

SPIRITUS MUNDI REVIEW

LITERARY JOURNAL

AGERE SEQUITUR ESSE



ISSUE 2:
IDENTITIES

Spiritus Mundi Review

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02

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Claire Griffin // Joshua Merchant // Emily Coppella //
Archana Dineshkumar Manhachery // Philip Athans // Matthew
O'Rourke // Jim Young // Keira Armstrong // John Onyeche //
Sugar de Santos // Theresa Jakobsen // Irina Norikova //
Elena Cosmos // Emma Tolliver // Megan Joubert // Tosin Okewole

SPIRITUSMUNDI.ONLINE

Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

Identity is a fickle thing. It defines us as much as we define it through our experiences, beliefs, and actions. Our identity is constantly changing as we grow, yet we can capture a snapshot of it, a small moment of who we are, through art. Then time passes and our identity is once again modified *ad infinitum*.

Growing up as a biracial Jew, I often felt like I was half everything but not fully anything. There was no area of my identity that I felt fully committed or connected to, no schema that I could fit under neatly. Instead, I found myself in the awkward overlap of a Venn diagram, with no clear idea of what my identity should be.

A struggle with identity is universal, whether it relates to our race, gender, sexuality, or overall personhood. While reading the submissions to Issue 2, I was amazed by the skill and beauty with which artists conveyed their feelings of isolation, confusion, and awkwardness as they move through this world, constantly amending their self-image and questioning their identity. These struggles formed the foundation for their work, which I am grateful to now share with you.

The goal of *Spiritus Mundi Review* is to allow artists to examine the human condition through various mediums and share their vision with other artists around the world. Our title, *Spiritus Mundi*, translates as *spirit of the world*, and through this issue, I am confident that we captured the spirits of many gifted artists around the globe.

Thank you to all of the *Spiritus Mundi Review* staff, our talented contributors, and all of our readers. I sincerely hope that you enjoy reading this issue and gain a new perspective on how our identity shapes us and how we can shape it.

Sincerely,

Breanna Crossman

Editor-in-Chief of Spiritus Mundi Review

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Longing

by John Chinaka Onyeche

Tonight, I will hide under poet-tree
With my lover's arms around my heart
To squeeze out of me, my bitterness.

Under this poet-tree, I will hide and bleed.
For love has not been a bird of roses
And though roses grow with the thorns

-But howling taunting words to love
No edge sword cuts deeper than that
I mean, calling love hatred at noon
No words can heal the scars thereof

Perhaps, tonight, I will hide under poet-tree
With my lover's arms around my heart
To squeeze out of me, my scars of failed love.

My Three Muses

Megan Joubert



Painting

By Tosin Okewole

There is no necessary depth to this. Someone asked me what I liked yesterday.

Years ago, I read Joe Graft's *Sons and Daughters* obsessively. Before *Sons and Daughters*, it was *The Passport Of Mallam Illia* and before that was a book that held a collection of JP Clarke's poems. I do not remember that book much. I only remember that it was red, and it gave me a headache and smelt the same as all the other books in the room, dusty. I like literature. And the enthrallment that comes with reading the thoughts of other people. Don't you like literature too? Don't you feel heady when you hold a person's ideas in your hands? If there is a heaven, I hope it's a bookstore. A pleasant, warm bookstore with the finest of books and scones too, because I like scones.

I also like the feel of neckpieces on my skin, crop tops and low-rise jeans and shrimp crackers because they remind me of my mother. Conversations also, because the idea of baring myself to the scrutiny of strangers excites me. I like gatekeeping my favourite music from some people. Maybe all people even. Because I fear that if they know how beautifully Meimuna sings, they won't appreciate her enough. And the thought alone saddens me. I like stained glass and Campbell Fauber's playlists.

I think the creator of Pinterest went off with that idea. Sometimes, when they are not being bigoted, I like my people.

