



# SEVERINE

ART :: POETRY :: FICTION :: ESSAYS :: CREATIVE NON FICTION

ISSUE ONE - (BE)LONGING

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# (BE)LONGING

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# WOMAN WALKING IN AN EXOTIC FOREST

LARYSSA WIRSTIUK

*(after Rousseau)*

Imagine me laughing out loud in a Philadelphia museum  
while cheap, borrowed headphones play the audio tour.  
I'm communing with an art history scholar, who inquires:  
*Why is this well-appointed woman alone in the jungle?*  
I think she's not lost. I think she's making herself small.  
I'm not sure why I'm laughing. I can't make myself stop.  
Sleepless for months, I am losing my once-rapid eyes  
to an Instagram filter that makes everything velutinous  
and apparently hashtag: hilarious. It's just that the fruit  
is bigger than her hatted head, and, look, she could climb  
those purple-petalled flowers that resemble some I wanted  
to show you during the longest summer ever: the ones  
my *Babcia* drew with crayon and hung above the barre  
in her humid hallway. When I danced, the trees shook.  
I danced for so long waiting for you, danced without food  
and shed so much you wouldn't recognize me laughing  
with my silly, plastic headphones in a city not my home

# THE MEMORY OF LONGING

ANDREA CAMPOMANES



# TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY TRIPTYCH, OR, THREE STUDIES ON BELONGING

MADDEN SWAN

## **1: Lover**

On panel one the man asks me to pass him his cigarette, as though his arms, already wrapped around my reluctant shoulders, indicate he is engaged in some worthier pursuit. He tugs my body closer to his chest though I did not know we could come any closer and asks me if I can see the shrubs that divide us from our neighbor's house and the movement between the leaves. I tell him that there is no movement between the leaves; there never was. But he tells me the movement is always there, quaking the simple result. I wonder if what he says is true, if the hedges dividing our neighbors from ourselves are meant to signify something expansive, something more than a lace curtain dividing us and the moments of ours they wish not to see: unwashed bowls of soup gathering fruit flies in the kitchen sink, the eutrophic overgrowth of our unkempt garden, my unclothed body as it lumbers down the stairs to snatch a pair of panties I had forgotten in the drier. I wonder if these moments gather like the leaves of the hedges, becoming the borders we erect between ourselves, quaking, as we are wont to do, in our own convictions.

## **2: Brother**

On panel two are depicted dinosaur fossils and plant remains, the stuff of oil and dirt. I have been told that these things tend to be the root for something else, and as the music starts, he tells me there is mounting evidence that they signify more than flowers and fuel. As the notes push themselves into the soft folds of my brain, I nod though I do not know if I believe him. He tells me the notes are like the land. He tells me to take a piece of the stone that has slipped off the side of

the rock and begin to carve white lines into its red surface. Listen to the dust, which is like the music folding into the rough hum of the landscape. Watch he says. Watch the cat whose fur is lines of red sediment. Call the cat simply *cat*. Wait for a name with history. If I could pinpoint the birth of the music that entrances my brother, I'd occupy a space within the sky and earth simultaneously. But this music, like places, always has a past. Listen he now says. Slide off this world, move into an imaginary one. I try, but from this distance, all I see are echoes.

### **3: Friend**

On panel three, a pair of girls ride their bicycles on a blacktop path past tennis courts and motorways, red sandstone and tall prairie grasses. The foothills, far away and sparsely covered with wired shrubs, quiver in the heat from the blacktop. One girl is too tall for her age, awkward in the new angles of her body. The other already looks like a woman despite her girlhood. This one feels the summer heat on her face and smells the grass and speeds up, pushing her body into a turn. As she does so, her helmet slips to the back of her head, and she feels herself moving forward, peddling until she can no longer feel the heat, the speed of the wind against her cheeks, her eyes closed to avoid the dry summer air. She veers off the path, hitting a rock, which separates her bicycle from herself, flinging her over its handles, throwing her body to the ground where her senses, in an instant, go black. In time, a sound appears, rasping at her ears as the heat once again presses against her face. The sound soon becomes the faint whisper of a breath as she can begin to decipher the outline of her lankier friend throwing her head up at the blue expanse, bursting into a laughter that bubbles upward, ricocheting through the mottled sides of the foothills, traversing the great expanse between.

UNTITLED

KLAUS PINTER





# RIVER WATER

EDWARD BELLEVILLE

Still scarce the daylight  
of your iris, the gravel  
of first utterance, the bowl  
of your cheek.

Having is nowhere.  
Unlodgeable matrix, rooted beneath the prairie  
of your voice  
its nickel and dime hoards.

Autumn crisp in the city.

So tell me about the night you arrived.  
It was Sunday, you sat  
with coffee  
on the corner of Callao and Santa Fe

in that mirrored bar,  
your face sheltering bemusement at the lights  
and the shine that cracks the window  
(I imagine).

Unquenchable gold  
of that cup – rings, shatters  
at what was not witnessed.

And what would I even do with it?  
That golden evening spilled, that grope in the dark?

Nowhere, invalid  
as river water.

