aggression over eroded cities under rubble piles and snow. People have lived and died in their

homes. These were the places where they should celebrate their next birthdays. The place where they bake rolls in the middle of the night and host their friends and families. The place where they have dreams and nightmares, yet they're in the safety of their home when they wake up.

One morning and two nights outside followed by a week in an abandoned concrete house with two kangals. We weren't just escaping from the collapsing buildings. We couldn't stop until we found warmth somewhere. For me, it took a couple of weeks to reach the warmth. For some people, it takes a lifetime to find a home. I was sleeping in a tiny room with ten other people. We found a way for only four of us to leave the apricot land with a truck.

Finally, a week later, I was on the intercity bus watching the sundown at the Anatolian steppes, wondering if seeing through the city would be possible. What if their hearts are still beating back and forth? My heart became boiling water. I had sores on both my eyelids and my wrists were blue and black. Anything can wake me up from my sleep that is slightly warmer than the air floating around now.

Before I left my home for my homeland, I had both. Two weeks later, my homeland is one big graveyard.

Way Back



At mid-day I walk away from any conversation.
Friends! faces, places, smells
Like footloose vagabonds perching on clouds of Tephra
Amid I reel speechless tiptoeing warm ash, fumbling words
Till the last hour o'clock.

A crimson rapture - illumination - I can see!
"Good afternoon! Have a soporific frenzy"
In the distance, I hear mirth, scowling fiends, and jazz.
Don't I need some sleep?
"Not going to be there for you"
Tea time with Masoch?
Or Coffee with Sade, Sodo, and me!

Darkness for all eternity
I think I'm in love - all that means is that I'm able to think.
Forever is a very long time.
Shut the main door through.

Like a copy of a copy of a copy,
I get myself together into a dandelion and wait for a kiss
Of death I have no memory.
A small pink blob, I saw somewhere on a screen of a monitor on the
screen of a monitor
that appeared out of the event horizon of a black hole.
"That thing will grow limbs and become a Quaking Aspen, you moron"
In a month she'll be back on routine bleeding a safe distance away
from the sun.

Hereby,
My mind-forged manacles testify.
All day the metrosexual express impregnates street-smart stoics
All walks of life meet destiny by the virtues (only) of desire.

How can it be that my own tongue fails me
When it hurts everywhere
All the time
There is no way to say anything - nothing at all - without sounding
like a fool.
Now I know,
"I hate cats"- that little rascal will never know, how sweet
You are mine and I know no way of saying.

So, at mid-day I walk away from any conversation,
Hoist a flag of silhouetted rainbows, smoke the day's last
cigarette, chop myself into small pieces, feed me to the trees, and
follow the sweet scent of my sweat to find my way back home.

Our future has been taken away.

Marina Karachova

They pulled the carpet from under our feet, took away the solid ground on which we all stood, stole the horse from under our asses. I don't know if it's just me, but I see no way ahead - only a faint hint of a path, overgrown with hogweed.

Yet no one thinks that we used to have a past - and they took that away, too. All those things that stored memories within: a gigantic velvet-bound photo album; the two orchids that have grown out of their pots over the years, each gifted by my godmother on the days my sisters were born; the cat-gnawed corners of my favorite children's book; the pink geranium I planted with my nanny when I was four; the chess set that lost its white knight with my dead grandfather's signature etched on the inside of the wooden box.

Not only the material things - they took away the feeling of

belonging, the walls of the house and the streets of the city. They set up barricades between me and my childhood hometown - between me and the centuries-old bridges which I passed under on a small boat in the summer. I reach out to touch the water of the gulf, but it's a mirage. My skin is always dry from the lack of humidity.

They haven't spared a childlike love for my country, either. They killed the urge to stand up during the national hymn; the dream of traveling the Golden Ring and to the world's deepest lake; the proud smile that appeared when my family's cheers for the national football team 'helped' them score a goal. They stole that love, abused it, poured gasoline over it and set it on fire.

The white, blue and red flag is a trigger. I want to take it in my hands and wash off the old,

dried, ingrained blood so that the sky-blue river and the snow surrounding it are the only things left on it.

No more coming back. No more walking along the alleys of the island-bound park, no more drinking coffee at my favorite coffee shop with baristas I had known since 9th grade. No more stroking stray cats, no more inhaling the smell of bird cherry in the spring, no more hearing that familiar sound of a key in the door.

They took it all away. Smearred it with oily hands as gleeful smirks split their Botox-filled mugs, trampled on the most important things, on the basics.

Only memory is left, but then again, it's unreliable - and it's weak. Memory gives up in the face of greed. How else can the war be explained?

Babies fall out into the world sinless and pure. Those who are childish don't understand much, but they are very interested in everything. And they don't know what will happen next, yet they know that another day will

come. "It can't be that nothing happens - something, surely, will," as my father, who grew up in a village, used to say.

And we - we are without the fulcrums but with the experience of losing them. Traumatic experience.

Beaten, poisoned. Floating and purposeless. As if reborn, but mom is not around, we're not at home, and there is no soft blanket around our shoulders.

Maybe we didn't have a future to begin with. Or maybe we were convinced of that by the brazen-faced, by the ever-hungry, by those lucky enough to end up near the gravy train.

There's no yesterday, today we're missing and misplaced, and tomorrow is uncertain.

And this is my youth. My best fucking years. I feel old, even though I am yet to have something in my life.

Something good.

Mariia Karacheva

haze

Juliana Obreja

Why should I rub my eyes with the bridge of my palms,
repeatedly and nervously,
to recognize your facial features?

Why should I blink,
so disturbed,
that my pupils go dry just to recognize your
smile?

Why should I force my body to ache
and scream and
let tears run down my kindled cheeks just so I could
feel your gaze?

Why should I prepare my own torment so that you can feast on your
lust for me?

I see you in a blur, and this time,
I didn't blink to get a closer
look.



To the people that I haven't met (yet)

Melanie Stenzel

Dear People that I haven't met yet,
I know I will meet you eventually. And you
will meet me. Not the current me. The
current me is still searching, slowly
finding, and always looking. The current me
still does not know where she'll end up and
how she'll find you. But she will,
eventually. She will be different from now,
but you'll recognise me, don't worry.

You are currently out there, doing your
thing, and maybe also not knowing where
your path will lead you. Maybe you will
change your favourite colour a few times
before we meet, maybe you will move around.
Maybe you will stay where you are and one
day, I will go to you, finding you,
wherever you are.

One day, we will cross the streets together,
share hellos and hugs and goodbyes. We will
be thirty or sixty or ninety and laugh, and
cry, and think together.
Some of you will not be in my life forever.
Maybe we will share a job or share a street
sign or maybe even share a bed, then separate
again. Or maybe we will stay together, until
the end of one of us. Maybe we will hope for
a forever, only for it to be cut short.

We will get wet under the same clouds and
cuddle under our umbrella, smile, because
the sun is out and jump into the waves of

the ocean together.

Some of you will hold my hand, some of you will read my books, and for some of you, I will cook. I make great scrambled eggs and maybe one day, you will get to taste them. And maybe I'll taste your food too.

Maybe I will not even get to meet you. Maybe tragedy or coincidence or simply a decision will keep us apart and we will never know. Maybe the timeline is wrong. Maybe others will take your place. I hope we still make it.

To the people that I haven't met yet. I am looking forward to sharing all the adventures the universe has for us. The good, the bad and the very pretty. Let's meet soon. I can't wait!

Love, xx

Melanie Stenzel

rot

Julia Swanitzki

a nanosecond longer

in this

house

of rot

and disease

and long forgotten dreams

and I will crumble into

pieces

of overripe fruit

left

abandoned

and

uncared for

to rot

by herself

in slow

decay

and thrown up fragments

of a person

once whole.

decaying

in a sea

of

blood

with particles

of

ancient scars

that no one ever cared to heal.

abandoned

uncared for

once whole.

If the swallows fly low, they indicate rain

Patrick Böttner

Oh, it's a mystery to me. How something of the past becomes the motor of the present, a messiah of a future. What I am talking about is the moped Simson KR51 which is more commonly known as "Schwalbe" - the German word for the passerine songbird swallow. The older the model, the better. If you can get your hands on such a scooter produced and licensed before February 28, 1992, you can ride legally at a pace of sixty kilometers an hour. Twice as fast as the first driving license could get you at the age of fifteen - a fortune having to do with old East German registration rules, that no one really understood. It was in its function not merely a moped but a sacred time machine, a way of delivering oneself at high velocity out of the present into a future. Escaping what was left of time. Although if one were to close his eyes and try to envision such a machine, he wouldn't necessarily think of two tires on a blue steel frame looking like the East German socialist

copy of an Italian Vespa, a symbol for a united German *dolce vita*.

Yet they were hotly sought after and easily found in the villages, as our fathers held them at our age as well - the longing to flee, not a play programmed into teenage brains, but a duty inherent to a bounded life. Trying to break out before the invention of Google Maps, most of them got lost, ran out of fuel, or crashed like my father. He still has a mark sitting on his right shoulder - the devil, in the size of his old man hand. Holding back and reminding him of his rainy tragedy.

No one ever got as far as I did.

I decide to head back in time. The ancestral Time Machine between my legs and the sixty kilometers unfolding before my eyes.

If the swallows fly low they indicate rain.
Altogether it is quite the remarkable bird.

It can only launch itself into flight by
diving off of something high, staying
airborne for 10 months of the year, feeding
and sleeping on the wing.

Diving down the road I know, I launch
myself into the past. Traversing into
adulthood, I have spent more than three
years fluttering. Flying so low that there
is nothing ahead of me but storm. Amidst
storm and wind there is a glimpse of
homeness ahead - already shivering, I
accelerate. I accelerate until the engine
roars. I accelerate until there is nothing
left to shiver.

And I seem to wander endlessly between the
trees that frame the federal highway and
the trees that frame this lifelong tragedy.

The rain awakens me. Caught by the trees
and thrown back at a guarded, frightened
face. My guard is the glass. The glass of
the window, the glass resting on my nose.

How am I to find a home with something
blocking my sight?

Even sixty kilometers per hour won't take
me off the ground.

In retrospect there was little left and I could have noticed it sooner

Selena Knopp

The diffusion of my mother took place
Quietly at first. Yet
A lot louder after a while when
The curtains were ripped down
And changed for ones so thick and heavy,
Confining me to stuffy rooms until
My suffocation did not surprise.

The orange was replaced with blue,
Just not the good kind,
The dull greyish kind that
Reminded me of bad hostels and mental wards.
Imitating the presence of colour, but
Not quite brave enough to be a colour itself.
Ornamental teacups switched for
A bottle of vodka with a piece of
Bison grass inside, a taste of mouldy citrus.
Not knowing what it meant, I
Sometimes took a sip of it before school,
Still thinking drinking was childish.
And I smoked her cigarettes
In the shower, between unfinished tiles
And rotten silicone.

What emerged was an irregular pattern,
But a pattern nonetheless that
Could not be hidden behind a stilted laugh
On the park bench, or knowing the right time to
Pull his vocal fold taut
(which would give you chills every time) and
When to explode into the glottis
(no reaction) strewing
The smallest particles across untreated wood,



In the end we set fire to the couch and
Decided to exist without definition.

Large drops of my newfound awe of
Anastomosing vessels



Imitating the presence
of colour, but
Not quite brave enough to
be a colour itself.

Which ripened into a fetid smell of
Artificial sweetener and opaque plastic.

I felt I could see my mother's edges
Liquifying into a shape that I could
Never quite determine, though not for
A lack of trying. Giving her
So many nicknames it was hard to keep up but
Never mum, because it did not feel appropriate
To push something like this into something like that
and
Getting a sense of her
By indulging in reading her emails, my heart stuck
In my throat and a burning sensation along the
oesophagus, but
Alone with her at last.

In the end, we set fire to the couch and
Decided to exist without definition.
Choosing red curtains this time that would turn your skin
Translucent when the sun came in,
Exposing every vein beneath, like
Being covered in a vague mycelium, grasping
Large drops of my newfound awe of
Anastomosing vessels and
Never feeling vulnerable again.

*a fetid smell of artificial sweetener
and opaque plastic*

Filename: Whereof one cannot speak, one must feel

dina laewen

I have felt homeless for many years, in the broadest sense. When I was seventeen, I ran away from my mother's home and moved to my father's until I graduated school a year later. Those wounds still haven't healed; my mother feels it, too. Sometimes, when I look at her, I can see it reflected in her clear eyes and in the lines around her mouth. I can feel her broken heart, a twin of my own, pounding through my chest. My mother lives in me, and it eats me from the inside out.

I smell her perfume on a stranger on the train, and there it is, another one of those moments, those wondrous keyframes. Just the trace of scent, a fragment of a second that splits my body from my mind. It transports me back, through time and space, to the days of my childhood. My mother, honey hair in an updo, her well-worn beige coat wrapping around her like a second skin, spreads her arms, and I run into her embrace,

inhaling her scent as I reach her. Lemon, flowers, home. Behind us, my teacher waves goodbye. *See you tomorrow.* It's another spring day in 2011.

The streets in the town I now live in have the same eclectic look of those in trendy districts of big cities. Thin trees to every side that turn them into lush avenues each summer. Colorful facades, blue, yellow and red, with big windows and graffiti-smearred doors. Cobblestones. Secondhand shops and vegan cafes. I still feel out of place sometimes.

As I walk, the wind and the light change, even though the sky is clear. Maybe it's just a synapsis in my brain that snapped. The city looks different now, familiar and eerily strange at the same time. The angle from which I normally look up at the tall fronts is not quite right. It's distorted. A blurry negative of reality, vibrating on another frequency. Why do I suddenly move so differently? I'm a

stranger in an unknown city, seeing the bright townhouses with their whimsy windows and doors for the first time. There is a taste of adventure in the air.