I don't particularly like the rain. Storms scare me. So when it's raining heavily, I lie still on my bed and pretend that I am dead, the same way I always did as a kid. Or I listen to Harry Styles. I like V.E Schwabb and Harry Potter and Malta Guinness in that other. The thought that people exist who voluntarily drink Amstel Malta gives me anxiety. The first day I listened to Alice Phoebe Lou, I felt the urge to go out and get my heart recklessly broken. I like soft people, people who love you with some form of tenderness. I like vulnerability.

I like platform boots because they make a statement. I don't think I could pull them off, though. I live to give ridiculous names to the stories I write. I like the following words and phrases: emotionally bankrupt, kafkaesque, potpourri, bruschetta, fuck off. I look forward to conversations with my brother because he is the most brilliant person I know. I sometimes pretend that the complexity of life does not startle me. Because even if I admit to this startlement, what difference does it make? I like to end my days by watching Timothee Chalamet's edits on TikTok and occasionally crying.

Corgis, glass, Foccacia, Legally Blonde, family, all the breeds of cats except Sphynx because they scare me, girls that are or look like Victoria De Angelis, Doja Cat, Friends- the show, Ethan Torchio. I also like these.

i'm in love with my mother

Emily Coppella

I walk with her, all over her, beside her,
i walk through her every day

i (forget to) thank her.

lurid memories

i wring out
again and again

like

how can i return these favours

like

how will we create the world when she's gone

crickets at night
the scent of the sun
(this is she)

a dead, dry leaf, wanting to soak but
instead float
in pondwater
(this is me)

i'm in love with my mother

Emily Coppella

now:

like maple seed, i twirl
with both arms
in the air.
reaching different
ways from the
same centre.

little seed
little shell
doing little spins
as i try to
talk about
the unpredictable futures,
the precariousness of the human race
without sounding like an asshole
at every party.

Orlando_Rev2.0

Sugar de Santos



Spirit of Turpentine

Ian Jackson

The beaming sun, the sounds of distant birds, sweat trailing down the back, the rough tree beneath fingertips. The heaviness of the axe, the smell of the pines, the weight of meeting the next quota.

Take your axe and chop through the tree, strip the bark around the desired area, attach your collection bucket, and funnel the resin. Repeat.

Chop with axe, strip bark, collect resin.

Eight of us work diligently in our borough. One group works to the North, close to the train tracks that lead into town. Another group works to the West, moving round the river. A third to the East, closest to the coast. But this spot in the South is our place, this area belongs to the eight of us.

Chop with axe, strip bark, collect resin.

The company employs us workers to collect resin to make into turpentine – the country’s lifeblood.

Chop with axe, strip bark, collect resin.

Over and over, tree by tree, day after day. The company is our bond – every worker is here because of their debt. Each tree we tap is money in the company’s pocket. Every day our bills become greater and we work to stay even. Like bondage, our dues keep our group working, keep us harvesting. We’ve traded cotton for turpentine.

Chop with axe, strip bark, collect resin.

Our boss stands over us, always out of frame, watching to see who falls behind – to see who doesn’t meet their quota. Somedays he sits patiently on his horse, so quiet we forget he’s there. On days when the heat embraces us, he makes himself known, throwing insults, as well as injuries, our way. We’ve exchanged the title “master” for “boss”.

Chop with axe, strip bark, collect resin.

Spirit of Turpentine

Ian Jackson

We glance sidelong at one another, sending silent signals. Sympathetic support when the boss yells at us for moving too slow. Cocky confidence when one of us finishes their work before the others. Days go by where no words are spoken, but we share a connection nonetheless. We'd much rather work the trees than hang from them.

Weeks and months pass, sometimes new faces join as old ones leave. Always eight remain. We work pine after pine, moving across different fields. It never ends. We finish one area and move on to the next. Carving through bark, collecting whatever nectar the trees leave us.

Chop with axe, strip bark, collect resin.

Blurry faces because our identities have no purpose, denim overalls to soak up the sap that's left behind, hats to block out the unforgiving sun – our great enemy. Trees surround us, barrels at our feet, grass softening the firmness of the earth.

Chop with axe, strip bark, collect resin.