# LITTLE MORE THAN A BOY

(INDY MATTHEWS)

When Joy heard that David Wong of *Wings with Wong* plunged from the roof of his restaurant, she felt dismay. She'd made a habit of eating at his restaurant Friday nights and had come to think of David as a friend. She thought him selfish for not considering his regulars before taking the dive.

“Who will make my honey garlic spare ribs?” A cinder block weighed heavy on Joy's chest.

After the funeral Joy shrouded herself in a blanket. David's death niggled at her. The neon sign of the empty restaurant flickered across the street from her apartment above the hardware store. She was sixty-five and unaccustomed to change yet now yearned it. Without a second thought, she tugged out a typewriter and pounded a letter of resignation as an insurance underwriter. Next she telephoned her landlord and gave notice. Lastly, she combed the ads and found a small cabin in Monroe to rent.

On moving day, the sky blackened and cracked with lightning. *Two Strong Men, One Big Truck* soon loaded her items. Rain thick as gel battered the windshield and red diamonds sparkled from puddles.

Later that night, sitting in the cabin, fatigue consumed Joy. Boxes piled on the propane cook stove. Plywood cupboards awaited her items. Dust bunnies collected along the baseboards.

Next day, after ten hours of sleep, she scoured and plucked weeds from the gardens.

Every day began the same. Tepid water stirred with a spoonful of Metamucil. A bowl of Cheerios and 2%. Coffee with cream and sugar. Breakfast dishes scrubbed, rinsed, dried. She missed the chaos and camaraderie of the office. She felt detained in the cabin, a fly wrapped in spider silk. The cabin felt empty.

A book club, *Between the Lines*, met at the local library. Joy had never been a joiner. "I'm going, dammit." She smirked at the vacant cabin.

On book club day, her car coughed to life. The library's yellow façade and large windows were luminous. A quilt hung over the distribution desk. Seven women and one man filled a seminar room. After introductions, an ominous woman lead the discussion. A collection of short stories.

"Boring." The man leaned back and cracked his knuckles overhead. His tongue probed his teeth.

The presenter's hands shook.

"We agreed to give all selections an honest try. Even mine."

"Oh, I read the book, every god-damned word. Garbage," said the man. His fist thumped the table.

Despite not reading the book, Joy thought the stories sounded rather dull.

After, Joy sat at the *Tea Emporium*. The book club man dragged the chair opposite her across the tiles.

"Oh," Joy said. "Will, is it?" She pegged him at fifty.

"I live around the corner," he said.

She tipped the tea pot toward his cup. Within minutes, they argued favourite authors.

"Can't stand Atwood. Pompous. Unreadable," said Will. He gnawed skin along a thumb. "And that hair."

Joy owned some Atwood books. She'd read many twice, pages dog-eared, yellowed,

margins scribbled.

“I feel that way about Urquhart.” Joy snorted.

“Except *The Stone Carvers*,” they said at once.

“I admire your quick mind,” Joy said, regretting her forwardness.

“Me, too.”

His nose listed to one side. His ears were large. She was both frightened and exhilarated by Will, and felt exposed, like he'd aerated her mind with fresh ideas.

After tea, Joy invited him to the cabin.

“It's cozy,” he said. “And tidy.” Will leaned on a shelf. “Shit,” he said, righting a lidded, white pot. “A pet?” Will tapped the urn.

“My husband.” Words stuck in her throat.

The kettle's whistle interrupted the silence. Dark sky poked from behind ragged treetops.

Joy said, “I'd like to go to bed now.”

“Well, okay, then.” Will stood to leave.

“Come,” Joy said. She held out a hand.

Joy tiptoed but Will still towered. She kissed Will hard on the mouth. He kissed the space under her chin. When Joy tugged his shirt open, buttons sprang along the floor. His hairless chest was like a boy's. They made love on the linoleum. Joy yearned to inhale Will. But before she could, his face grimaced.

“Sorry,” he said. “It's been a while.”

Their age difference never came up. Sometimes when they clutched, Joy felt a vague pang that comes from feeling too much pleasure.

A few weeks later, Joy broached seeing Will's apartment.

“Whatever for?” Will pulled on his jacket.

“Where are you going?” she asked.

From the porch she watched him try to start his car. It was temperamental. Will slammed

a palm against the wheel. A light drizzle fell and spots speckled Will's face. Joy waved him in.

Will looked pensive. "There was someone else."

"Oh?"

"In Mount Forest. A teacher."

"You split up?"

"You could say that."

Joy quivered.

Will tugged an ear lobe. "We have a child. The wife blames me."

"The wife?" Joy shuddered.

"Kid's not right." Will tapped his temple.

Under Will's eyes were two smudges, like ash. A final streak of late afternoon light cloaked the room.

"Do you see him?"

Will looked away. "What's the point? He's not like us."

"Never?"

Will's brow creased and his eyes dropped. The screen door slammed behind him.

Before Joy's husband reclined on train tracks, she'd been pregnant. The baby was deformed. After the termination, Joy had never been able to conceive again. Then her husband turned coward.