Somewhere in a tiny backroom of my brain, a memory stirs and wakes. I'm twelve and full of an indistinct yearning for faraway places. The houses in my hometown look like those in England. Like the England I imagine while reading books about magical schools. I'm twelve, and books are my home.

You sit on my kitchen counter, a cigarette in one hand and a half-empty soda can in the other. Sugar-free, naturally. The room is too small for a table and chairs, so we crouch uncomfortably next to the sink. We watch TikTok on your phone; you don't scroll at the clip that says: "°*, ask your friends which kind of sky you are.*°" I snort at it, but I secretly hope you say I'm the golden sky.

"You're definitely the fourth," you say. Ah. The golden sky. I play it cool. I must stop my heart from beating so fast. It is a stupid video and a stupid little sentence, casually said without deeper meaning. Silly hope washes over me and I feel foolish. I want

to look at you and ask *Do you see me?* (*Can you grasp my essence?* No one has ever done that before.)

You don't know that I categorize those in-between moments, those glimpses of the past, in a nameless file in my mind. Nameless because I can't possibly shape the feeling into words. Every time I think I have found a way to describe it, it slips away. The feeling is abstract, but the same for all those moments, nonetheless. The closest I have come to describing it is associating it with golden skies. I think I might be heliophilous. Each tiny moment, a little snippet cut out from the endless amber sky.

What am I, if not patches of my past?

Lina Laewen

the one who stayed

Emilie Gerdtz

the one who stayed,
I've never asked you
how it is
to be the one.

I'm sorry you're the one
who has to live up
to their expectation.
suddenly, I am the rule
and you're the deviation.
you're the only place
where they are heard
with all the problems they have
with you and the world.

I'm sorry you're the one
who now holds
their weight on your back
when they speak.
who is the object
of their hopes
and all their critique.

I'm sorry you're now
the child
the project
the concern
the burden.

I wish I could take you with me,
but
not to let you down it's not any better here
in a lonesome town.

you're on your own
now, kid

where you walk the fine line
between a smile for the future
and a cry for the past.
where you don't know
if you're homesick
or just sick of yourself.

they're too far away now
to see my failures or hear
how messed up I am
while yours are loud and clear.
words were never your armour
like they were for me
I'm sorry that yours are
the only ones they see.

trust me when I say
they only love what I could be
they only miss what I once was.
trust me when I say
when you go someday
they will treat you just the same
like some long-lost friend
a returning soldier
coming back to the war
he tried to escape.



they only love
what I once was

I'm sorry you're the one
who endures the silence
at the dinner table.
who smiles happily
so they can feel assured
they are somewhat a family.

I've never asked you
how it feels
to be an only child.
I'm sorry you're
the only one now
I really want to help
but I don't know how.

I can only do
what I always did
play your games with you
but you're on your own, kid.

I'm sorry you're
the one who stayed,
the only child.
I'm so sorry.
I left you behind.

- *Quinn S.*



non-
fiction

“Turning to a color at a particularly fraught moment” – Configuring the Affect of Grief in Colour and Form(s) in Maggie Nelson’s *Bluets*

Anna Westhofen

What we know about grief: it, from a loss. This is largely all we know of grief. That loss might be material (your body I adored), sensual (the sight she once had), geographical-historical (the home he had to leave), ephemeral-ideational (the ideology they saw fail). This, too: the affect of grief is a uniquely painful suffering – (‘No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief, / More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring’), and it is painful because the lost thing was valued highly – wanted, needed; it sustained; it defined; it was loved.

– Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects*

How can one articulate – see through – the burdensome experience of the loss of a loved person and the grief that ensues from that experience? is the crucial question that Maggie Nelson’s book *Bluets* (2009) poses and persistently recurs to. In an attempt to formulate the grief resulting from the painful absence of a lover, the book’s unnamed narrator turns to ‘blue’ – “the word and the

condition, the color and the act, [which] contrive to contain one another” (Gass 11). Appropriating genre conventions of the literary form of the prose poem, the book’s 240 hierarchically ordered propositions possess “poetic ambiguity” (Delville 137) and are yet driven by a narrative line (137). *Bluets’* propositions encapsulate the narrator’s exploration of broader

philosophical, cultural-historical, and scientific meanings of the colour blue as well as their subjective insight into the experience of heartbreak and suffering, which ultimately builds the book's overarching narrative structure.

Building on Eugenie Brinkema's theoretical conceptualisation of 'affects as forms,'¹ I argue that the personal grief of *Bluets'* narrator configures, dwells, and develops in *forms* – it materialises in blue objects, the engagement with other people's works and writings on the colour blue, and, crucially, *Bluets'* literary form itself. Departing from the most constitutive notion of 'affect' as an evasive yet socially relational and organising force that exists beyond emotion and arises from the encounter between bodies and objects (Seighworth and Gregg 1-2; Brinkema 24), I will close read *Bluets'* propositions for grief as a form of affect. Throughout this paper, my analysis of grief will be guided by the question "how it [the literary text] means, not just *what* it means" (Johnson 348). My methodological approach, thus,

entails a strong emphasis on *Bluets'* stylistic, poetic, and formal details put forth *in* and *through* the "close encounter[r]" (Gallop 17) with the literary text. In this paper, I will begin by offering a close analysis of how the intimate and inimitable grief that occurs from the experience of lost love manifests in forms in *Bluets'* prose poems. In consequently focusing on the affective functions that, in the propositions, the narrator ascribes to 'blue' as a physical phenomenon, I will examine how their grief materialises in formal structures such as light, line, and colour as exterior dimensions (Brinkema 37). Finally, I will turn to the question of how the affect of grief is inscribed in *Bluets'* literary form and informs the narrator's reflections on the possibilities of expressing their experience of grief by means of language.

Grief: Contours of an Affect

The loss of someone who was loved calls the grieving subject to turn to "[t]he 'essence' or the ephemeral, presumed moments of

¹ In her work *The Forms of the Affects*, Brinkema insists on an approach of close reading *affect* as plural (xii) and, thereby, emphasises the manifold *forms* of affect (xv). In turning to Brinkema's analysis of affect in the scope of this paper, I will primarily focus on grief as a singular affect that manifests in different forms (that is, various forms of grief).

absolute events and encounters of which repositories are now remiss of any archive or words" (85) to borrow from the apt words of Tina Chatterjee. Such memories which are at first interiorised by the grieving subject (85) function as referents that, in the continuing absence of the lost other, solidify in forms. Leaning on Roland Barthes' analysis of grief's untransformable dimension that takes shape in the undialectical visualisation of the lost other through the externalised structure of the photograph (91), Brinkema develops a rethinking of grief as a formal affect. Such a reconceptualisation of grief as form does not dismiss the psychological dimensions of interior grief altogether – rather, Brinkema insists on a theorisation of grief as *also* figuring as a formal affect that "inheres in material objects, [and] takes shape in an exteriority and formal structures bound up intimately with light" (76). Hence, in primarily close reading grief as a "textual and visual form" (116), grief protrudes as an undialectical presence that materially renders

the absence of a loved other or meaningful abstraction (57).

A configuration of grief as enduring in material objects and formal structures unfolds as a recurring theme in *Bluets'* propositions: in their quest to fathom the loss of a lover, the narrator's grief manifests in their devotion to the colour blue and the poetic undertaking to formulate its various meanings. For the narrator, grief's static structure exposes in blue's "non-relational" (76) physiological "presence" (*Bluets* 28):² "Over the years I have amassed countless blue stones, blue shards of glass, blue marbles, trampled blue photographs peeled off sidewalks, pieces of blue rubble from broken buildings" (*B* 69). However, the narrator's commitment to trace various nuances of blue in found objects, gifted tokens, paintings, landscapes, and the materiality of synonyms of blue is not a mere distraction from heartbreak. Rather, the ontological presence of the colour blue holds the "function of an affect" (Golovchenko 54): blue, the colour, stands in place of the once intimate but now absent lover and, thus, bears the affectivity of the narrator's grief. In this respect, the "community of blue" (58) conjured in the lines of *Bluets'* propositions represents the attempt to *form* an absence. Grief becomes "concrete" (Brinkema 97) in the

² Further references to *Bluets* are subsequently abbreviated as *B*.

The double bind of blue looms in its affective quality to equally produce desire and pain in the narrator; in other words, in the face of loss, blue evokes felt proximity and intense longing at the same time.



narrator's corporeal and, in the literary form of the propositions, metaphorical "gather[ing] [of] 'fragments of blue dense'" (B 68).

The narrator's affective attachment to the colour blue reflects the vain endeavour to trace in their love of blue "a related form of aggrandizement, to inflate a heartbreak into a sort of allegory" (B 75). In the course of the propositions, the narrator's love of blue and their memories of their lover shift and are persistently reformulated: at times, the sight of blue made the narrator "suddenly hopeful" (B 12), leading them to the conclusion that "for the moment, I can't think of any times that blue has caused me to despair" (B 13). Further into the text, as the narrator's meditations develop, the narrative about blue breaks: "And so we arrive at one instance, and then another, upon which blue delivered a measure of despair. But truth be told: I saw them as purple" (B 50-51). The double bind of blue looms in its affective quality to equally produce desire and pain in the narrator; in other words, in the face of the loss, blue evokes felt proximity and intense longing at the same time.

Early into the book, the narrator thus concedes: "So what could it be a symptom of, to start seeing colors – or, more oddly,

just one color – more acutely? Mania? Monomania? Hypomania? Shock? Love? Grief?" (B 12). In fact, grief's pain surfaces in light as becomes apparent in the narrator's allegorical recurrence to the complex physiological processes of colour vision in the book. Proposition 52, for instance, states:

[...] Fifteen days after we are born, we begin to discriminate between colors. For the rest of our lives, barring blunted or blinded sights, we find ourselves face-to-face with all these phenomena at once, and we call the whole shimmering mess 'color'. You might even say that it is the business of the eye to make colored forms out of what is essentially shimmering. This is how we 'get around' in the world. Some might also call it the source of our suffering. (B 20)

The ability to see and, consequently, *be affected by what can be seen* is inextricably linked to the formal structures of the narrator's grief. Yet, the attempt to transform visually perceived images of quotidian blues into poetic imagery dissolves into bleak metaphorical formulations ("How all of these formulations drain the blue right out of love and leave an ugly, pigmentless fish flapping on a cutting board on a kitchen counter." [B 18]). To distinguish between colours (thus, to feel love and desire for another person) implicates delusion which,

inevitably, leads to suffering. In fact, the colour blue builds the fabric of the propositions' material and imaginative reality (Lasky 364–65). Thus, the narrator's meditations on the colour blue reflect "association[s] that ha[ve] weight" (364) and denote "the formal force, the heavy, gravitational weightiness, of the affect [of grief]" (Brinkema 73):

135. [...] [...], it remains the case that to see blue in deeper and deeper saturation is eventually to move toward darkness.

144. [...] I have spent a lot of time staring at this [blue] core in my own 'dark chamber,' and I can testify that it provides an excellent example of how blue gives way to darkness—and then how, without warning, the darkness grows up into a cone of light. (B 52–56)

To see the colour blue intensely – in both a literal and figurative sense – is a gravitation towards darkness, a space where one is deprived of vision altogether. Hence, contained in materialised grief is the interminable stasis of the affect, its weightiness. As the narrator points out early into the text: "And what kind of madness is it anyway, to be in love with something *constitutionally incapable of loving you back?*" (B 15; emphasis added). Here, the narrator's introspection denotes the unproductiveness of the "untransformable dimension of

loss's pain" (Brinkema 75) that is perpetuated by formal grief. As the narrator's grief materialises in the presence of blue, blue objects embody forms of suffering – the lost lover remains unattainable. Crucially, such "non-relational" (76) forms of grief cannot induce change nor cure the subjective pain of the narrator's grief.

Blue Offerings and Limitations in Literary Form and Language

Bluets' propositions invoke the literary form of the prose poem. The propositions' appearance as literary fragments of paragraph length and the logic of their sentences suggest "the mode of prose" (Hetherington and Atherton 7). Simultaneously, the openness of the propositions' form bestows them a "poetically suggestive" (11) quality. Each of *Bluets'* propositions stands as a container that archives the narrator's articulations of loss, pain, and grief. Thus, allowing for associations, leaps, and gaps, the propositions engender as well as maintain a "productive uncertainty" (Jamison qtd. in Delville 139). The evasiveness already adherent to *Bluets'* form is reinforced by the narrator's recursive questioning of the possibilities and limitations of what can and cannot be articulated through language. In fact, from the beginning of the

book, the narrator figures their personal grief by means of the literary form and the use of language. Turning to Propositions 1 and 2, the narrator begins with a presupposition:

1. Suppose I were to begin by saying that I had fallen in love with a color. Suppose I were to speak this as though it were a confession; suppose I shredded my napkin as we spoke. It began slowly. An appreciation, an affinity. Then, one day, it became more serious. Then (looking into an empty teacup, its bottom stained with thin brown excrement coiled into the shape of a sea horse) it became somehow personal.

2. And so I fell in love with a color—in this case, the color blue—as if falling under a spell, a spell I fought to stay under and get out from under, in turns.
(B 1)

Read as a preamble, Propositions 1 and 2 frame *Bluets'* text as an expository "confession" (B 1) in which the narrator writes about their love of the colour blue which turns into an "allegory" (B 75) of working through the private grief induced by the loss of someone who was close. Each of *Bluets'* propositions, as Manuela Moser posits, inheres a hypothetical nature that engenders "conditionality" (119) as is fully disclosed by the narrator in Proposition 40: "I am trying to talk about what blue means, or what it means to me, apart from meaning"

(B 16). For the narrator, the attempt to write about loss and heartbreak might as well be a "form of aggrandizement" (B 75); thus, dispensing notions of the lyric tradition, the question of how — or, *if* — grief can be configured through the art form of poetry endures throughout the book.