Summer. Our busiest time of year - bigger quotas, less time, the boss watching closer than ever. The sun burning our skin, sweat dripping down our brows, less time to sip water – times like these, we mutter to ourselves.

We convince each other, our families, and ourselves, that we'll find something better. We chant in our heads, over and over, that someday we won't have to tap trees – but we know this isn't true.

With each day the sun gets hotter, the trees get stronger, and the boss becomes viler.

With each day that passes, our identities become fainter, our clothes become more stained, our barrels heavier, the grass harder.

With each day that passes, it becomes apparent that there isn't any escape from this life. This is our people's past, present, and future.

...Chop with axe... Strip bark... Collect resin...

Because boys are not flowers

after Chukwuma Eke Pacella

Adesiyan Oluwapelumi

Because boys are not born of seeds or suckers,
I hide the garden in my mouth for I shouldn't
culture emotions.

Because a boy's eyes must wear ~~fear~~ fire & not water,
I string my lashes with beads of coal
& clothe my pupil with sulphur.

Because a boy's dreams are fleeing horses,
I saddle my feet to the soils of my hometown
to resist the hungry urge for futility.

Because boys are not flowers,
I expect no nurturing shears
& craft a knife to trim every thorn
but every thorn is my body.
I have no petals but my
body is painted with the blood
of punctured dreams.



Blómutíð

Theresa Kohlbeck Jakobsen

INSTRUCTIONS FOR GROWING A TREE

Amina Radonicic

When spending much of your life being a tree who stood tall, with brightest of leaves that grew on the longest of branches, it comes as quite a surprise when the dark days fall upon you. Your branches turn to twigs, your leaves begin to shrivel, and your trunk becomes incapable of holding itself up straight. It is as if all the life that was once radiating from within is blown out like a feeble match in the wind.

There is only one way to light that burning flame once again, to grow strong and allow yourself to absorb all the light that shines from up heavens above. You must allow nature to take its course; your seeds will be planted again, and you will begin to sprout. As you emerge out of the ground, your roots will spread through the soil. Slowly, you will regain your strength and the gusts of wind won't threaten your stability anymore. You are longer a sapling or ghost of what you used to be, you are now a tree.

Marionette

Matthew O'Rourke

transfixed by the microwave's golden humming spin

i am thinking

 dead weight / dead

 weight dead / weight,

me, in the glow of it,

warming

but too late,

warming

bronzing

maybe even grinning

(beneath all the silken skin

and wooden muscles),

thinking I could be anything,

but really I am just

holding

 gripping

 grasping

onto whatever appetite I had five hours ago,

to be new,

to be shining.

Marionette

Matthew O'Rourke

always sculpting
crafting
a response that will make me
reanimate.

whose corpse am i?
or is this just an empty box
without a light?
a puppet.
walking by command.

how am I still spinning.
how is it all still working.

Do Butterflies Remember Caterpillar Dreams?

Claire Griffin

Crawling,
passing the time.
Surviving
and dreaming
of floating weightless.

Colorful wings, beautiful patterns
anything but bland. For now I hide
in the shrubs and bushes.
With the other bugs and grubs.
It's safe,
but wrong.

Not all make it
to our cocoons. We're
stepped on,
torn apart,
chewed up and spit out.

Yet we crawl,

and crawl,

and crawl, until
we finally strive.

Do Butterflies Remember Caterpillar Dreams?

Claire Griffin

Do Butterflies remember
their Caterpillar dreams?
Hold past hopes close
while drifting along their path?
Remembering,
though not born with wings,
they earned them.

The World We Constructed

Emma Tolliver



Abstract Identity

Blaine Centauri

There's a script we expect when it comes to abuse. The meek and flinching thin, white woman with the black eye and split lip is what a victim looks like. Her abuser is masculine but vague and undefined, and we never refer to him as abusive. He is angry or troubled or sick. He is being abused himself at work. His mother never loved him. He is lonely and scared. He just needs love. As always, his needs are more important and visible than a survivor's. Does a survivor not need love? Does a survivor have no valid emotions? Do our loneliness and fear not matter?