Joy didn't sleep well after learning of Will's son. The top sheet layered between bulky thighs soon smelled. Hours morphed into days and weeks. Joy waited but the telephone refused to ring.

# I OWN YOU

SARAH MACLEAN



# JUST OFF THE TRAIN AND ALREADY NEVER LEAVING

PALVASHAY SETHI

“The crowned spire, the dungeons, the crags, the old lags, the seagulls  
Raucous on carless early mornings, the Firth of Forth perjink past crowsteps  
Of informatics, draughty parallelograms, pandas and heritage pubs,  
Cannons pointing rudely down the Canongate, the New Town’s trig  
Windowboxes geraniumed for suffragettes’ parades,  
The Bioquarter, the Quartermile, the hanged, drawn, and quartered,  
Halls, gardens, harpsichords, waterfalls, jiggings and jeggings,  
Festivals, Days Estival with lawyers’ clerks, and couthy, uncouth doctors,  
Surgeons’ Hall surgeons, the burked dead, the Fringe, the redheads,  
Hoaxed hexes, Samhain dreamers, schemies,  
Anaemic academics, to-die-for grass, strollers, statuesque stalkers  
Capering on parade with fire-eaters, unicyclists, caber-tossers, pipes and drums  
Youtubed ad infinitum, the heady, reikie breath, and the rush of breathless newbies  
Just off the train and already never leaving.” Robert Crawford, *Camera Obscura*

“Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.” W.B. Yeats, *The Second Coming*

One hundred and thirty four children were shot in cold blood the day I intended to begin this essay. On the sixteenth of December, seven members of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) attacked school children and teachers at the Army Public School (APS) in the blood-stained city of Peshawar.

The morning was cold and calm and I was writing. I wanted to demonstrate the deep and abiding love I have for Edinburgh; the city where I had recently completed my MSc. I was thinking of alleys undulating with promise and grotty pubs glistering with the bonhomie of patrons. I remembered the duration of an afternoon in the Meadows on a sun-speckled day as the clouds scurried and the grass rippled. I looked back to the day I left in September, and thought of streets

in a state of mourning and buildings with looks of resignation, unhappy at the necessity of having to show up to work on a day as crestfallen as that. My reverie of tourists walking and stopping to rub Greyfriars Bobby's nose was interrupted by the strident staccato of gunfire. The upright columns of the National Monument on Calton Hill gave way to the evenness of coffins. They played images of the latter on a loop on TV channels once news of the attack broke out. Coffins with straight and narrow lines inducing all the claustrophobia and finality of death; a far cry from Edinburgh's cobblestone streets that beguile you into long walks.

And so one hundred and thirty four children were murdered on a pale winter winter morning and very little seemed right with the world.

Throughout the day, images of disorder flickered on TV screens commodified to the point of relentless regurgitation and accompanied by intrusive reporting. Mics were thrust under the chins of agitated parents. Petrified children were placed in front of cameras like deer in headlights. Numbers trickled in at first and then experienced a steep rise, flooding channels with stories of death. Even as a nation inured to variegated forms of violence, the shock experienced by those watching the attack unfold was palpable. Sitting in my office, I experienced a sense of depersonalization as I watched my co-workers and I gripped and repulsed by the story unfolding before us; slack-jawed and eyes-widened, Munchian in our collective grief and horror.

It wasn't as if this hasn't happened before - violence in Pakistan is abundant and manifests in a frightening plethora of ways - the attack on the All Saints Church Pakistan claimed the lives of thirty seven children out of a total of eighty seven people, little over a year ago. Shama and Shahzad were burnt at a brick kiln on the pretext of blasphemy but really because the latter had the misfortune of being indentured labour. Mukhtaran Mai, Kainat Soomro, Shazia Khalid - all subject to brutal sexual assault, which does little more than temporarily outrage and appear in yellow newsprint. Saleem Shahzad: part of a growing number of journalists that have made the mistake of challenging the status quo and were subsequently brutalised by security agencies with impunity. Mama Qadeer Baloch, led a long march in excess of 2000 km, only to be pelted and harassed by ubiquitous men in plain clothes that the Pakistani state has a particular fondness for manufacturing. In cataloguing all that plagues Pakistan, no list can purport to be exhaustive and final. In truth, what is listed barely scratches the surface and reeks of tokenism. Even mentioning all the mayhem and misery seems gratuitous, cheap; as if we fling blood on narratives to provide colour.

Yet when violence animates different parts of the landscape at all times, it is disingenuous to speak from a vacuum. It becomes disingenuous to not record or remember (and in the words of John Berryman; "do I do anything ever but remember?"). The impulse to commemorate and honour death is natural, even healthy. But when bodies lie in heaps and piles, putrefying faster than one has time to pencil them in, how many times can we promise ourselves to #NeverForget? How many times can we masquerade this phrase, far-removed from its origin, stretched to the point of wearing thin? It might temporarily placate and lull but it is ultimately tainted with shades of The Old Lie.

We will forget.

We have forgotten and we will continue to forget.

That too, is perhaps natural.