The inherent resistance to ascribe their grief (and the colour blue) a singular ontological or phenomenological meaning is most immediately reflected in the narrator's recursive use of citation that is woven into the text's form. As Proposition 50 states, the narrator's personal inquiry is undergirded by the joint "confusion about what color is, where it is, or whether it is [which] persists despite thousands of years of prodding at the phenomenon" (B 19). Thus, in the evolution of *Bluets'* propositions, the narrator takes up lines from the writings of Goethe, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Getrude Stein, and others who, from different perspectives, have engaged with the phenomenon of colour. Leaning on the citational style, the narrator freely links their own meditations to various historical discourses and theories about the colour blue and thereby never conclusively resolves what the meaning of blue is for them. The prose poem's capacity to forge elements of the "lyrical and analytical, private

and public" (Delville 137) is central to the narrator's progressional figuring and (re)configuring of their grief. Precisely by means of *Bluets'* prose poems' versatile modes and their ability to be in dialogical play, an answer to the question *why blue* remains inexplicable and thus, the narrator's painful suffering continuous.

Bluets' propositions are thus bound in uncertainty and contradiction as, in the course of the narrator's exploration of their experience of heartbreak, notions of veracity and truth are invariably complicated. Detached from conventional philosophical definitions of propositions as "primary bearers of truth-value" (McGrath and Frank unp.), the propositions in Nelson's work are "a recording of the author's own affective journey and relationship with blue, a limit that is compounded by the limitations of language" (Golovchenko 60); the narrator, therefore, steadily reminds the reader of the intimately confessional nature of their poetic project: "I know all about this passing for truth. At times I think it quite possible that it lies, as if a sleight of hand, at the heart of all my writing" (B 48). As Michelle Dicoski rightly states, retained in each proposition is "the movement of a mind as it follows a

line (or lines, or wild associations) of thinking" (7). In the process of conjuring a tenable formulation of their grief, the narrator works the modes of "association, digression and meditation" (3) into *Bluets'* form. As such, the propositions appear as "carriers of affective content" (Gibbs 5): they yield to the continual changes caused by the intensities and development of a grief that, in turn, is itself is configured and reconfigured by means of the literary form's capacities.

The versatility of the propositions' prose-poetic form, most apparent in each fragment's permeability and capability for osmosis (Caldwell and Hardwick 2), allows for the possibility to both contain and liberate affect. Thus, while the lineated prosaic form of the propositions suggests the continuity and progression of a narrative, they, in fact, deny the reader closure (Hetherington and Atherton 8). *Bluets'* propositions are characterised by their "reach outwards" (8), most noticeable in the narrator's shifting associations about the colour blue (which, again, allegorise as articulations of their grief). The book's quality as a "multivocal text" (Moser 159) – distinctly marked by the narrator's dwelling upon others' thinking, then, in other instances, the sudden

In *Blues*, the affect of grief takes on formal properties: it dwells in the ontological presence of the colour blue, thus, relies in material objects, and, ultimately, is inscribed in the literary form of the work itself. Fundamentally, grief operates as the book's organising force—the narrator's grief gives form to the narrator's philosophical and existential inquiries through which they explore the greater question of how to bear the painful absence of someone close and loved.



displacement and disengagement from previously drawn-upon ideas – allows the narrator to avoid a definite answer to their grief. In closely observing how, in an effort to lure its female counterpart, the male bowerbird “collect[s] and arrange[s] blue objects” (B 27), the narrator infers an analogy to the text’s form and its diction:

70. Am I trying, with these ‘propositions,’ to build some kind of bower?—But surely this would be a mistake. For starters, *words do not look like the things they designate* (Maurice Merleau-Ponty). (B 28)

The drawn analogy is a reiteration that, in the process of the narrator’s grappling with grief, the destination of their personal quest is unknown to them and, after all, closure as such is not substantial to the nature of their project. Hence, both the *Bluets*’ distinct literary form and its citational mode operate as means that uphold the inherent uncertainty of the narrator’s affective inquiry. It is a demonstration of the text’s conditionality inaugurated at the beginning of the book: there is no formula for their grief; or, a consolation for loss and grief might neither be found in words nor form.

Ultimately, towards the end of the book, the narrator explicitly delineates the exhaustive

possibilities of their poetic quest to formulate – in fact, *form* – their grief: in the poetic process of labouring over their devotion to the colour blue, writing serves “pharmakon” (B 84) and “mordant” (B 84) to preserve memories of their lost lover and the emotional pain resulting from their absence at once. Alluding to the Wittgensteinian concern that “[t]here are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words” (250), the narrator points out *Bluets*’ main philosophical and linguistic grappling: the semantics of grief cannot – perhaps, does not need to – be articulated through words. Yet, it is only in and through the process of formulating their grief that, in the final propositions, the narrator can stage the outcome of their poetic inquiry: “an anemia that seems to stand in direct proportion to my zeal” (B 91). The sobering awakening from grief, thus, eventually leaving them “stumb[ing] upon a pile of thin blue gels scattered on the stage long after the show has come and gone; the set, struck” (B 91).

After-Grief

In *Bluets*, the affect of grief takes on formal properties: it dwells in the ontological presence of the colour blue, thus reifies in material objects, and, ultimately, is inscribed in the literary form

of the work itself. Fundamentally, grief operates as the book's organising force – the narrator's grief gives form to the narrator's philosophical and existential inquiries through which they explore the greater question of how to bear the painful absence of someone close and loved. At the same time, *Bluets'* propositional nature and prose-poetic quality is itself a form that models and archives the narrator's grief. In a word, grief touches on the book and the book touches on grief.

In the narrator's reckoning with loss and grief, form serves to fill an absence; but the state of *Bluets'* narrator's grief (its form) does not change: "Everything changed. Well, what changed? [...] 'I grieve that grieve can teach me nothing,' wrote Emerson" (B 88). The grief emerging from intimate loss is ineffable – just as the prose poem, in its form, refuses closure, grief's contours remain unresolved. As such, the deeper insight that 'blue's' entity – as the phenomenon that carries both the narrator's devotion and grief – cannot be articulated poses the phenomenological and ontological problem of 'blue' that persistently resurfaces throughout the book. Hence, blue does not satiate the yearning for who is deeply desired; or, as the two closing propositions reveal, 'blue' is not sustaining:

239. But now you are talking as if love were a consolation. Simone Weil warned otherwise. 'Love is not consolation,' she wrote. 'It is light.'

240. All right then, let me try to rephrase. When I was alive, I aimed to be a student not of longing but of light. (B 95)

Ultimately, grief resists form and as such, it is "[t]he force of grief's gravity" (Brinkema 109) that pulls the narrator towards the voidness of glaring white light. To see blue too intensely leads to an obstruction of vision, for, as the narrator already forestalls in Proposition 144, a glare occurs when you stare at the blue core of a flame for too long (B 56). As such, *After-grief* is a negative space empty of formal structures and, thus, a figuration of something that no longer is. However, it is only in the disengaged state of *after-grief* that the narrator finds an articulation of what they have been trying to fathom in the progression of the book's 240 propositions: their love was blindness.

Primary literature

Nelson, Maggie. *Bluets*. US Books, 2009.

Secondary literature

- Brinkema, Eugenie. *The Forms of the Affects*. Duke University Press, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822376774>. Accessed 20 May 2024.
- Caldwell, Anne, and Oz Hardwick. "Protean Manifestations and Diverse Shapes. Defining and Understanding Strategies of the Contemporary Prose Poem." *Prose Poetry in Theory and Practice*, edited by Anne Caldwell and Oz Hardwick, Routledge, 2022, pp. 1-5.
- Chatterjee, Tirna. "Impossible Emotions: The Ethics of Mourning and Melancholia." *Zoon Politikon*, vol. 12, 2021, pp. 74-93. <https://doi.org/10.4467/2543408XZOP.21.004.14427>. Accessed 26 May 2024.
- Delville, Michel. "The Prose Poem, Flash Fiction, Lyrical Essays and Other Microgenres." *The Edinburgh Companion to Prose Poetry*, edited by Mary Ann Caws and Michel Delville, Edinburgh University Press, 2021, pp. 137-49.
- Dicinoski, Michelle. "Wild Associations: Rebecca Solnit, Maggie Nelson and the Lyric Essay." *TEXT*, vol. 21, no. 39, pp. 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.52086/001c.26090>. Accessed 30 May 2024.
- Gallop, Jane. "The Ethics of Reading. Close Encounters." *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 2000, pp. 1-17.
- Gass, William. *On Being Blue: A Philosophical Inquiry*. NYRB Classics, 2014.
- Gibbs, Anna. "Writing as Method: Attunement, Resonance and Rhythm." *Affective Methodologies. Developing Cultural Research Strategies for the Study of Affect*, edited by Britta Timm Knudsen and Carsten Stage, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp. 222-36. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137483195_11. Accessed 20 May 2024.
- Golovchenko, Margaryta. "Accessing Blue in Maggie Nelson's *Bluets*." *Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Inquiry*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2021, pp. 54-63.
- Hetherington, Paul, and Cassandra Atherton. *Prose Poetry. An Introduction*. Princeton University Press, 2020.
- Johnson, Barbara. "Teaching Deconstructively." *The Barbara Johnson Reader. The Surprise of Otherness*, edited by Melissa Feuerstein et al., Duke University Press, 2014, pp. 347-56. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9780822399070-027/html>. Accessed 20 May 2024.
- Lasky, Dorothea. "What is Color in Poetry, or Is It the Wild Wind in the Space of the Word." *Poetry*, vol. 204, no. 4, 2014, pp. 357-77. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43591545>. Accessed 25 May 2024.
- McGrath, Matthew, and Devin Frank. "Propositions." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Stanford University, 2023, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/propositions/>. Accessed 30 May 2024.
- Moser, Manuela. *Notes towards & Maggie Nelson's Rhetorical Fictions: A Study of Bluets*. 2020. Queen's University Belfast, PhD dissertation.
- Seighworth Gregory J., and Melissa Gregg. "An Inventory of Shimmers." *The Affect Theory Reader*, edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seighworth, Duke University Press, pp. 1-25.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logicus-Philosophicus*, edited by Luciano Bazzochi, Anthem Press, 2021.

Writing (a) Home in Times of Crisis: A Review of *Scattered All Over the Earth* (2018) by Yoko Tawada

Evangeline Scarpulla

Despite the universality of the idea of 'home,' there is an undeniable multiplicity to the many definitions, relationships, and experiences of 'homeness' expressed in art, literature, and daily life. Yoko Tawada's work celebrates this multiplicity by rejecting rigid definitions of home that imply permanence and physicality, showing instead the many ways in which people think about, relate with, long for, and inhabit their homes.

In her surprisingly heartwarming dystopian novel, *Scattered All Over the Earth* (2018), Tawada explores the concept of 'homeness' by imagining a future in which new communities can be formed, even after upheaval. Japan has been destroyed because of the climate crisis, and the island country's only survivors are emigrants who lived abroad when it disappeared. Among this small, displaced community is a woman named Hiruko, who embarks upon a quest to seek out other survivors with whom she can speak her native language. During her journey, she befriends a diverse cast of

characters, each of whom becomes invested in her search for the cultural remnants of her home country.

When Hiruko speaks, she does so from the perspective of someone displaced, stateless, and officially unidentifiable because she lacks a valid passport and can no longer return home. However, through the unwavering hopefulness and creative spirit with which Tawada imbues Hiruko, the reader does not only see the bureaucratic obstacles, challenges, and injustices faced by displaced people but also the positive potentials inherent to the state of in-betweenness that permeates them.

Tawada illustrates the ambivalence of the migrant relationship to 'homeness' through the "picture dramas" Hiruko draws for the students at a school for immigrant children in Denmark (Tawada 27). These visual stories synthesize Japanese folktales with contemporary European settings and personal stories of migration and home. One such tale is that of Kaguya Hime, a moon princess found in a bamboo stalk and raised on

Language covers or shelters
 someone, and yet it is changeable,
 growing and shifting with
 one's journeys until it becomes
 something new.

earth. While adapting this tale, Hiruko wonders: "The stalk of bamboo where the old couple find[s] the shining girl should be her home, so why is she always talking about 'going home to the moon?'" (Tawada 31). As a result, Hiruko advances that "Kaguya Hime was the child of immigrants. She was born in a bamboo tree on Earth while her parents were living here, but unable to feel at home in her earthly environment, she's always dreaming about 'returning' to the moon, where her parents are from" (Tawada 31). Hiruko imagines that Kaguya Hime would feel deeper homesickness if she returned to the moon, finding that her sense of belonging is now split between two places. This feeling of in-betweenness, expressed through this moment of intertextuality, motivates Hiruko to seek out others from her lost homeland. Paradoxically, then, it is through

this sense of in-betweenness and her experience of traveling, seeking, and meeting people with diverse backgrounds that Hiruko eventually finds community and belonging.

One way in which Hiruko constructs a metaphysical home is by creating and inhabiting a "homemade language" called *Panska* (Tawada 33). *Panska* is a hybrid language combining Japanese sounds, rhythm, and syntax with Scandinavian words. Through this act of language creation, Tawada offers a nuanced perspective on how language roots people, its potential to both connect and alienate, and "[...] the dilemmas of finding linguistic shelter in a world of rising seas and ceaseless migration" (Lucas 13). In her work and interviews, Tawada often speaks of language as a 'skin' that one inhabits, explaining that, while we may be born with the skin of our mother tongue - a skin we cannot step out of - when we consume foreign words, these words "slowly transform themselves and become meat and then, ultimately, they can become [...] flesh" (Brandt 5). Through this metaphor, Tawada

explains how language covers or shelters someone, and yet, it is changeable, growing and shifting with one's journey until it becomes something new.