We don't talk about how or when she leaves. She just does, somehow, and somehow that means it's all over. She's either being abused or she's not, and if she's not, then it's all a distant memory. Shh, don't talk about the stalking or the love bombing or the gaslighting or recruiting her loved ones to pass on the pleas to get back together or weaponizing custody of children or the manipulative threats of self-harm or fake attempts at therapy.

That would make things too messy. If she leaves, the rest of the world can move on. (If she stays, the rest of the world can ignore and forget.) Our script is very lacking.

Escape is the end of one chapter, but it's not the end of the book.

There's a lot more to abuse than the potential physicality and the fear and tears it causes. The erosion of self-esteem. The powerlessness. The lack of control. The overwhelming confusion. The loneliness. The anger. The numbness. The isolation. The guilt. The loss of sense of self and who you are as a person.

Verbal/emotional, digital, sexual, financial... There are many ways to abuse someone. To wear them down until they're pieces of sand scattering in the wind and make them believe they deserve it. Or maybe everyone lives this way, and they're just weak for not accepting such a life.

It's like climbing your way out of a deep, dark, damp well when you're escaping. Maybe you've got some people who sometimes cheer you on from the top of the well, but they don't think to send down a rope, or if they do, the rope is slick and jagged and they berate you any time you slip. You know there's supposedly an end to this well, but you hardly seem to make any progress toward getting out.

You're tired. Your fingers ache. You just want to rest but to rest is to slip back into the embrace of the sewage always waiting for you at rock bottom. Heaven forbid you to have pets or children.

Abstract Identity

Blaine Centauri

You have to strap them to your back and carry them out, too, lest abandon them to a watery grave. And if you don't climb quick enough the government that can't bother to help you or extend you any sympathy reaches its meaty paws down into the well and plucks your kids away while tutting at your failures.

Only after all that, when you finally fight your way to the top of the well, can you focus on rebuilding yourself. Only people aren't jigsaw puzzles. You can't rebuild yourself into the same person you used to be. Some pieces are too damaged or missing, left behind forever. You must craft a new picture out of what you've kept. You must build new pieces out of brand-new materials where you can. It's a bit like building a jigsaw puzzle except all the pieces are the same shape and the puzzle's upside down so all you see is one color sans picture. Only once you think you've got it solved can you flip the puzzle over to see how well you're really doing.

See if there's any hint of a picture or just a complete mess. The good news is: you get to keep trying, and it's okay if the puzzle turns out to be a little bit abstract.

Sun People

Elena Cosmos



My Body Hasn't Grown into My Brain

Archana Dineshkumar Manhachery

Grey yarn unfurls from my mouth to reveal
unruly fibres like branches on a winter tree,
and it is too late for a mischievous spirit
to moisten the brittle threads caressing time.

My ocean skin is really 50 years dead
and my velvet lips idolize charitable poison
that can renew them into boxing gloves.

Shine a torch on my nerves withering
like fried leaves tired of wisdom, as they
finally trip on water due to partial vision.

This is what it is like to be fully grown
in a curtain torso, partying in silence
and staying silent playing games.

Though I got to free butterflies from glass
prisons and smile at snakes seeking refuge
on my foam feet fit for owls,

Now, I must drink 7 glasses of water
or I risk exploding into thorns of torment
and grief buried in a supersaturated river.

My Body Hasn't Grown into My Brain

Archana Dineshkumar Manhachery

Instead of playing student to jackfruit trees,
I should've learned how to row snakeboats
and make natural eye contact with strangers.

He Says I Am Quite the Character

Megan Joubert



References to Particular Flowers

Philip Athans

Who are all these poets
Who seem to know so much
About flowers?