Nonetheless, that the first vigour of memory dulls does not mean we are left unchanged. When violence snowballs, accumulating all manner of disaster and death in its wake, it has a

devastating effect on those at its mercy. Consider a riff on the character of Bishan Singh - an inmate who belongs to an insane asylum that is repatriating patients to their respective countries in the aftermath of Partition - from Manto's seminal short story, *Toba Tek Singh*. Bishan Singh and his cohorts provide a moving and apt example of not only the trauma inflicted by Partition but also the anarchy and mismanagement that characterised the minutiae of the process itself. In the short story, one inmate impassioned by all the talk and business of Partition climbs a tree and proceeds to speak on the matter. Having delivered a rousing two hour speech and as the guards repeatedly ask him to climb down, the inmate declares that he does not want to live in either India or Pakistan and is perfectly content to reside in the tree.

And while it is easy to find humour in the arbitrary convictions of a lunatic it isn't quite as easy to acknowledge the absurdity and constructedness of our own. National belonging is both contingent and malleable and the present brand being peddled in Pakistan is one that is subject to flights of fancy that delve in conspiracy and revel in perceived persecution. Twitchy with suspicion and righteous from the paranoia that blinds him; Bishan Singh's descendant is distrustful, despondent and dedicated to his delusions, continually outsourcing the object of his antagonism to tenebrous enemies in foreign lands.<sup>1</sup> I can't say I share this sense of fear-based belonging and any other expression seems tenuous and fraught with far too many complications than is comfortable.

So what then of "the overwhelming question"?

The question of belonging has a certain resonance in light of my rupture with Edinburgh and I had been agonizing over how to adequately express these feelings without betraying too much of the self-absorption characteristic of any victim of unrequited love. The question had been troubling me and resurfaced recently at a protest and vigil commemorating the one month anniversary of the Peshawar attack. It started innocuously enough when a lady armed with a camera and wonderful headgear asked me why I was there. Caught off-guard, I mumbled something vacuous in response. Being kind or simply curious, she asked me another question, "What does being Pakistani mean to you?" To that, my response was immediate, "I don't know. I don't really feel Pakistani<sup>2</sup> most days." At the risk of incurring the relentless wrath of patriotic Pakistanis, to claim that I have never experienced this sentiment would be a lie. But simultaneously claiming zero affinity is also a mischaracterization. Posing as unmoved in response to a country that is as infuriating as Pakistan would be an attempt to obfuscate the visceral bond that I share with this deeply exasperating country.

Returning then, to the issue at hand: what does it mean, to be Pakistani? I'm not the first or the last person to pose the question and be flummoxed. To be sure, religion informs certain iterations of national character but there are other cultural signifiers such as literature, music and cuisine, which in their weird and wonderful way shape the way we view ourselves. Or maybe it's the unholy trinity of Allah, Army and Amreeka that holds a sway over our national consciousness in ways that we can't possibly fathom or quantify.

I don't know and I don't think I ever will.

What I do know, however, is that I am also a product of this country - a rudderless member of a

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This is not to be conflated with legitimate critiques of American intervention and appraisals of the devastating effects of colonialism that have been performed with remarkable erudition by scholars of history.

2 To clarify, I was born and have lived in Pakistan for twenty one of my twenty four years.

privileged elite that would most likely be categorized as burger<sup>3</sup> with a healthy sense of deserved derision. And even in giving a frank appraisal of my relationship with Edinburgh - a simultaneously Scottish and cosmopolitan city - it is worth asking: what underlies the basis of my claims of love and belonging? I cannot with a straight face say that I am any more Scottish than I am Pakistani - by way of arbitrary half-measures I love haggis but do not fancy Scotch; I love the William Brothers but the jury is out on the trams; I adore Oink but cannot understand the Scottish predilection for Buckfast - but there was an ease and dignity with which life carried on there that I cherish and miss. A sense of security, whereby a street performer on the Mile can offer a riveting display of acrobatics and pyrotechnics without the crowd pausing to think, "What if...?" And I say all of this carefully cocooned in one of the comparatively unscathed urban centers of the country. The unremitting gamut of violence experienced by others in Pakistan is unparalleled, unjust and just too much for anyone to have to endure.

Faced with all these questions - momentous, trivial; call them what you will - I am trying to make a life in Islamabad. A city of clean lines and clear grids - perhaps not quite as much any more; old notions of Islamabad are giving way to new ones. A city in flux. But still a city of hills and parks. Of minarets gesturing rudely to hills. A city of enclosed deer pens - a wildlife sanctuary to be precise - regal and circumscribed next to busy roads where cars whizz by. A city that is a rather cruel host to the 80,000 or so people that live in various katchi abadis. A city where some houses have the Pakistani flag hanging off the roof and others - because Islamabad is one of those places that has schools in houses - are adorned with the mild metal menace of barbed wire. But even with its perverse mass of contradictions, Islamabad is not an emblem of this complex country. And nor should it be regarded as one. That would be disservice to the remarkably diverse and vibrant people this country is host to.