The parallels between Tawada's background and Hiruko's story are undeniable. However, the author also explores in depth the experiences of home felt by the other five principal characters, each embodying a different aspect of Tawada's personal journey. To begin with, Knut, a linguistics student from Denmark, struggles with feeling confined to his home due to his mother's possessiveness. When he speaks, he rejects imposed relationships and conventional definitions of home and kinship, thus finding a new community of friends who offer him the emotional security intrinsic to the feeling of 'homeness.' Moreover, Knut's fascination with Hiruko's 'homemade' language hints at his interest in the act of homemaking itself.

Similarly, through the characterization of Akash, a trans woman from India studying in Germany who expresses the feeling of 'homeness' by wearing saris and openly sharing her experience of transitioning while exploring the ruins of Roman bathhouses in Trier, Tawada explores what it means to feel comfortable and at home in one's physical body.

When Nora, another important character in the novel, speaks, she is searching for someone to overcome feelings of detachment and estrangement in her physical home by sharing the space with another. When Nanook speaks, on the other hand, he inhabits the language and body of Tenzo, the alternate Japanese persona he creates to escape the ostracization and feelings of inferiority he experienced as a young Greenlandic Inuit person. Finally, when Hiruko's countrymate Susanoo tries to speak, he finds that his voice has been lost, mirroring the loss of identity and communication that can occur due to the trauma of enduring an environmental, economic, or social crisis.

In her novel, Yoko Tawada explores the complex struggle between the human desire to feel at home and the realities of the contemporary world, such as migration, climate change, and globalization. The novel reads as an unconventional letter home, one in which the author writes back to Japan, sharing the unique experiences of being a transnational migrant author while creating a metaphysical home through language. Thanks to her imaginative and whimsical snapshot of a dystopian world, Tawada succeeds in creatively engaging with discourses on home and kinship and their evolving definitions.

Tawada explores the complex struggle between the human desire to feel at home, and the realities of the contemporary world

Works Cited

Primary literature

Tawada, Yoko. *Scattered All Over the Earth*. Granta, 2022.

Secondary literature

Brandt, Bettina, and Yoko Tawada. "Ein Wort, Ein Ort, or How Words Create Places: Interview with Yoko Tawada." *Women in German Yearbook*, vol. 21, 2005, pp. 1-15, www.jstor.org/stable/20688244. Accessed 20 May 2024.

Lucas, Julian. "The Novelist Yoko Tawada Conjures a World between Languages." *The New Yorker*, 21 Feb. 2022, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/02/28/the-novelist-yoko-tawada-conjures-a-world-between-languages. Accessed 20 May 2024.

Acknowledgement of Funding:
This research was supported by the 101073012 EUTERPE HORIZON-MSCA-2021-DN-01 Project.

Subverted and Internal: Portrayals of Home in Women's Refugee Writings

Carla Martínez del Barrio

Introduction: Rushdie's *Imaginary Homelands*

In this essay, I focus on how the concept of *home* that Salman Rushdie proposes in *Imaginary Homelands* is portrayed in two literary texts written by African refugee women: Meron Hadero's "A Down Home Meal for These Difficult Times" and Novuyo Rosa Tshuma's "New Lands, New Selves".¹ My goal is to explore the gendered transformations *home* undergoes in forced displacement with relation to how the home is imagined as internalized and subverted to benefit the protagonists themselves.

In *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie reflects on the idea of home as something both tangible and intangible, real and imagined. One of the central themes the author grapples with is the notion of

belonging in displacement. As an expatriate writer, he often writes from the perspective of someone who has been uprooted from his homeland - India - and finds himself navigating multiple cultural identities. Rushdie's notion of home is not tied solely to a physical place but is also deeply connected to memory, imagination, and narrative. In this collection, Rushdie suggests that home can be a fluid and evolving concept, shaped by life experience, collective histories, and personal stories. He challenges the idea of a fixed, static home and instead embraces the idea of a shifting, dynamic sense of belonging. For Rushdie, the home is as much a construct of the mind as it is a geographical location. If we view the home as a mental construct, then, it can reside within us and thus, be subjected to subversion.

¹ Hadero, Meron. "A Down Home Meal for These Difficult Times." *A Down Home Meal For These Difficult Times*. Canongate, 2022, pp. 172-181. Further references in the text abbreviated as "DT." Tshuma, Novuyo Rosa. "New Lands, New Selves." *The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives*, edited by Viet Thanh Nguyen, Abrams, 2018, 173-183. Further references in text abbreviated as "NS."

Furthermore, Rushdie critiques oversimplified and nationalist conceptions of home(land), contending that they can lead to exclusion and oppression. He celebrates cultural diversity and suggests that true belonging can transcend narrow boundaries to embrace "multiplicity, pluralism, hybridity" (32). Hence, I believe his framework is well-suited for examining the experiences of African female refugees. For Rushdie, "the migrant is, perhaps, the central or defining figure of the twentieth century" (277). I argue that the migrant, most specifically the forced migrant or refugee, is the central or defining figure of the twenty-first century.²

The *subverted home* in "A Down Home Meal for These Difficult Times"

The first story I analyze in this essay is written by Meron Hadero. She is an Ethiopian writer who sought refuge in Germany and the United States. Hadero includes Jazarah and Yeshi's story as the conclusion to a collection which bears the same title and is written

entirely by herself. Every chapter of the homonymous collection features different individuals facing various conflicts, albeit always within the context of Ethiopian forced migration to Germany and the United States. In this particular text, Jazarah and Yeshi are two Ethiopian women who, like Rushdie, leave their home behind - Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia - to settle in New York City. The factors driving their displacement are not explicit, but it can be inferred they are refugees of war, climate change and economic conditions. The civil war (1974-1991) and the drought-induced famine of the 1980s, the period in which the narrator places "DT", resulted in the forced displacement of millions of people in Ethiopia.

These two women meet at a series of recreational activities organized by the neighborhood church to foster the integration of new migrants like themselves. After becoming friends, they start a business together selling Ethiopian

² In the category forced migrant, I include war refugees and internally displaced people, as well as economic and climate refugees, amongst other types, regardless of whether the labels overlap and are protected and defined by international legal frameworks or not.

home-cooked meals, which later evolves into a food truck. Their entrepreneurship not only provides a feeling of empowerment but also grants them economic independence from their husbands and the sense of belonging Rushdie grappled with. They achieve this, first, through their partnership, and second, via the transcultural exchanges with other church attendees, volunteers and customers. As a result, they oppose the problematic model of cultural assimilation as well as the multicultural model so popular in North-American society.

Yeshi and Jazarah create a new sense of home in a process of bidirectional *transculturation*. The duality of the process implies that they are not seeking to assimilate into American culture, nor are they aiming to preserve their Ethiopian identity completely intact. Their original culture permeates the American and the new, being influenced by the old, the Ethiopian. Their hybrid identity emerges as distinct and unique (Bhabha). Perhaps challenging to define but that is precisely what makes it distinctly their own. In their first encounter at a cooking workshop, Yeshi and Jazarah neither knew how nor wanted to cook:

Yeshi asked, "Does your husband cook?"

Jazarah replied, "Never. Does yours?"

"He wouldn't be caught dead near the kitchen", Yeshi said.

Yeshi asked, "Do you want to learn to cook?"

Jazarah said, "No way. How about you?"

Yeshi asked, "Is it mandatory?"

However, it did seem to be a requirement for them, somehow entangled in the American vision of femininity and womanhood. ("DT" 174)

Their uninterest in cooking might turn ironic and somewhat comical the fact that they later start a food business together. Yet, as hinted at in the quote above, it seems there is a good reason behind their entrepreneurship. Both women feel enormous cultural pressure from the host community to be good mothers and homemakers. They feel it is their duty to make their family feel at home, to *make a home*. Depending on how 'good' they are at this task, they feel it can make the difference between their families' acceptance and rejection by the community.

Hence, "cooking every meal just for their little families not only felt like a waste of energy but also like a national prerequisite" ("DT" 174). Indeed, Yeshi and Jazarah start the food business to support themselves and their families economically. In addition to that, they set it up as a natural and necessary consequence of the transculturation process they experience. They want to fit in and meet expectations, but they

They make a home but on their own terms.

also do not want to waste their efforts or lose themselves to gender ideals that do not align with their personal aspirations or personalities. As they say at the beginning of the excerpt, they neither want to cook nor want to learn to cook. But they do. They learn, and they make a *home* – but on their own terms: they subvert the role assigned to them, turning it into an economic source, a life purpose, and a home for themselves, their families, and their community.

Through their dishes, they establish relationships, create their own community, and keep their Ethiopian culture alive in their new sense of home. In addition to being united by their reluctance to cook, “Yeshe and Jazarah talked about their experience as refugees, their assimilation, and all the unsettling things they learned to fear when they resettled in the United States” (“DT” 173). In the course of the story, through their work in the restaurant, we witness how they manage to avoid cultural assimilation by engaging in a process of transcultural influence with their customers.

Their clientele, who come from diverse backgrounds and cultural settings, gather around their table, seeing their similarities in their differences, and identifying with the powerful North-American

symbolism of a family around a table (Griffin). Following Rushdie, such pluralism makes their customers believe that “a meal at Down Home was like being at the eternal American family table, different people from different places coming together to unwind after a hard day, sharing the same food: one dish, one destiny” (DT 181). However, it is not that Yeshe and Jazarah’s way of socializing around food resembles the American myth, but rather that the American myth itself resembles theirs, and that is where they find their place without losing themselves. Through the subversion of imposed cultural and gender identities, they build a new sense of home after migration:

Roots intertwined their lives, sprouting from seeds they never wanted to plant, never consciously watered, but that took root nonetheless because life adapts, or tries. These roots cradling their lives were uprooted from time to time, trampled, shaken, but gradually they made their way, stabilizing them, as Yeshe and Jazarah treaded more firmly on ground that had to become their home. (“DT” 183)

These lines also invite us to question the concept of *resilience*. This capacity manifests in the face of obstacles for both protagonists. Having said that, it is important to question whether resilience is a natural and inherent characteristic of

the refugee person, or whether, as the text suggests, it is more of a contextual and conditioned skill, despite the natural metaphor employed by the narrator to describe their transculturation and subversion processes. According to Brad Evans and Julian Reid's critique in *Resilient Life*, resilience could be interpreted as a quality that emerges in response to the shortcomings of a structural system and manifests as an imposed inevitability. Evans and Reid's perspective corroborates the previously stated: that New York is their home, they make it their home, not by freedom of choice but out of necessity, as an inescapable, subversive reality.

The *internal home* in "New Lands, New Selves"

The second story I analyze in this essay is written by Zimbabwean author Novuyo Rosa Tshuma. Tshuma herself sought refuge initially in South Africa and later established residence in the United States. This text is part of *The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives*, a compilation of autobiographical refugee stories. Tshuma shares her experience as a Zimbabwean woman who migrated to

various countries due to a major crisis in Zimbabwe that began in 2000. From the socio-political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe to xenophobia in South Africa and the United States, the narrator explores the struggle against discrimination, political violence, and the search for a home that feels her own. The narrative highlights the complexity of identity and resilience in the face of adversity, aspects that once again emerge as key themes.

Throughout the narration of her migration experience, Tshuma introduces the notion of the first home as Rushdie's unattainable myth. The protagonist of "NS," despite the metaphorical impossibility of returning to her past home, redefines the concept as something internal, mobile, and fluid. On the one hand, upon crossing the American border, the protagonist's presence is questioned. This encounter, marked by prejudices and stereotypes about African people, exemplifies the critical concept of *orientalism* (Said). It also highlights how she is recognized as *the Other*, a stranger, an alien during the encounter (Ahmed). On the other hand, upon returning to Zimbabwe for a visit years later, she is also perceived as a stranger (Riley). This perpetual scrutiny could lead her to

isolation, generating a sense of total and constant estrangement. Despite this challenge, the narrator manages to internalize the sense of home, which helps her understand and appreciate the total complexity of her hybrid identity.

Furthermore, the narrative voice delves into the implications of the processes through which the Other is perceived during the encounter, especially the Other's body, which is categorized as strange. These processes align with Donna Haraway's, and particularly with Judith Butler's research, which suggest that some bodies seem to matter more than others. In other words, these feminist theorists tell us that *strange bodies* and the identities associated with them are shaped by entrenched discursive and material practices. Both recommend challenging these identities to make way for new forms of existence, connection, and relationship for everyone in the world.

In "NS", the notion of home is approached as an imaginary myth, as something that no longer exists as it once did. This means that the home is a place one can physically return to but not metaphorically, as described by Rushdie. When returning to Zimbabwe, the narrator comments:

The metropolitan landscape of my childhood city is what I hold onto most, as it remains static and unchanged, filling me with nostalgia when I visit my home, unlike the family and friends I left behind, who have grown and changed in ways that surprise and sadden me; we are no longer the people we used to be for each other, and we can never return to the ease and familiarity we shared. Life has moved on, for everyone. ("NS" 174)

In this excerpt, we see that the physical landscape, the environment, the city, remain unchanged. On the contrary, the protagonist acknowledges that her family and friends have undergone significant changes. The metaphor of home, i.e., the abstract, the felt and imagined, that which cannot be quantified, does show a notable difference. The narrator, in line with Rushdie's ideas, admits that she herself has also changed and recognizes that the familiarity of home, as it existed before, can no longer be regained. Initially, the impossibility of returning to the imagined home generates a feeling of nostalgia in the protagonist, as evidenced here. However, despite this loss, she manages to adopt a different and more reflective perspective on the situation.

Like Yeshi and Jazarah, instead of only lamenting what they

Home can be a fluid and evolving
concept, shaped by life experience,
collective histories, and personal
stories.

lost after migration, Tshuma seems to have developed an attitude that allows her to confront change with a more nuanced and understanding outlook towards herself and others, finding a kind of meaning or acceptance in transformation: "Although I still yearn for my 'home,' I no longer see it as a place to go. It now resides within me, a 'feeling at home' within me that I try to cultivate every day, that I can carry with me wherever I need to go" ("NS" 186-188). Now, the concept of home has transformed into something internal, something that moves with her and that she can access wherever she is. Although it departs from its original conception, the sense of home and belonging resides within her, in her being, and is constructed through her own perception. The sense of home she manages to internalize belongs to her and her only, even after crossing multiple - literal and metaphorical - borders.