If you pointed to a rose
I would know it was a rose
Maybe the same with a daisy
A tulip, a sunflower, a dandelion
But beyond that, no
Not one of them

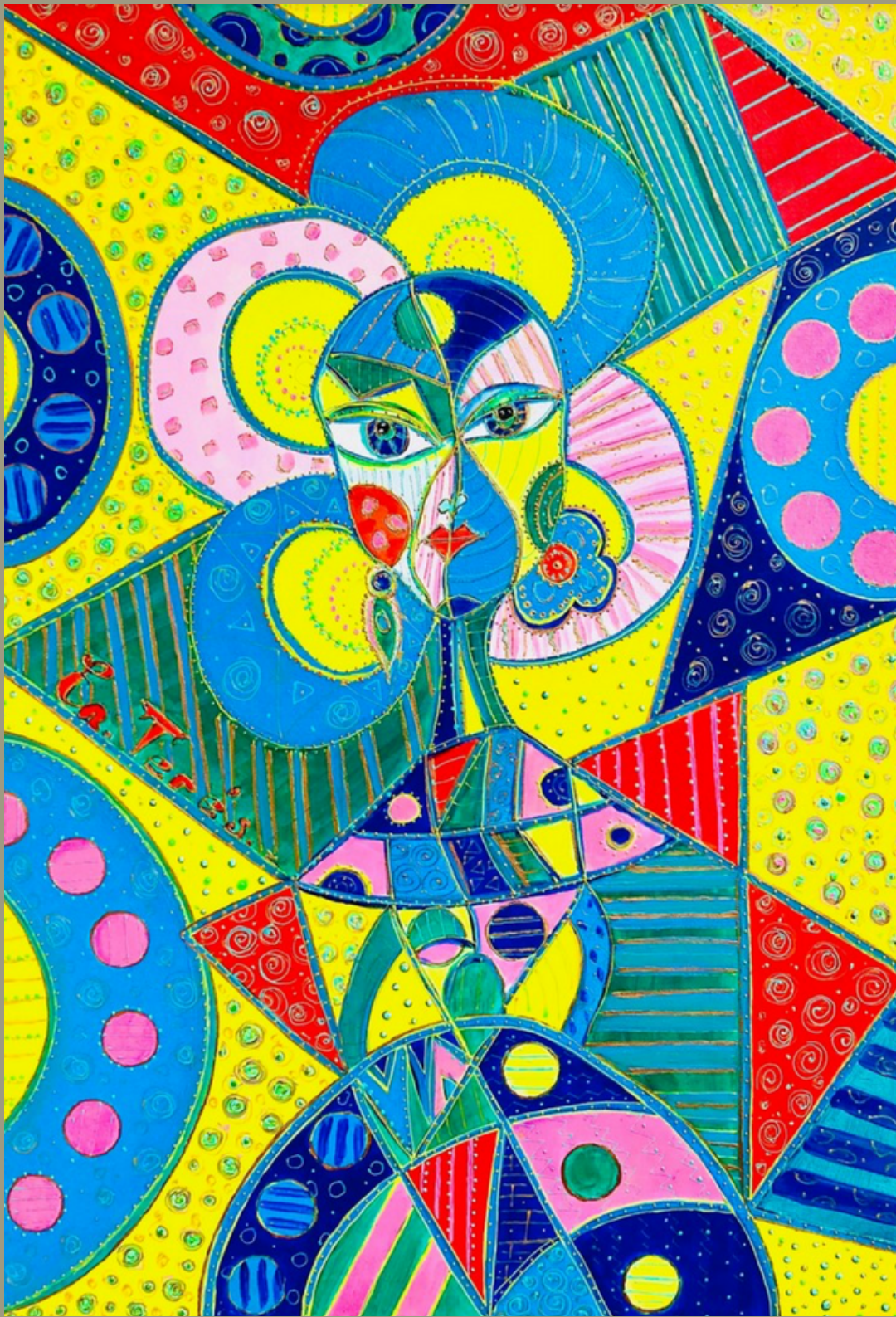
My brain holds no image
Of the yellow-striped petals
Of the Western Blindbeggar
And I have no idea that its stamens
When dried
Makes a tea that cures dyspepsia

I might have walked right by
A bed of Licorice Hiccups
And thought I'd spilled a drop
Of ouzo on my shirt
After dinner last night
In Greek Town