So, I'll continue to go to work on palely lit, gray mornings that weakly herald the start of a new day. I'll pass staff employed by the CDA that clean the streets each morning so that a sanitized view of everyday life is presented to inhabitants of the capital; complicit and complacent in their suburban reverie.

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<sup>3</sup> The culinary history of the hamburger is fraught with dispute with competing claims from the Germans and Americans but it is easy to accept the modern manifestation of the hamburger courtesy McDonalds and other fast-food chains as a ubiquitous symbol of American culture. To contextualise, while normally advertised as a low-cost food item, a McDonalds meal in Pakistan is decidedly more expensive than its desi counterpart the bun-kebab and would come under the purview of middle class consumption. Buying a McDonalds meal in Pakistan can generate enough of a discussion on class and status as does the desire to stuff your face with an inordinate amount of sodium. The etymological origins of the pejorative "burger" are contested within the academic community with Messrs. Zohair and Toru claiming that the word originated in Karachi and is used to describe foreign educated, upper-class Pakistanis that are gloriously out of touch with their own culture - the definition of culture being subject to regional variation. In this view, a caricatured representation of a burger could feature non-traditional, western sartorial choices accompanied with accented English and broken Urdu. Eminent phenomenological sociologist Muhammad Bilawal posits a slightly amended explanation, espousing that the term burger denotes an aspirational mind-set and that the disjuncture between the burger's values and society's values stem from class conflict and a desire to achieve vertical social mobility. Hence this interpretation suggests that a burger is someone who seeks to imitate or apes his construction of what the he/she thinks the Pakistani elite behaves and acts like. The burger is then subject to ridicule from the social class that he/she is from and reasons for this mockery can be as wide-ranging from a sense of class betrayal to accusations of inauthenticity etc. To be clear, at the heart of this debate is the issue of authenticity as the burger - irrespective of what definition you subscribe to - is regarded as inauthentic and lacking in sincerity. Refer to #TheBurgerInquiry for a more informal take on the matter.

# ARE YOU DRESSED JUST LIKE MY LOVE?

KAYLA ALLEN

He's wearing his best suit. He slicked back his dark hair. He's drinking a whiskey ginger with trembling hands. He never used to drink, but things change, she thinks. She wonders if it roughens his throat the way the words "I love you" used to; he didn't say the words often, but when he did she could feel them resonate inside of her. She wonders if he starting drinking again because he doesn't say, "I love you," anymore.

She likes the suit. She picked it out for him. It used to make him look like a Golden Age movie star, but now he looks more like the movie star's rotting corpse. His face is pale; his cheeks are hollow. The hand holding the drink is almost skeletal.

He flickers, like a hologram, blinking out of existence for a moment and then popping back in. She shakes her head. She can't see straight anymore.

She stays in the corner of the room. She dressed up for this party—red lipstick, pearls, her favorite polka-dotted dress—but it's best for her to stay out of the middle of things. It's best for her to just watch.

She's watching him, but all of a sudden he's everywhere. He's talking to a woman with golden hair. He's across the room, swaying to the slow piano music. He's standing by the window, in the pool of moonlight collecting on the floor. Every single person in the party has his soft blue eyes, his long nose, his tattooed knuckles. A hundred copies of him, swarming around

her but never getting too close.

She blinks, and everyone has the right face, the right body, and they chatter around her without noticing that she's there. She finds him—the right him. She meets his gaze. He must be able to see her—his eyes widen, his thin lips part, he steps back a few feet. People move between them and the spell is broken, but she knows that that moment was real.

He downs his drink and retreats back to the open bar. She wishes she could do something to erase that broken look from his face, but she has done all she can. She doesn't know if it made things better or worse.

She catches a glimpse of her reflection in the mirror and she can see her bones, x-ray like, through her gray skin. Uncomfortable feelings collide somewhere in her stomach. She wants to keep watching him—she wants to know that he's okay—but perhaps it's time to move on. Perhaps he doesn't want the ghost of his wife hanging around anymore. Perhaps she has to let go.

She wants to find his eyes one more time, but her fragile body is already fading.

VERA

ALICE VON GOTHHA



# YESTERDAY'S WOMAN

(CLARE DOLAN

Dust particles fall all over  
We watch them rise between breaths  
can we call this procrastination?  
I've been awake for twenty-four  
hours, can they keep piling?  
Please don't let your lashes tumble

It's too late, I leave you quietly,  
Letting the droplets cataract  
Warming me quickly  
Keep me up, I wonder  
Lathering a lime zing  
Am I clean now?

I hunt and gather my clothes  
Surrounding myself  
In yesterday's creases

I have no keys,  
But let the latch click

UNTITLED

SARAH DOW





# WAITING FOR THE BOUNCE

CALLUM BOATH

Currency falls ambivalent to myself  
With the grace and tenacity  
Of a bombing gull, plunging under the surface,  
Breaking the water releasing a plume of white foam.  
Like the jaws of a ravenous dog  
Sectioned  
In the pound.

A mixture of bravery and insanity  
They stand on the ledge of high buildings  
Ready to embrace the fall.  
Life proved too much  
After all.