Nevertheless, she continues to face situations where her presence, identity, and experience as a refugee are presupposed and contested. When migrating for the

second time, from South Africa to the United States, she observes:

I became 'African,' from the Africa of the Western imaginary, which confuses 'Africans' with a narrative of perpetual crisis and suffering. So many Americans reacted to me with surprise: How come I spoke English? How come I knew American movies and music? How had I gotten here? *I rode an elephant until I reached the U.S. border.* ("NS" 174)

Despite the linguistic-colonial past - and present - in South Africa, North-American airport officials find it puzzling that our protagonist speaks English. These brief lines encapsulate the simplification of Africa, a continent often conceptualized as a country, acknowledged for centuries of occupation but paradoxically, rarely imagined as possessing experiences remotely similar to those of the West, to 'ours'. Through this reductionism, a dichotomy of *us versus them* is established, via which it is perceived that nothing significant or important happens or is projected from this continent in comparison.

When I was reading Tshuma's story, I thought of Kenyan writer and journalist Binyavanga Wainaina's essay, "How to Write About Africa". Both texts, with great sarcasm, criticize the stereotypes and prejudices that often prevail in the Western collective imagination about Africa. Like Tshuma, Wainaina points out how one often falls into the trap of perpetuating harmful stereotypes, from only describing nature and people to completely avoiding topics like love, cultural diversity, and African characters with depth and complexity.

In the conclusion of the story, she touches upon the *naturalization of suffering*, in which non-white bodies are considered less important or not valued in the same way (Butler). Tshuma explores how certain bodies are marginalized or neglected, and how this marginalization becomes rooted and normalized in society, which can have profound implications in terms of social justice and human rights:

The suffering of non-white bodies is so naturalized, so overwhelming and so ordinary that it ceases to be exceptional. Therefore, the price to escape from that constant possibility of being reduced, under the gaze of the sovereign power of the host country, to a mere biological fact of life, is an unyielding pursuit of exceptionalism. ("NS" 182)

This excerpt highlights how suffering not only involves projecting images and stories that perpetuate the victimization of the Other but also involves recognizing her as such (Ahmed). In this case,

she is the African woman, an 'African' in quotation marks, an African body that is observed but not seen, upon which racist and colonial stereotypes and prejudices formed over time by the collective imagination are projected. Tshuma concludes her commentary by questioning the notion of *exceptionalism*. She emphasizes how refugees like herself, especially women and girls, such as Yeshi and Jazarah, initially experience the expectation to be twice as good, correct, and grateful. This idea connects with what Dina Nayeri exposes in *The Ungrateful Refugee*, where she denounces refugees' efforts to obtain a minimum recognition of their humanity and dignity; qualities that should be inherently recognized in all people, regardless of their legal status.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I contend that both narratives depict two portrayals of home: the *subverted home* and the *internal home*. The internal home suggests that the concept of home may lack a physical referent. On the contrary, it is personal, fluid, and changes out of necessity. This notion redefines home as internal, mobile, and detached from tradition and the past. The protagonists internalize their

sense of belonging, carrying it beyond geographical borders. Consequently, in both the host society and upon returning to their place of origin, they recognize their cultural hybridity while questioning and challenging prejudices and stereotypes. This questioning leads to the concept of the subverted home, where the protagonists disrupt and challenge established (and gendered) systems, engaging in practices that allow them to feel at home on their own terms.

These two conceptualizations are represented in both texts, although the subverted home is more prominent in "DT", while the internalized home is clearer in "NS". In "DT", Yeshi and Jazarah build a subverted home, transforming and reconfiguring their space by opposing gender roles via a transculturation process. They defy expectations and the fear of not belonging, as Rushdie warns, by starting a culinary business. Their economic and social empowerment arises as a consequence of actively participating in their host community and holding a strong capacity for resilience. In "NS", Tshuma creates an internal home for herself: after migration, she carries a sense of home within her. Unlike Rushdie's notion of an unreachable home, hers is always

accessible because it resides within her. Moreover, she opposes the us versus them mentality and questions the naturalization of the suffering of non-white African bodies as well as the need for being an exceptional refugee, all while using humor and sarcasm to strengthen her resilience and distance herself from trauma.

Overall, both narratives oppose Western stereotypes about Africa and African refugee women, emphasizing the need for responsible and complex narratives that avoid simplification and perpetuation of prejudices. First, these authors challenge conventional constructions of identity in displacement. Second, and most importantly, they highlight the need for transformations not only of exclusive and cliché literary representations of migrants but also in social, political, and legal structures to ensure that human rights are also present in - and outside - the home, however it may be imagined, of all refugees and forced migrants alike.

Works Cited

Primary literature

Hadero, Meron. "A Down Home Meal for These Difficult Times." *A Down Home Meal For These Difficult Times*. Canongate, 2022, pp. 172-181.

Tshuma, Novuyo Rosa. "New Lands, New Selves." *The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives*, edited by Viet Thanh Nguyen. Abrams, 2018, 173-183.

Secondary literature

Ahmed, Sarah. *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*. Routledge, 2000.

Bhabha, Homi. "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." *Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis*, vol. 28, pp. 125-133.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. Routledge, 1993.

Evans, Brad and Julian Reid. *Resilient Life: The Art of Living Dangerously*. Polity, 2014.

Griffin, Mackensie. "'No Place For Discontent': A History Of The Family Dinner in America." *NPR*, 16 February 2016, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2016/02/16/459693979/no-place-for-discontent-a-history-of-the-family-dinner-in-america>. Accessed 14 May 2024.

Haraway, Donna. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. Routledge, 1991.

Nayeri, Dina. *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You*. Catapult, 2019.

Riley, Philip. "The return of 'The Stranger': Distance, Proximity and the Representation of Identity in Domain-Specific Discourse." *ASp*, vol. 53, 2008, pp. 7-24.

Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. Penguin, 1991.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. Pantheon, 1978.

Wainaina, Binyavanga (2019): "How to Write About Africa." *Granta*, 2 May 2019, <https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/>. Accessed 20 May 2024.

Challenging the Idea of Europe: Representations of Female Transnational Experiences in Chérissa Iradukunda's *Broken Object*

Maía Auxiliadora Castillo Soto

Scholars use historical sources to explain how the idea of Europe has emerged in the past centuries; however, it is important to keep in mind that much of written history has been one-sided and biased. In his book *The Idea of Europe*, Shane Weller claims that the discourse around this concept concludes that "being European has, with very few exceptions, taken the form of a sense of superiority and entitlement" (15). This characterization is displayed both in policy-making and people's collective imagination, ultimately becoming naturalized in and

outside of Europe. As a result, transnational subjects¹ face discriminatory bureaucratic procedures and social marginalization, which complicate their resettlement process and threaten their feeling of 'homeness.'² As an alternative proposal, transnational literature offers representations and experiences different from those used to create the idea of Europe.³ To define transnational literature, I use Paul Jay's concept of "authors who have themselves experienced the kind of displacement and mobility characteristic of twentieth- and twenty first-century life under

¹ I use the term 'transnational subjects' as an umbrella term to avoid focusing on people's legal status and/or the reason for resettling.

² Homeness is a concept "developed by the phenomenologist Seamon (1979) through five themes: rootedness, appropriation, regeneration, at-easeness, and warmth" (qtd. in Mehta and Cox 6). These themes will be used throughout the analysis to assess belonging in this narrative.

³ As examples of the idea of Europe, Weller refers to the constructions conceived "[f]rom the ancient Greek myth of Europa to the European Economic Community's Declaration on European Identity (1973), followed two decades later by the creation of the European Union, the question of Europe and the European ..., with profound political, philosophical, social, and cultural implications" (1).

decolonization, globalization, and the proliferation of struggles related to nationalism around the globe" (52), and who write about their resettlement stories in their narratives.

The present analysis considers *Broken Object*, a life-writing transnational story written by Chérissa Iradukunda, as a text that challenges the discourse around the idea of Europe through the representations of 1) the broken and 2) the gazed upon transnational female subjects. Iradukunda's family was forced to leave her home country Burundi due to armed conflict. They moved to Tanzania and "[a]fter the war was over, they moved back, but nothing was the same. The war had destroyed everything, including humanity" (Iradukunda 1). Later, her family resettled in the Netherlands, the country where Iradukunda lives now. *Broken Object* is her first published book, an autofictional story developed through Mylene, one of the main characters. Mylene's story is told by Bella, a sick child who has a pronounced scar on her chest due to open-heart surgery. Bella is telling the story

to Josephine, a middle-aged Black woman whom Bella decides to befriend. Readers follow Mylene's experiences of resettlement in the Netherlands, where she does not feel at home. The concept of 'homeness' is closely connected to resettlement stories due to its probable loss in the process and the lack of safety that derives from it. 'Rootedness' is Seamon's first theme related to 'homeness,' and it refers to having a grounding point where home is the start and the end of activities (qtd. in Mehta and Cox 6). However, due to forced displacement, Mylene's transnational life lacks 'rootedness,' which complicates her resettlement process even further.

Although Europe and 'homeness' are indeed connected, the unique perspectives of those who have been displaced into this territory may challenge the prevailing idea of Europe. Weller associates the idea of Europe with the topic of European identity, culture and values due to "the very significant challenges faced by the European Union, on account of the global financial crisis in 2008, the refugee crisis that began in 2015,

The intersectionality of her race, age, ethnicity, and gender shows how she is discriminated against and abused due to her identity.

and, in 2020, the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union" (8). These events have resulted in the pursuit of a more solid European identity since forces such as globalization and migration have threatened to blur more traditional definitions. Using the representations of the three main female characters in *Broken Object*,⁴ I intend to denounce what David Turton refers to as the "dehumanizing effect" (qtd. in Canaday 165), which anonymizes transnational subjects into faceless masses. By analyzing Iradukunda's unique story, I dispute this dehumanizing effect and instead bring forth a narrative that is shared (albeit with differing nuances) by many others. Even though Iradukunda does not represent all transnational subjects, her story offers readers first-hand experiences of a resettlement process in Europe and

allows for a widening of the public debate.

In terms of methodology, the present paper combines a close reading method with a thematic deductive analytic approach. I uncover patterns and details in the story through Olaf Zenker's dimensions of identity, which the author lists as "nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, class, gender, sexuality, age, and ability and disability, and [...] linguistic phenomena" (3). I use these dimensions as categorical labels to classify references to identity in the story. Afterward, I add a thematic deductive analytic approach since "[d]eduction is the process that enables us to use theories to explain real-world events" (Rich et al. 22). I focus on two representations: 1) the broken and 2) the gazed upon transnational female subjects. Through an intersectional analysis,

⁴ Towards the end of the book, the reader realizes that the three main female characters: Bella, Mylene, and Josephine are the same person. For this reason, I refer to them as the 'protagonist(s)'. Most of the story is based on Mylene, but their experiences are interrelated.

which takes into consideration a wide spectrum of discriminations and privileges related to a person's identity, I show how the female transnational experiences in this story, especially those of Black women-characters, challenge the traditional idea of Europe.

Analysis: Representations of Female Transnational Experiences

The Broken Transnational Female Subject

Just like the title foreshadows, the metaphor of people, in general, and transnational subjects, more specifically, being broken objects is present throughout Iradukunda's narrative. At different moments throughout the book, the protagonist(s) and her friends refer to themselves as "indeed the broken object[s]" (382). It is not explicit what the characters mean by 'broken object,' but through Mylene's story, one can deduct that it is related to the absence of a feeling of 'homeness' in their life. An absent sense of belonging to the family or social settings results in a lack of safety as well. The 'warmth' and 'regeneration' referred to by Seamon as two of the themes of 'homeness,' are limited due to the absence of other people's friendliness and support, and the lack of a safe

space for Mylene to get her mental rest (qtd. in Mehta and Cox 6). However, this situation changes by the end of the story, and they encounter people willing to help and find a place to call home. This adjustment shows that the feeling of 'homeness' is prone to being lost during the resettlement process; nevertheless, it may be (re)gained afterward.

On top of Mylene's absence of 'homeness,' her relationships and life experiences heavily mark her resettlement process. Although Mylene and her mother have a complicated relationship, the loss of both her parents at a young age affects her greatly. In addition, she suffers bullying in high school, and finds it difficult to adapt to her new surroundings in the Netherlands due to the linguistic and cultural differences. She points out how she does not "know many people in this country, I can't speak their language. How am I supposed to make friends or trust someone?" (Iradukunda 41). She experiences a feeling of loneliness with no one to turn to. Moreover, the fact that in her culture "we mustn't show our weakness, we must stand firm and put on a show in our face. I moved to a foreign country where we should feel and show our emotions, it confused me" (248) and it alienates her even further. In

short, the sense of lack of belonging to her family and her surroundings, the loss of both parent figures, the difficult adaptation process during her resettlement, and different traumatic life experiences contribute to Mylene's constant feelings of being broken and insufficient.