The eight-foot-tall Giant
Lindengrooves
In my neighbor's backyard
Could be what's keeping
The raccoons away, but I wouldn't
know
It could just as well be
Her patch of Raccoon's Bane

The little indigo bells
Of the Wild Indigo Bell
Mean no more to me
Than does the crimson flamberges
Of the Crimson Flamberge
That line the sidewalk in front of
Starbucks

The world is full of flowers
I couldn't pick out of a lineup
And that's precisely why
I've never referenced flowers
In anything I've written
Until now



Happiness

Elena Cosmos

SPIRITUS MUNDI REVIEW

My Queen

Zary Fekete

My name is Elaine, the mercury has hit 100 every day this week, and I have done everything that I can for my bees and their queen. Every afternoon I sit in the backyard, close enough to the hive to hear the soft murmur of their wings. They speak this quiet language to one another every day.

Yesterday, while I was driving past the school on my way home, I saw my daughter waiting for the school bus. She was laughing. I noticed this, because she doesn't laugh often. She laughed and threw her head back. Then she laid her head on the shoulder of the girl next to her...a girl with black hair. They were holding hands.

All of the books say that bees don't do well with the weather over the mid-90s. I thought about trying to move them today, but the books also recommend not doing that. This one is the third hive I've attempted. The first two died away. Hives require a lot of work and often the bees can't seem to make a go of it. They are expensive, and people grow frustrated quickly. The rest of the drive home I kept picturing my daughter with her head on the other girl's shoulder...so different from how I usually see her at home...head down, eyes down.

The only time I saw her raise her head in the past few days was when she overheard me talking on the phone with our neighbor from up the street. My daughter's eyes were hard, like glittering rocks.

This hive, this third one, however, crackles like a fire. My neighbor from up the street told me yesterday that her son had been stung three times in the past week. This means that my queen has reached adult maturity and is now commanding, through pheromones, for her drones to venture beyond the borders of my yard.

My neighbor's son used to ride on the school bus with my daughter...until last month. Last month the school called me to ask whether I wanted to press any charges. Because this is such a small community the word had gotten around quickly, and I think the school was hoping to quench any fires. I said no. My daughter has known him since grade school.

My neighbor was so angry. I still remember her harsh words, "The audacity! That you should keep that hive! That you could pretend to control so many thousand!" And then my neighbor left me. I closed my front door. And I returned to sit near to my hive.

My Queen

Zary Fekete

When my daughter arrived home I told her that I had seen her at the bus stop. She was on her way to her room, but then she stopped, realizing what that meant. She looked at me.

I said, “Pretty girl.” I smiled at her. There was a soft look on my daughter’s face.

She said, “She is.”

She hadn’t meant wrong, my queen. On hot days bees are commanded by their queen to stop focusing on nectar and to start bringing water back to the hive. To cool it, you see. The bees probably felt threatened by my neighbor’s son. Bees become more defensive when it’s hot, and they want to protect their queen. I understand. That’s what I’d want.

What Right Have I?

Jim Young

Dark veins of the valley terraces.
There you see, above the London train,
see their doors, two up, two down in stone.
What right have I, to that leaching nostalgia?

The iron works blazing red in their faces.
Families who lived and died in those dripping
days.
For the struggles born and bred there,
what right has my comforting words?

Frozen, dead, the pit head's silhouette wheel.
Sadness etched deep in coal line faces,
that tethered men so deep.
What right have I to look upon their
countenance?

Coal and iron emote the Welsh in song.
But the neighbourhoods are bleeding to death.
For, no work now - sorry.
What right have I to consider who they were?

Or are! For they live on.
Their way of life is deceased.
Only they can know it in the full.
What right have I to question them?

Are the valleys a museum now?
How dare we venture to bestow upon them
our own interpretation of the past?

What right? None at all.

What right have I to ask them what is right?
They are not my ancestral collage.
Should my words even attempt paint them?
Probably not. But surely that cannot be right?

How sad that what makes us Welsh,
or so we like to think,
has rushed right past now.
So, do we not belong at all?

Am I not Welsh, who has lived my days
in another deprivation in dereliction?
Where I played among the ghosts.
What right had they to speak to me?