For once in their life they now feel extroverted,  
From a life once beguiled by agoraphobia,  
With tears in their eyes but a smile on their face  
They fail to all consuming nature.  
Trip  
Force  
Fall

A bombers delight,  
Two half moons lie across each other  
There will be no star-crossed lovers found,  
Where the X marks the spot.

“At least we all have something to aim for.  
Just tell them I’m sorry”

With a trip, a bang, a thud,  
And like a drip from a tap  
Followed by the rest.

# THE LOST

KYLE COOPER

They have come out of the mist, into the new world.  
Risen up from forgetful rivers,  
The clouds fall away beneath them.  
They stride from island to island in the sea of summits.

The people here of a kind  
And kindness is that kind  
And they show compassion of a kind  
That shows them kindred.

Here there are no lost;  
They laugh with abandon -  
Find only  
Fresh homes.

The clouds clear,  
They bend -  
Grasp the silver stream  
Wind it into a ringing circle.

# LONGING

ANDREA POPYORDANOVA



AH IT'S  
MY LONGING  
FOR WHO  
I MIGHT  
HAVE BEEN  
THAT  
DISTRACTS  
AND  
TORMENTS  
ME!

FERNANDO PESSOA

# GOING BACK IN

ARAN WARD SELL

Lia walked away from the big house. It was getting dark, and the silhouetted eaves had their outlines torn by brokenknuckled trees.

She didn't want to go back in.

Dad had been cruel, to say what he had. It was no day for cruelty, not with the eyes of her half-sister – his non-daughter – spectral behind everyone's shoulder. She hadn't come back for *him*.

Behind her, they would be gossiping, picking over her departure like crows over a dead dog. *Oh, just like her*, she could hear them say. *Just like her to make it all about herself*. She thought about just getting in the car and leaving, driving all the way back to Wales. It would be past midnight before she got home, but Graham would still be up, his retinas bleached by laptop glow. He'd make her a cup of tea and not ask the wrong questions, make her feel at home again before shuffling back to his game. She couldn't. She avoided asking herself *why not*, in case the answer chimed with the crows' opinions. *All about herself*.

It wasn't her fault it was dad's. Wasn't her fault, it was dad's.

Her red knitted scarf itched her cheeks. She'd forgotten to snatch up her gloves from the hall table, so she rammed her hands deep into her coat pockets, and walked quickly to keep warm. A couple of cars passed, dipping their headlights when they saw her white face startled by their fullbeams. Five more minutes, and she'd reach *the village*, a scraggle of bungalows flocked around the shop where dad bought lottery tickets, cigarettes and sad, square, sliced white loaves in plastic bodybags. It became her destination: she didn't know where she was going after, but for now she was *going to the shop*. Her fingers raked her pocket-lining for change, avoiding the car key; enough there for a Lucozade. She wondered if that would be enough excuse for the crows. *Storm out? I didn't storm out, I just fancied a Lucozade*.

Her phone rung in her pocket. The intro to *Someone Like You*. She didn't want to answer. She wanted twenty minutes of just the road and the dusk and her cold fingers and the empty interactions of buying a drink in a shop before even deciding what to do next. She looked at the screen. Mum. She answered.

“Emilia?”

“Mum. What's up?” *Why aren't you at your daughter's funeral*, she didn't ask.

“Your dad just called me, he asked me to check that—”

“He's got my number, hasn't he?”

“Emmy, I just wanted to check that—”

“I'm fine. I'm fine mum. Dad just got too much.” *Carla's fine too.*

“Yes, well, he does that.” her mother started to fake a laugh, gave up on it. “How is...?”

“It's fine. Everyone came. I have to go, mum. I'll drop in on Sunday, tell you all about it, kay?”

“Well if—” Lia pressed *End*. She pictured her mum, sitting on the white couch in her small front room, looking at her aged flip-phone, too nervous to call again, too timid to call dad. She felt bad for passing on dad's cruelty, but it wasn't her fault, it was his. She'd bake mum a cake for Sunday, or something.

The shop was shut. She could see that already, but kept on walking right up to the door anyway, past the bungalows where families clustered in front of huge televisions, visible through inadequate curtains. She rested her fingers on the glass door of the shop, looking at the blinking lights on the coffee-vending machine, still on inside.

“Shop's shut,” said a man with a grey moustache and Nike jacket, passing by with his jack russell straining at its leash. She grunted.

The pub, another ten minutes along the B-road, would be open. The distance was about right, but she dismissed the idea. People thought they could talk to you in country pubs. Her text alert buzzed. The screen said Dad. She shoved the phone back in her pocket without reading the preview. She leant back against the shop door and watched her clouded breath turn orange in the dim electric light. A few cars passed. A cow, or something, lowed in the distance. She adjusted her scarf and belted her coat tighter.

“Shop's still shut,” said the man, coming back the other way. He chuckled at his own joke. “Pub's still open in the village”, he offered. “They do milk and bread and that too.” To dad, this was the village. Where the pub was, was *town*. She smiled and managed to say some kind of thanks. The dog snuffled her boot-tips, and the man dragged it on. Her phone buzzed again. She left it in her pocket.