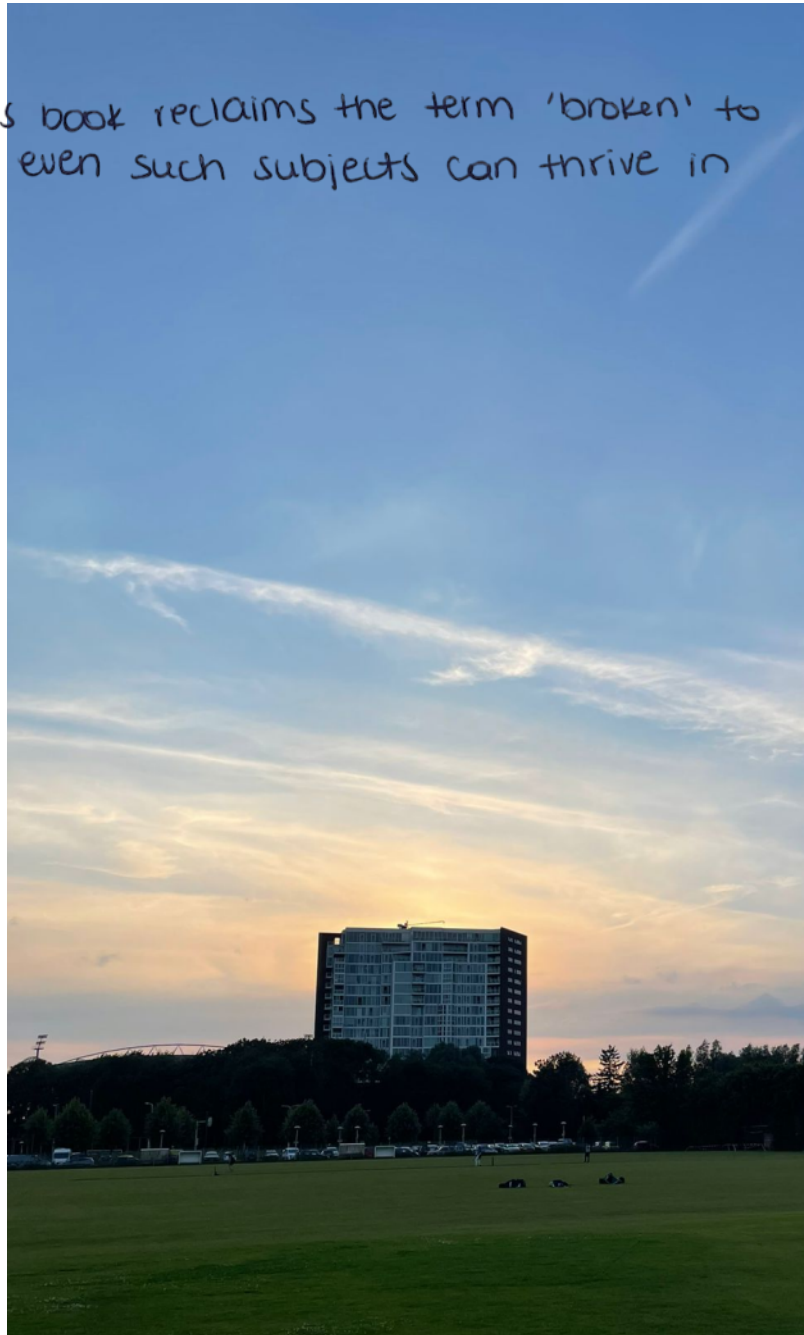
There is a clear intention by the author in selecting the word 'object' over 'subject.' The word 'subject'⁵ has different meanings, but the main difference in contrast to 'object' is that the 'subject' performs an action while the 'object' is acted upon. Interestingly, Iradukunda chooses the word 'object' to refer to those broken individuals in her story. In Mylene's case, she depends on the Dutch system, and in most of her recollections, she is a passive receiver of the actions of those around her. When both her parents pass away, "somehow the government

wants to send us back to where we came from, asking if we'd rather go back" (354). Mylene is interviewed incessantly until she is granted a stay in the country with her little brother is placed in a foster home. Once again, 'homeness' is threatened through 'appropriation.' This theme refers to the way an individual has control and power over the home space and a notion of privacy (Mehta and Cox 6). Mylene is told where to live with little to no options, affecting her 'appropriation' of a physical living space. Although Mylene has no control over the bureaucratic process and must remain passive, she is taking steps to improve her personal life through therapy. For this reason, in this analysis, she continues to be 'broken,' as she describes herself, but a broken subject, nonetheless.

Although the idea of Europe promises haven for its residents, not everyone is included in this promise. Mylene confirms that "[w]hen I was little, I heard so many things about Europe, sounds like a paradise to my ears; no pain, no war and above all a great life" (233); however, this idyllic

⁵ "[T]he person or thing that performs the action of a verb, or is joined to a description by a verb" (Cambridge Dictionary).

Iradukunda's book reclaims the term 'broken' to show how even such subjects can thrive in society



idea fades away when she encounters a different reality. Iradukunda explains the broken object metaphor on the back cover of her book:

I was looking for those pieces I had lost, trying to puzzle over where they belonged and where they should be. It felt like I was picking up pieces of broken glass: it cut me every time I picked up one of the pieces. In the end, though, I found a way to merge them with a little bit of gold.

When Josephine and Bella are getting to know each other, Josephine breaks her mother's vase, which is symbolic because of Mylene's relationship with her mother. The broken vase and Bella's willingness to "glue it together" (25) shows how the protagonist(s) are the ones responsible for putting back together the pieces of their lives that society, their mother, and others have broken. Josephine ponders: "I owe myself to be the best I can be" (385). This phrase shows the protagonist(s) reclaiming their agency and wellbeing. Bella tells Josephine a story about how "[i]n Japan, broken objects are often repaired with gold. The flaws are seen as a unique piece of the object's history, which adds to its beauty" (382), and their perception of what is broken starts to change. Being 'broken' does not

necessarily have a negative connotation. Iradukunda's book reclaims the term 'broken' to show how even such subjects can thrive in society. Mylene, Bella, and Josephine are part of those heterogeneous, contradictory and incoherent subjects (Harding 454) who challenge the status quo through their existence and unique transnational life experiences, which must be incorporated into the debates around our ideas of Europe.

The Gazed upon Transnational Female Subject

There are two major instances in which the gaze is noticeable in Iradukunda's story. First, when the female characters look at themselves in mirrors, a recurrent trope. Second, when the protagonist(s), mainly Mylene, are gazed upon by other people, generally men, placing them in an objectified position. Peters and Yue affirm that a mirror "displays the real world. It is not an 'as if', but an 'is'" (3). The protagonist(s) do not feel comfortable looking at themselves in the mirror. They are not comfortable with life as it is. Mylene sees all her broken parts when she looks at her reflection and at the same time, she sees nothing. She has "tried so hard to find [her]self

in the mirror, but all I can see, a blank and empty mirror, it hurts" (Iradukunda 333). She does not have a clear identity to hold onto. She feels isolated and hurt.

Due to the discomfort experienced by Mylene, Seamon's fourth theme on 'homeness,' which is 'at-easeness' (qtd. in Mehta and Cox 6), is threatened. Mylene tries her best to sustain a public image, and this prevents her from being herself. She is not at ease. She does not really know who she is or who she wants to be. Her only mission is to keep a mask on when she is with other people. Although she has romantic experiences with men that do not end well, her heart got truly broken when her mother tells her that she "wished [she] never brought her in this world" (Iradukunda 107). She becomes invisible, even to herself in the mirror. Mylene spends most of her life trying to understand how she fits in this world, especially in this new country. After a lot of emotional and psychological work, she "began to recognize another person standing in front of me who

needed my attention, especially to be cherished and to get to know better. The mirror showed me what I am" (370). She decides to take care of her neglected inner child, represented by Bella, who due to her open heart-surgery, literally has a broken heart.

Mylene is constantly complimented for her physical appearance. Unfortunately, she is also hypersexualized, especially by older men. Mylene tends to get romantically involved with men who are "[her] father's age" (238). Even though most of them express wanting to take care of her, in reality, they harass and stalk her, and they feel entitled to her and her body. The sexualization of racialized bodies is a topic discussed by feminist Black scholars. For instance, bell hooks writes that "the designation of all black women as sexually depraved, immoral, and loose had its roots in the slave system" (52).⁶ As a result of this hypersexualization, Mylene trusts nobody and she does not feel safe. One of these men asks her to be his escort, and she inquires: "So, you think I can give you fire? Then

⁶ Similarly, Kimberlé Crenshaw suggests that "Blacks have long been portrayed as more sexual, more earthy, more gratification-oriented. These sexualized images of race intersect with norms of women's sexuality, norms that are used to distinguish good women from bad, the madonnas from the whores" ("Mapping" 1271).

added, Because I am black woman or because I am young. Both, he replied" (Iradukunda 156). The intersectionality of her race, age, ethnicity, and gender shows how she is discriminated against and abused due to her identity. Although in the Netherlands she is not necessarily marginalized for being a woman, she is othered for being a Black woman. "Where I am from I don't have a right to my freedom, especially because I'm a woman, here once in a while because of my colour of skin but thank God there are some who see me" (Iradukunda 256). Here, the gaze is important. She is not perceived as an individual until someone else recognizes her existence. Mylene continues to be invisible until she is acknowledged by those who hold the gaze, in other words, those who hold the power of recognition.

In Mylene's story, those power and gaze holders are white people, in general, and males, specifically. Race is crucial to this analysis because Mylene questions how people treat her due to the color of her skin. There are instances in which the protagonist(s) face racist

behavior. For example, Mylene is told by some classmates in her high school that Black people smell (42), the grandparents of her first boyfriend, Michael, disapprove of her for being a Black immigrant (98), teachers are disappointed when she receives good grades (333). These experiences show that for some transnational subjects their participation in society is contingent upon their skin color and ethnicity. However, the discrimination does not only come from white individuals. Mylene remarks:

Today I met a group of girls from Suriname. Apparently, I had a dirty African girl smell to them [...] I looked at them, they were the same colour as me, I wonder why they always say we are different. "We are black, but we are better than Africans" [...] it feels lonely when our own colour people dislike you.
(338)

This passage shows the existence of an implicit hierarchy of races and ethnicities⁷ that is rooted in people's collective imaginary. The idea of Europe also sustains this hierarchy through "European colonialism grounded in the

⁷ "Although most societies no longer defend systematic theories based on an allegedly objective hierarchy of 'races,' a sense of division remains between many ethnic groups, especially towards foreigners of different phenotypes" (Freier et al. 143).

notion of the superiority of European humanity over the non-European 'inferior races,' particularly in Africa and the Americas" (Weller 4). In this case, those who believe in "ethnic purity" (Weller 4) hold the gaze over those who are considered "inferior" and decide what is best for them.

Conclusion

Through the analysis of the broken and the gazed upon transnational female subjects in *Broken Object*, I have accomplished two outcomes. First, I have challenged the idea of Europe which results in a "Eurocentric, Euro-supremacist, and Euro-universalizing [discourse] in nature" (Weller 5). Secondly, I have used Seamon's themes of 'homeness' to uncover how for some transnational subjects neither the place of birth nor the place of resettlement offers a feeling of belonging and safety. In this sense, Mylene reminds herself that "even the country I suppose to call home I never really feel at home or welcome" (Irudukunda 298). The European experience is lived differently by individuals, especially by transnational subjects. Because the idea of Europe was created and reinforced by those who held a

privileged position, it does not take into consideration people who have been historically marginalized. For Mylene, resettling in Europe was meant to improve her life and "be different [...] but I think I was wrong" (Irudukunda 41). The idea of Europe has impacted history and modern society, and it must be approached from a critical point of view. Weller invites us to acknowledge those not so positive contributions and argues that only by understanding "their intimate relation to that which is worth saving in the idea of Europe, can we begin to adumbrate the idea of another Europe, one no longer set in aggressive or hierarchical relation to that which lies beyond it" (15). Although this move towards a more inclusive idea is already taking place, it is not an easy task to accomplish.

The female transnational representations in Irudukunda's autobiography remind us why this transformation is important. This unique transnational narrative questions the old representations that have been "characterized as keeping the subordinate subordinate, the inferior inferior" (Said 95). In Irudukunda's story, broken subjects may thrive in society and gazed upon subjects can reclaim their agency and well-being.

As a result, transnational subjects face discriminatory bureaucratic procedures and social marginalization, which complicate their resettlement process and threaten their feeling of 'homeness'.

Nonetheless, we must acknowledge the societal obstacles imposed on transnational Black women. The different intersections in the female characters' identities hinder their resettlement process and their feeling of 'homeness.' 'Homeness' should be a right for everyone regardless of their self-identification. Throughout the story, its absence negatively affects the protagonist(s)' lives.

However, the story ends on a more positive note as the protagonist(s) meet, and this coming together represents a healing journey in their resettlement process. The future looks brighter since they understand that they may belong to two (or more) places at once. "When I look in the mirror, I see confused person with pride, trapped in two different worlds" (Iradukunda 14). Transnational subjects may benefit from a fluid

identity that is not demarcated by traditional standards. Cherrie Moraga praises this fluid identity as she writes: "I am a woman with a foot in both worlds; and I refuse the split. I feel the necessity for dialogue. Sometimes I feel it urgently" (29). It is up to individuals to identify where they belong to and where they come from and how they glue broken pieces with a little bit of gold.

Primary literature

Iradukunda, Chérissa. *Broken Object*. Austin
Macauley Publishers, 2023.

Secondary literature

Adey, Peter et al., editors. *The Handbook of
Displacement*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020,
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-47178-1>.

Amberg, Julie, and Deborah Vause. *American
English: History, Structure, and Usage*.
Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Canuday, Jose. "Conceptualising Postcolonial
Displacement Beyond Aid and Protection."
Adey et al., pp. 157-169.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins:
Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and
Violence Against Women of Color."
Stanford Law Review, 1991, vol. 43, no.
6, pp. 1241-1299, [https://doi.org/
10.2307/1229039](https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039).

Freier, Luisa, et al. "'Race,' Ethnicity, and
Forced Displacement." Adey et al., pp:
143-156.

Gu, Yue. "Narrative, Life Writing, and Healing:
The Therapeutic Functions of
Storytelling." *Neohelicon*, vol. 45, 2018,
pp. 479-489, [https://doi.org/
s11059-018-0459-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11059-018-0459-4).