“When did it start being so hard to just get some time alone?” she asked her clouds of breath out loud. Alone, belonging to nothing. She could feel dried tears on her cheeks, and wondered when they'd happened. “Sorry,” she apologised. “That was a bit melodramatic.”

The last time she'd seen Clara had been surprisingly alright. They'd known what was coming by then. They'd said all the goodbyes they'd needed to. There'd been the right kind of tears. She pulled her phone out of her pocket to turn it off completely. She *never* did that. The last text was from Graham. *Hows the disaster??*, it said. She smiled without wanting to, picturing her slacker housemate pausing his game to pad in pyjamas over to the kettle, shouting up *Brew's up Lia* as he passed the stairs, remembering her absence when she failed to shout back. *Disastrous*, she texted.

His reply buzzed in immediately: *Lol big suprise, back tonite?*

She checked the text from her dad too. *Not angry, just concerned – please come back soonest? Don't want to ruin tonight, for Carla's sake.*

Don't want to ruin your social standing, she thought, but the fury was gone. She turned the phone off without replying to either text, feeling mighty. Somehow she had stood here long enough for the twilight to condense into night. She was genuinely thirsty now, and the locked door teased her. Money in her pocket and a shop full of bottles, and not a drop to drink.

Nowhere to go but back.

*Come on, Emilia, I'm sure Irina doesn't want to hear all about your latest heartbreak he'd said, passing with another tray of drinks, eavesdropping on every conversation in the room all at once the way he could. Let's make tonight about good memories, eh? Talk about someone besides yourself for once.*

Had it been such a bad thing to say? *Not by itself, but if he wasn't always doing it then I wouldn't have.* Had she flounced out too dramatically? *I don't flounce, but maybe I could have been.*

Unfinished thoughts.

She'd taken tomorrow off anyway so there was no need to hurry back. Just another hour or two, circulating and smiling and accepting the scrag-end of condolences, and she could plead tiredness. Tomorrow would be easier, dad more relaxed, making giant heaps of scrambled eggs, the overnighters' spirits raised by having got through the funeral-day. The car key in her pocket didn't seem so jagged now the fury had ebbed. Circulating and smiling, but she had nothing to prove.

The road seemed much shorter on the way back. Before her feet could think things through, she was back on the wide gravel drive. The trees barely stood out against the bruised sky. The bay windows wasted light obscenely on the empty lawn. Dark uniforms of mourning beyond the glass, moving in the approved patterns, saying the right things. *Such a shame Sharon couldn't make.* Not saying the wrong things. *That woman and her daughter both, did you see the way she.* She'd probably imagined the crows. If anything, they were probably saying *no wonder it was hard for her tonight, they grew very close at the.* She wouldn't want to prick such a dream of forgiveness. She didn't want to go back in to the big house, anyway.

She turned her phone on again, and texted Graham back. *Yep back maybe 2am? Gonna be a brutal drive, get that kettle on standby.*

She knew the tyres would sound loudly on the gravel, and avoided looking at the windows to see if heads turned. She decided they hadn't. She waited until the end of the drive to turn the headlights on, and swung smoothly out onto the B-road.

She paused just before the motorway, and texted dad back too.

*Sorry, all got too much. Tell everyone sorry and I'm ok. Going to see mum on Sun, I know it's a long way but would love it if you'd come? I'll make a cake.*

Half an hour later, still waiting for a reply, she pulled into a services, and added: *oh and could you bring my gloves (in the hall)? Xx*

# NEW ZEALAND I LOVE YOU, BUT YOU'RE BRINGING ME DOWN

ALISON PIPER

I woke up in my ball jar beside the pickled eggs.  
I woke up chilled, a little spilled  
in the refrigerator where we kept our bed.

I woke up pickled and jarred  
clutching the larger part of your wish bone,  
unbeknown to you as we lay back to back  
stone and grey and cold meat our feet  
cramped and clawed from a dozen breaks  
and a dozen avenues explored.

I woke up and I couldn't speak  
so I wrote upon our bed sheets.  
My fingers and thumb  
scribbled invisible syllables  
My echolalia  
la la la la la  
laced our cold meat sheets from the crook of your neck  
to your  
broken toes  
with impossible verses of over and over.

I woke up and took photographs of every ceiling  
under which I dreamed of leaving you  
the way I left my handbag in the office  
on that day  
the Richter scale hit eight point four  
a needle scrawled down  
up the walls and on the floor  
that cracked and cried for the spire  
as if fell from the church where the doves and the  
vultures fell down from their perch.

As we mourned the falling of Christ  
and her church  
we found comfort in sedentary  
our skin fused together with old water  
bedsores  
and five-dollar wine.  
I lay supine inhaling our dust and dead skin.  
I don't love you and more,  
And I don't love you any more.  
Choke and suck bitter limes  
from the shelf in the door.

I woke up numb under stalactites of cracked white  
watching re-runs with iron gums  
obscured by the dust and the light of  
mid-afternoon dull hues a loose tooth  
yellow bruised too early for booze  
and too late to start the day,  
I stayed awake to watch the earthquake again  
on the evening news.