Harding, Sandra. "Rethinking Standpoint
Epistemology: What is "Strong
Objectivity?"" *The Centennial Review*,
vol. 36, no. 3, 1992, pp. 437-70.

hooks, bell. *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and
Feminism*. Routledge, 2015.

Jay, Paul. *Transnational Literature: The
Basics*. Taylor & Francis Group, 2021.

Mehta, Priya, and Andrew Cox. "At Home in the
Academic Library? A Study of Students
Feelings of "Homeness."" *New Review of
Academic Librarianship*, vol. 27, no. 1,
2021, pp. 4-37, [https://doi.org/
10.1080/13614533.2018.1547774](https://doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2018.1547774).

Moraga, Cherríe. "La Güera." *Moraga and
Anzaldúa*, pp. 22-29.

---, and Gloria Anzaldúa, editors. *This Bridge
Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women
of Color*. State University of New York
Press, 2021.

Peters, Luc, and Anthony R. Yue. *On Mirrors!
Philosophy - Art - Organization*.
Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018.

Rich, Richard et al. *Empirical Political
Analysis: Quantitative and Qualitative
Research Methods*. 9th ed., Taylor &
Francis Group, 2018.

Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage,
1994.

"Subject." *Cambridge Dictionary*. Cambridge
University Press and Assessment, 2024,
[https://dictionary.cambridge.org/
dictionary/english/object](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/object). Accessed 6 May
2024.

Weller, Shane. *The Idea of Europe: A Critical
History*. Cambridge University Press,
2021.

Zenker, Olaf. "Language and Identity." *The
International Encyclopedia of
Anthropology*, edited by Hilary Callan,
John Wiley & Sons, 2018, pp. 1-7,
[https://doi.org/
10.1002/9781118924396.wbiea2271](https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118924396.wbiea2271).

This research was supported by
the 101073012 EUTERPE HORIZON-
MSCA-2021-DN-01 Project.

#Bookstagram: Where Readers Connect, Discover, and Belong

Juliana Obreja

The digital landscape of the twenty-first century is constantly changing, creating new opportunities for individuals to interact online. In other words, distinct communities are being created in relation to specific digital activities. So I introduce the bookstagram community, a space dedicated to reading lovers, born from the development of a simple hashtag, #bookstagram, which focuses on users' digital experiences. In addition to the content dedicated to books, I also highlight the processes implemented, namely the characteristics of the social media Instagram.

By fostering a virtual space where people share aesthetics, intimate book-related experiences and curated content, bookstagram allows users to build a sense of "home" within the digital ecosystem they are interested in. Therefore, transcending geographical boundaries and fostering a community centered around the love for books, the members reflect their personal comfort and connection to the literary world. Beyond these shared interests about reading, the active members can be vulnerable with one another and

create a sense of belonging at a deeper level than usual conversations about what book they have read recently.

Since all the activity occurs entirely online, there are a variety of techniques by which both bookstagrammers and individuals in the community interact with each other. These include visually appealing posts, where the book product and detailed descriptions, which tend towards recommendations and reviews, are prominent, as well as the hashtags used. In this manner, #bookstagram lays the groundwork for connectivity between participants, becoming a point of convergence between individuals with similar passions, and supports a community that is "home" to its own trends, subcultures, and even custom language for bibliophile members.

The art of bookstagram

The approximately two billion consumers of digital content on Instagram get to interact with the aforementioned hashtag and by default, as both the

So, #bookstagram succeeds in tapping into users' deep human need to connect.

platform and the number of followers grow, this community grows steadily. To that end, #bookstagram plays a key role in promoting books in the digital environment (Tselenti 2020).

The bookstagram trend has emerged from the intersection of two words, stemming from the product itself, "book", and the social media platform being harnessed for digital activity, "Instagram". Thus, it illustrates the presentation of books in the form of positive encouragements (Siguier, 2020). The network that emerged around the hashtag laid the foundations of a unique space dedicated to readers and reading lovers, where they can connect, recommend new books or even create and strengthen friendships. Accordingly, the availability of the internet gives participants the opportunity to interact with the created environment whenever they want, from anywhere. Moreover, the virtual space created is a safe and authentic way through which they can create friendships with other book enthusiasts (Wiederhold 2022). Bookstagram thrives on aesthetic

preferences since users are more drawn to an account who has a personal style and also creates content that is visually appealing.

Individuals participating in this online activity also share relevant information and literary recommendations as well as create key visuals in posts that have the hashtag #bookstagram (Wolna 2018). Furthermore, we mention the opportunity to interact with new knowledge about the field, such as literary genres and sources of inspiration, as well as opportunities to purchase lesser-known books, whether fiction, non-fiction or poetry published by active community members. Therefore, bookstagram is not limited to just photos, but it also starts discussions, intrigues challenges, shares recommendations and reviews, and strengthens the sense of support for the digital space created.

Finding your tribe – bookstagrammers

In addition to the actual culturalization of Instagram users, I also highlight the impact #bookstagram has on several

It has evolved into a virtual shelter and home for book enthusiasts by giving users a place for exploration, inspiration, and a feeling of community

areas, such as social or political. Here, influencers present in the community encourage changes for the better and promote various behaviors among their followers (Balaban et al. 2020). Most notably, the community around the hashtag connects online readers through comments and shared experiences posted on Instagram, bringing members spiritually closer together, even if geographically they are in distant corners of the world. Along these lines, the ecosystem created by readers is not just a way to showcase readings but provides feelings of belonging through active interactions and the chance for individuals to identify with people who share the same literary pleasures or cultural perspectives (Wiederhold 2022).

Hence, these dedicated individuals who repeatedly promote

literary content on Instagram are referred to as bookstagrammers - people who are part of the community like any other member, but who wanted to evolve their experience by relating it from a literary perspective to other members. Specifically, posts that include reviews, discussion of specific topics, or even recommendations for future books have been promoted (Darma et al. 2020). Thus, online book influencers appeal to their target audience, regardless of age, through a variety of promotional techniques, placing primary emphasis on the #bookstagram sense of belonging. In this way, the community offers freedom in terms of expressing opinions and starting discussions about books, but also glimpses a welcoming behavior for anyone who wants to actively participate (Novotná et al., 2021).

With this in mind, the need for twenty-first century users to seek the most honest connections with other individuals arises, and the hashtag mentioned, along with the variety of bookstagrammers and consumers using it, reinforce these digital actions constantly through their activity in the #bookstagram community. For this reason, trust is born out of the honesty of posts, such as authentic images of books or unadulterated opinions of literary genres (Reddan B., 2022).

United by pages

One of the important aspects that #bookstagram creates in the digital environment is the sense of camaraderie it imbues in the experience of every member of the community. To this extent, the present readers connect with each other through discussions that provoke a variety of feelings, and they share their communicated passion for reading. The relationship between them is beneficial for both participating parties, since they form a virtual community united by shared identities and feelings of understanding and support (Novotná, et al. 2021).

So, #bookstagram succeeds in tapping into users' deep human need to connect. Moreover, the community's own footprint is created by the experiences readers

participate in, and the shared language they use in their digital activities on Instagram. In this vein, I highlight the personalized vocabulary of bookstagrammers and book lovers, from which words such as "TBR" (to be read), "ARC" (advanced reader copy), and "comfort read" emerge. Also, the process of connecting individuals in the community is entirely supported by the language, but the interactions between members are also influenced by the images and texts used, namely captions (Thomas 2021).

Users may interact with people who enjoy similar visual styles thanks to the platform's emphasis on shared aesthetics, which fosters a feeling of community based on common tastes. Curated material, which includes reviews, conversations, and book suggestions, encourages a feeling of community and intellectual interchange. Joining like-minded people as they explore the literary world gives users a sense of familiarity and comfort. The intimacy and emotional connection that result from this vulnerability and shared enthusiasm deepen the sense of community. Therefore, the atmosphere created around this online space dedicated to books where there is ease of communication and love for reading reinforces the members' perspective of belonging, of building a "home"

with people similar to them. Thus, the concept of home is more than a physical location, it is a comfort and sense of understanding brought about by the similarities between the people involved.

In conclusion, Bookstagram does more than just serve as a photo-sharing website. It has evolved into a virtual shelter and home for book enthusiasts by giving users a place for exploration, inspiration, and a feeling of community. This unique online space plays a significant role in shaping the contemporary literary landscape, offering a supportive and up-to-date community for readers in the digital world. For

this reason, #bookstagram provides a space that feels like "home" for any user or member who wants to share his love for reading.

Iuliana Obreja

#Bookstagram lays the groundwork for connectivity between participants (...) and supports a community that is "home" to its own trends.

Secondary literature

- Balaban, D., C. & Racz, R., G. (2020). "Social Media Influencer Advertising versus Advertising on Social Media Account of a Brand. Evidence from an Experimental Design." *Journal of Media Research*, vol. 13, no. 3(38), pp. 46-54.
- Novotná, A., Matula, K., Kociánová, V., & Svačina, V. (2021). "Lessons Learned from Bookstagrammers for Library Promotion and Promotion of Readership: Qualitative Study." *Library Philosophy and Practice* (e-journal), 6768, <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/6768>.
- Reddan, B. (2022). "Social reading cultures on BookTube, Bookstagram, and BookTook." *School Library Association of Victoria*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 1-12, <https://slav.vic.edu.au/index.php/Synergy/article/view/597>.
- Siguiet, M. (2020). "Donner à voir le lecteur sur les réseaux sociaux numériques: « Bookstagram », entre nouveaux régimes de visibilité et iconographies standardisées." *Études de communication, langages, information, médiations*, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 113-134, DOI: 10.4000/edc.10203.
- Thomas, B. (2021). "The #bookstagram: distributed reading in the social media age." *Language Sciences*, vol. 84, 101358, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2021.101358>.
- Tselenti, D. (2020). "'What a nice picture!' Remediating print-based reading practices through Bookstagram." *Paper Presentation at the Conference: Digital Practices: Reading, Writing and Evaluation on the Web*. 23-25 November 2020.
- Wiederhold, B., K. (2022). "BookTok Made Me Do It: The Evolution of Reading." *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, vol. 25(3), pp. 157-158.
- Wolna, H. (2018). "#bookstagram." *Biuletyn EBIB, Biblioteki i bibliotekarze w mediach społecznościowych*, no. 178, pp. 1-7.





about the
journal

the authors

Rifat Abdullah

Rifat Abdullah is a Master's student in the NTS program at the University of Münster. With great expectations, he's been waiting to join his studies since the winter of 2023. This is his first published poem. After joining the Master's program, he plans on publishing more of his work. Until then, he scribes his love from thousands of miles away in Bangladesh.

Gülsüm Yağmur Akdeniz

Gülsüm Yağmur Akdeniz is a Master's student in British, American, and Postcolonial Studies at the University of Münster, Germany, specializing in linguistics. She holds a graduate degree in English Language Teaching and is an Assistant Editor at *Satura* Journal. Besides her academic work, she is deeply passionate about art in its many forms – including acrylics, ceramics, painting, photography, and music.

Yahia Alsallaq

Yahia Alsallaq is third-space, third-world, third-culture student, brother, son, and friend.

Bethany Andrews

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

Miriam Bell

Miriam Bell holds a Master of Education degree in English and Social Studies. She enjoys photography, dancing, singing, and writing as multiple forms of self-expression. Currently, Miriam explores her inner landscape in multiple semi-autobiographical pieces as the character Dolia. Her first piece Galcom has been published in *Satura* Vol. 5. Miriam aspires to turn her works of self-exploration into a published collection in the future.

Laura Braun

Hi, I'm Laura. Under the weight of everyday life and the pace at which things change, I sometimes feel like I'm merely in the passenger seat of life rather than holding the steering wheel. Writing always gives me a moment to breathe and reflect on my experiences and feelings. Usually, I only understand how I feel about a situation when I put it into a poem. It's like deep cleaning the mess inside my head.

Patrick Böltner

Patrick Böltner is a student of philosophy and educational science. His favorite color is yellow and he once played football. But he does not do that anymore. He wants to be a rockstar when he grows up.

María Auxiliadora Castillo Soto

María Auxiliadora Castillo Soto is a PhD candidate in the EUTERPE Project: European Literatures and Gender from a Transnational Perspective. For this project, she analyzes how the idea of Europe is challenged by transnational life stories written by women who resettled in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Spain. She holds an Erasmus Mundus M.A. in Women's and Gender Studies (GEMMA) from the universities of Granada and Łódź. She also holds a M.A. in World Languages, Literature, and Linguistics from West Virginia University. Her research has focused on the teaching of English and Spanish as second languages, and literary analyses with an interdisciplinary perspective. Some of her contributions are "A journey through the already existing wall" in *W drodze/On the road: Perspektywy badawcze*, 2019; and "(Re)Construcción de la identidad a través del aprendizaje de un segundo idioma" in *ReiDoCrea - Monográfico sobre Perspectivas Transnacionales en la Enseñanza de Lenguas*, 2019.

Emelie Gerds

I am 21 years old, just started studying German and Philosophy in Münster - and when I'm not going absolutely insane trying to understand those texts, I like to write myself. Mostly my own little tries at a fantasy series or little short stories. Sometimes, I also listen to way too much Mitski and then very melodramatic poems come out at the end. I write a lot about mental health struggles, family struggles, the ambiguity of human nature, the beauty of the sun and the moon, inescapable pain and suffering and generally everything that whirls around in my clustered brain. I never really thought these rhymes would go past my notes app ... but here we are. Thanks for reading, it means a lot.

Anika Hagen

Hey, I'm Anika! I'm currently doing my master's degree 'cultural poetics' in Münster. Having always been fond of literature and reading, I eventually started writing my own poetry as a teenager. My texts are mostly in German and I enjoy experimenting with different writing styles. My inspiration lies in autobiographical experiences and my daily surroundings.