# ARTISTS AND AUTHORS

**Kayla Allen** is an English major at Northeastern University with minors in history and musical theatre. You can find her at [thekaylaallen.wordpress.com](http://thekaylaallen.wordpress.com).

**Edward Belleville** - Edinburgh native, GSOH, likes cooking and rainy days. Seeks food/ shelter/ acclaim. Previous work found online at *The Cadaverine*, *Ink Sweat & Tears*, *Poet and Geek*; in print journals *Weyfarer's*, *Poetry and Audience*; and the anthology *Strangers in Paris* (Tightrope Books, 2011)

**Callum Boath** lives in Edinburgh and likes to drink wine. He also steals packets of chewing gum whilst shopkeepers aren't looking. Ultimately he is just one of many that wants a job remotely linked to his degree.

**Andrea Campomanes** is a current MA illustrator student at the ECA with a background as a fine artist. She mainly works in B&W, using ink pens and technical pens to achieve small details and textures contrasted with rough and loose lines. <http://andreacampomanes.weebly.com/>

**Kyle Cooper** reads, writes, walks. He has recently completed a Masters in Literature and Modernity and has been scribbling for some years now. He has been published in *The Cadaverine* and *Brittle Star*, and he reviews for *Lunar Poetry*.

**Clare Dolan** is a 23-year old trying really hard to be a grown up in Edinburgh. She studied English and Creative Writing at the University Of Hull and spent her final year at the University Of Iowa. She's a big fan of holidays and eating.

**Sarah Dow** is a twenty-something primary school teacher who lives near London and likes to take photographs of the scenery and people around her. She tries to find beauty in things that might go unnoticed, especially skies and clouds. Although completing a Photography A Level, she is recently returning to her interest in photography. She also writes a lifestyle blog under the name of Polly May.

**Peony Gent** - Originally from the fens of Cambridgeshire, now a student at Edinburgh College of Art. Enjoys tea, cats, and watching endless reruns of the crystal maze in her pyjamas. [www.peonygent.com](http://www.peonygent.com) & [www.peonygent.tumblr.com](http://www.peonygent.tumblr.com)

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**Cindy Matthews** has worked as a chamber maid, potato peeler, data entry operator, teacher, and vice-principal of special education programs. She writes, paints, and instructs online courses for teachers in Bruce County, Ontario, Canada. Her fiction and non-fiction have appeared or are forthcoming in *Story and Picture*, *The Bohemyth*, *Ascent Aspirations*, *The Belle Journal*, *Tincture Journal*, *Steel Chisel*, *Rural Voice*,

Ricochet Magazine, Crab Fat Literary Magazine, Green Hills Literary Lantern, Gamblers Mag, and Rhubarb Magazine. She is a frequent book reviewer for Prick of the Spindle and Professionally Speaking. Her creative non-fiction piece, 'Nothing by Mouth', was shortlisted in the 2014 Event Magazine Non-Fiction Contest. Find her work at [cindy.matthews.ca](http://cindy.matthews.ca)

**Alison Piper** (b. 1988, Scotland) is a Glasgow based filmmaker and writer. Inspired by the way digital and physical cultures merge, her current focus is an examination of atemporality in cinema. [www.alisonpiper.com](http://www.alisonpiper.com) [www.twitter.com/acutelycurious](https://www.twitter.com/acutelycurious)

**Klaus Pinter** b. 1968, lives and works in vienna. [www.klaus-pinter.net](http://www.klaus-pinter.net)

**Andrea Popyordanova** - Illustration student in 4th year in Edinburgh College of Art. She is interested in the realm of the human soul, in the invisible, mysterious, the aspects of reality underlying what is obvious. She works on the theme of rituals, beliefs, magic by working on literary texts (books), music (album design), movies, or creating branding for imagined products.

**Aran Ward Sell** is an Edinburgh-based writer, currently studying for an MSc in Literature and Modernity at Edinburgh University. His short stories and performance poetry can be found at [www.reasonstoremain.co.uk](http://www.reasonstoremain.co.uk), as can a picture of an emu. He is currently completing a novel. [twitter.com/AranWS](https://twitter.com/AranWS)

**Palvashay Sethi** on most days is content to exist. She recently completed her MSc in Literature and Modernity from the University of Edinburgh and has moved back to her home town Islamabad where she is in the throes of a second adolescence.

**Madden Swan** lives in Kaiserslautern, Germany, with her husband, where she teaches English and writing to military members serving overseas. She graduated from The University of Edinburgh in 2014, and has previously published with The Bygone Bureau and Lighthouse Writers Workshop.

**Alice Von Gotha** - Socially awkward with a distorted sense of reality, I'm working on the concepts of creation and destruction, either physically, psychologically or philosophically. Forever attracted by the weird, the mysterious or even villains in stories, I try to express my vision of beauty on the odd and the broken. [www.twitter.com/loony\\_loveart](https://www.twitter.com/loony_loveart) [www.aliceswanderings.wordpress.com](http://www.aliceswanderings.wordpress.com)  
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