Julia Iwanetzki

My name is Julia and I am a 21 year old philosophy and slavic language student. I started writing songs when I was 17 years old, but quickly realized that I am not the best musician, which is why I turned to poetry! Trying to put what I feel on the inside into words and expressing emotions I cannot seem to explain has always been a fascination of mine. My poetry helps me to understand myself better and is the only way for me to create an image of my own world that is perceptible for the outside world.

Jamie Jungblut

Jamie Jungblut (she/they) is 23 years old and studies English and German for her Master's degree in Münster. When she is not busy eating the pastries of her sister, she is researching old myths and fairy tales. But more than anything else, she loves to spend her time creating new worlds through words and color.

Mariia Karacheva

I am finishing my Bachelor's in English Literature and clinging to the passage of time by my fingernails. That is where my poetry comes from, most of it tiny time capsules, letters to the future and reminders of the past. Based in Nitra, Slovakia for the last three years, I had left my heart amongst century old bricks of a theater in a factory, as a parting gift. I do not have any time to spare, so I write, learn and care.

Selena Knoop

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 20 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. In their spare time they like feeding jackdaws and sitting down for extended periods of time.

E Kraft

E Kraft is a poet who enjoys creating origami art and coding for a non-profit organization. Her poems have been published by *The Inlandia Institute*, *The Hanging Loose Press*, *The National Poetry Quarterly*, and others.

Lina Laewen

Well, what do you write about your outer self after you've just written about your inner self? I'm a bachelor student in English and German at the University of Rostock, Germany. I'm a smalltown girl from the north. Chronically online. Enjoyer of tragedy. Music lover and tortured poet. Unapologetic supporter of grand emotions and kitsch. I have never shown anyone my writings before. I want to keep doing this, though. Always dreaming of a future where people are more gentle and where I can pay my rent with my art.

Carla Martínez del Barrio

Carla Martínez del Barrio holds a degree in English Studies (2015-2019) and a Master's in Gender and Diversity (2019-2020) from the University of Oviedo. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Gender and Diversity at the same university. She also holds a Master's in Spanish as a Foreign Language. Since 2023, Carla is the student representative of EACLALS. In addition to being a dedicated teacher, Carla's research interests encompass contemporary and postcolonial English literatures, refugee and diaspora studies, gender perspectives, the figure of the stranger, cosmopolitanism, and concepts of home and community. Her publications, presented at international conferences, include the book chapter "Solidaridad Transnacional En Relatos De Mujeres Y Niñas Africanas Refugiadas" included in *Manifestaciones africanas de la solidaridad* (2024), the book "Extrañas" menores: los relatos de niñas en "Refugee Tales" (2023), the translation and introduction of "The Dependent's Tale" de Marina Lewycka (*Refugee Tales*)" included in *Extrañezas cosmopolitas*.

Antología literaria (2023), and an article "Gendered Urban Spaces and Strangeness in Jean Rhys' *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939)" published in *Odisea* (2021).

Laura Ntoumanis

Laura Ntoumanis has always been a poet at heart. She chases words like butterflies, then puts them in her pocket, waiting til the time is right to stretch and pin them behind a pretty glass frame to hang on the wall. She won't be satisfied until the world is overrun with poets, their poems draping across the landscape like freshly fallen snow. This was her impetus in the co-founding of *Satura*.

Iuliana Obreja

Iuliana Obreja is a PhD student in marketing at the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi where she focuses on the #bookstagram phenomenon and its impact on book consumers. Being a book lover herself - with a collection of more than 800 books and a researcher enthusiast - in her second year of study, her thesis is based on the bookstagram community in Romania and its bookstagrammers, the book influencers. Besides her love for reading, she constantly writes both poetry and fiction. Her academic work can be further followed here: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Iuliana-Obreja>

Evangeline Scarpulla

Evangeline Scarpulla is a first year PhD student at the University of Bologna. She is a recipient of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie EUTERPE grant, which funds research on European Literatures and Gender from a Transnational Perspective. Evangeline holds a BA and an MSc in Comparative Literature from King's College London and the University of Edinburgh, respectively. Her master's dissertation was on 'Folklore in Fantasy: Challenging the Western Conventions of the Genre through a Critical Comparison of Marlon James's *Black Leopard Red Wolf* and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*.' Her research interests include speculative and imaginative genre criticism, contemporary feminist literary theory, and decolonizing the canon. Evangeline's PhD thesis is currently titled 'Boundless Imaginations: A Comparative Study of 21st-Century Transnational Feminist Writings in Minor Imaginative Genres.'

Hannah Grace Smith

From East London, based in Münster, this is Hannah Grace Smith's first published work.

Regina Steitz

Regina Steitz is a student of English and Educational Science in the Master of Education Programme at the University of Münster. She enjoys reading in her free time, especially poetry, as well as literary fiction. As she enjoys reading, she is currently exploring creative writing for herself, as she is amazed at how writing enables people to express complicated emotions that are otherwise hard to grasp. Regina also enjoys traveling or having fun crafting sessions with her friends.

Melanie Stenzel

Melanie Stenzel, born and raised in Münster, currently studying to become a primary school teacher for English at the University of Münster. She has been writing since 2nd grade and somehow this is her first work that has ever been published.

Aleksandra Sukhodolskaia

Aleksandra Sukhodolskaia is an aspiring writer who hopes to eventually publish a fantasy novel. Though she does not have anything published yet, Alex has been writing poems and short stories for a while now. Her previous monolingual poems have won contests in Russia; however, nowadays, Alex is interested in exploring the English publishing world. In her free time, you can find her hopping on and off German trains, discovering new bookstores, sipping boba, and learning languages.

Iulia-Francesca Susan

I'm Iulia, 21 years old, now in my third semester of my Bachelor studying English and starting with Sports/PE and French from this semester on at the University of Muenster (teaching programme). I was born in Romania and moved to Germany when I was eleven. I find it easier to express myself by writing instead of speaking, but I have never submitted nor published anything before. I enjoy listening to people and paying attention to the

little things. I like reading good books (by good I mean sad ones). Apart from words, I enjoy playing football, travelling, exploring new languages and spending time with the people I love, enjoying the little things in life.

Anna Westhofen

Anna Westhofen is currently studying for a Master's of Arts in British, American and Postcolonial Studies as well as a Master's of Education in German and English studies at the University of Münster. In both degree programmes, she focuses on literary and cultural studies with a specialisation on gender studies, affect theory, reader-response criticism, ecocriticism, and postcolonial studies. Outside university, Anna enjoys creating – whether that's through painting or photography.

Marcel Wienecke

My name is Marcel Wienecke. For a teaching degree I study Politics & English, the latter including studies of culture, linguistics, and of course literature. Literature has, for most parts of my life, been greatly overshadowed by my love music, which I both listen to and make myself. However, writings did manage to impact it from time to time. For example, James Joyce's *A Little Cloud* has shaped the way I think about life like no other piece of literature and keeps on creeping into my consciousness from time to time. My creative output so far has been limited to a few electronic tracks and includes, so far, few literary works. *Südstadt Haiku* is now one of them.

the staff

Mobina Abasnejad

assistant editor

I'm from Iran and moved to Germany in October to do a master's in BAPS at the University of Münster. My study at the moment focuses on Literature and I'm in *Satura's* editorial group as well. Since my B.A. was in TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language), I'm a part-time English teacher.

Gülsüm Yağmur Akdeniz

assistant editor & author

Gülsüm Yağmur Akdeniz is a Master's student in British, American, and Postcolonial Studies at the University of Münster, Germany, specializing in linguistics. She holds a graduate degree in English Language Teaching and is an Assistant Editor at *Satura Journal*. Besides her academic work, she is deeply passionate about art in its many forms – including acrylics, ceramics, painting, photography, and music.

Yahia Alsallaq

assistant editor & author

Yahia Alsallaq is third-space, third-world, third-culture student, brother, son, and friend.

Bethany Andrews

consulting editor, section editor non-fiction & author

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

Ibarra Pe Bacani

assistant editor

Ibarra Pe Bacani (though he prefers to be called Bari for short) recently completed his MA in British, American and Postcolonial Studies at the University of Münster. He was part of the editing team for *Satura's* Volume 5, from 2022-2023. His hobbies include gaming, singing, reading (history mostly) and watching documentary films (again, mostly history) and food and travel shows.

Daniela Batarilo

assistant editor

Daniela Batarilo is an M.A. student in British, American and Postcolonial Studies specializing in book studies. She loves reading romance and literary fiction, doing ceramics and her neighbors' dog Enzo. She's also an interpreter, a language enthusiast and enjoys listening to old Y2K songs.

Thea Clasen

section editor fiction

Thea Clasen is an MA student of British, American, and Postcolonial studies. In her studies, she focuses on everything to do with books and in her free time she enjoys reading murder mysteries. She is not a writer herself, but likes editing other peoples' work. When she is not working or studying, Thea likes to drink coffee, go for a hike or to the movies, or browse a flea market. She loves cats and Taylor Swift.

Roberta Di Nunzio

assistant editor

I am currently pursuing a Master's degree in National and Transnational Studies at the University of Münster and had the pleasure of volunteering as an editor and proofreader for the publication of *Satura*. In my spare time, you'll often find me mixing music or screening films with the collective of the Anticolonial Cineclub.

Sophie Funtikova

section editor poetry & social media

Sophie - a down-to-earth human being who enjoys life's simplicity. She loves freedom and horses.

Özge Kayan

social media & design

My name is Özge Kayan and I am currently a Master's student in the National and Transnational Studies program here at the Münster University. This past year, I got to be part of the *Satura* team as a designer for social media. I absolutely loved working on the latest volume with the others and hope that our readers will enjoy Volume 6 as much as we do.

Sara Luque Pérez

assistant editor

I am an undergraduate student of Translation and Interpreting at the University of the beautiful city of Granada, Spain, who discovered this amazing journal while spending my Erasmus year in Münster. Inspired by my mum, I've always felt the most like myself surrounded by music, literature and foreign languages. Shy but longing to communicate, I am determined to explore my creativity and soon open up to the world. In my free time you can find me buying yarn to start yet another crochet project or struggling to learn guitar.

Verena Meyer

editor-in-chief & journal layout

Student of Kulturpoetik at the German-Institute, part-time bartender, full-time cat mom, enthusiastic about anything to do with popculture, will recite the soundtrack of *Les Mis* at any minor inconvenience. Very excited to bring *Satura* volume 6 to life.

Laura Ntoumanis

co-founder, consulting editor & author

Laura Ntoumanis has always been a poet at heart. She chases words like butterflies, then puts them in her pocket, waiting til the time is right to stretch and pin them behind a pretty glass frame to hang on the wall. She won't be satisfied until the world is overrun with poets, their poems draping across the landscape like freshly fallen snow. This was her impetus in the co-founding of *Satura*.

Regina Steitz

assistant editor & author

Regina Steitz is currently studying English and Educational Science in the Masters of Education Programme at the University of Münster. Always having a big interest in the understanding of human interaction and the human mind, she finds that both of her subjects give her an interesting insight into the emotion of people. In her free time, Regina loves reading books, spending time with her friends or outside and traveling.

Melanie Stenzel

assistant editor & author

Melanie Stenzel is studying at the University of Münster to become a primary school English teacher. She has enjoyed reading books and writing stories since she was able to do so and somehow ended up in every journal/yearbook/magazine editing team that her schools had to offer. As a teacher she wants to encourage children to seek out what they love and support them in finding their voices in this world.

Gemma Tompkins

assistant editor

I am Gemma Tompkins, an English masters student studying National and Transnational Studies at the University of Münster. I've worked editing with *Satura* for nearly a year and I'm so excited for everyone to see what we've been up to!

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 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.

You want to be a part of *Satura* as editor, author, event planner or social media manager? We're always looking for new faces and brilliant ideas. Check out our website or instagram (@satura_journal).



acknowledgements

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Universitätsgesellschaft Münster, the Culture Office (Kulturbüro) of the University of Münster, and the Student Parliament Budget Committee (AStA-Haushaltsausschuss) for their generous financial support. Their funding has made it possible for us to stay an active part of the student body by hosting a Literary Open Mic and produce a printed edition for Volume 6, allowing us to showcase the work of our contributors.

Our special thanks goes to Joanna Becker for hosting a Creative Writing Workshop at the English Department this year in collaboration with *Satura* to give students the opportunity to develop their writing skills and give them a creative outlet.

We are also grateful to Radio Q for providing a platform to discuss this volume and explore our theme of "homeness." Their support has enabled us to share our vision and reach a wider audience on campus.

Anna Rapp from the English Department has been a loyal ally and unwavering supporter of *Satura*. We would also like to thank the Fachschaft Anglistik for their steadfast encouragement and ongoing friendship.

The Volume 6 staff is immensely grateful to Bethany Andrews and Laura Ntoumanis, who have provided invaluable guidance and support to the new team. Their expertise and encouragement have been

essential in shaping our work and fostering a sense of community.

Crucial to this volume are the authors' brilliant and beautiful submissions. Their talent and dedication are at the heart of what makes *Satura* special, and we are honoured to feature their work in this volume.

Finally, we thank our readers, whose interest and engagement give life to *Satura*. Your support and curiosity inspire us to continue our mission, and we are grateful for every moment you spend with our journal.

Image Copyrights

The images accompanying the works are provided by the respective authors and used with their permission. Additionally, we used the following images:

p. 1 cover artwork: Selena Knoop (with permission)

p. 4: 'Pale Blue Dot' by NASA, photograph of the Earth taken by the Voyager 1 spacecraft on February 14, 1990 (public domain)

p. 8/9; 72/73; 118/119: Miriam Bell (with permission)

p. 11: Ann Poan via pexels.com

p. 42: Joschua Hoehne via unsplash.com

p. 55: Nikita Taparia via unsplash.com



UNIVERSITÄTS
GESELLSCHAFT
MÜNSTER

asta.ms

GEFÖRDERT DURCH DEN

KULTURFONDS

DER UNIVERSITÄT MÜNSTER