Every right. For I saw the old men's faces.
I saw their coal tattoos, their scars.
I listened, as their dusty chests spat.
So, I have a right. Right?

For I have seen a furnace splat slag - watch out!
The sand-mould gas ignite and slam the floor.
I have felt the glow of hot metal on my face
and the fizz of a spark burning in my ear.

When the ghosts in the stones bleed cold tears,
and the buildings crumble under my feet.
I hear the stones repeat.

What Right Have I?

Jim Young

S'alright bachgen. S'alright now. Having a nap
see?

Art records the times.
Colours of toil, and death, and suffering.
Varnishes the dignity of the people
who stare back at me.

I cannot sing in a male voice choir.
I cannot play the national game.
I cannot speak our native tongue.
But I have the right to my past.

See the vision of my forebears,
there, above the mantle shelf.
See how they entreat of me,
make tomorrow a better place, son.
For the past was the death of me.

I have the right.
I hear you now.

I see, I see, I see.

staring, still

Keira Armstrong

behind the metal gate, as the sun breaks the bones in our backs, the boy's eyes
ask me a question i curl my jaw around his wrist and answer. yes.
my hands ache and i think i might throw myself into the ocean, mouth
open, to forget this.

fag rings hard and true in my bones and on his lips.

years later

when i am graceful and contain a wisp of america,
inside my name,

i still write his name in the mirror with my mothers lipstick— he is still
himself

my ribs are still a

little girl's

i still pin myself to

////////////////////////////////////the ground

and ask another

question

The Two Sides of Me

Sugar de Santos



Exellence

Joshua Merchant

a hen's bunch was stolen from her fertilizer in a dead sea of straw. I ate them. they came in a jar, whipped. an avocado was worn ragged. it's sweat used before discarded. the rest of it? probably. no way to tell for sure. I used half the jar to create makeshift dumplings and biscuits. I had leftover soup from scratch, flour, grapeseed oil, avocado oil mayonnaise, a skillet, and fingernails clipped from the fever dream of employment. I'm innovative. even when scared and hungry. when the jar was emptied, I began washing it out. it's a glass jar so I was extra excited about it. scraped the label clean under warm water. ignored the adhesive left behind~ my father

once made a bong out of my sippy cup. he did that a lot actually- makeshift tools. if I had to guess he learned this trick from one of his friends, relatives, brothers even. that day I was thirsty and this man had a twisty top, a plastic bag, a rubber band and some nug he would use as an etch a sketch for his rage. he wasn't really a dinner set kinda guy. each plate looked like a page from a different book he never finished reading. or did. just never talked about. kept his favorite memory to glance through though~ I think most things in his life were like that~ there are the muscles he wished I had~ and the memories attached

to the rest of me. I am a dinnerware person. my first bowl shot glass and coffee mug were altogether three dollars and I never felt so me. my plate and saucer set was passed down to me from an ex-lover whom I try to forget on bad days and on good days I might remember. and still, the empty mayonnaise jar chilled with sugar, tap water, and the nectar of a palm-sized green bottle briefly glued to my fingers has a way of consuming me. even after the teeth, my body ignores.

I Am Someone Else

Shrutidhora P. Mohor

I had always wanted to be someone else. I had never known how to.

So, when this idea seized my mind, I grabbed it with all my might.

They stand in a cluster, yet you can make out each one of them distinctly. Their front facades are lit by glowing neon boards. An array of signs, ticks and crosses, arrows and half circles, straight lines, and curvatures, adorn these boards. Distinguishing colors ooze out of their metal surfaces. They stand tall and proud, representing all that is there to represent. They are reliable signs for passers-by, a ready assurance of identity and recognition. Children and adults alike swoon over their presence, their agonizingly excited faces stimulated even before they have accessed the enclosed spaces below the dazzling signboards.

Having entered the game, I waste no further time in becoming them.

I dress myself up. That's easy, for all I have to do is to shine violently.

With that done, I now look for a sign.

A good, appropriate sign. I go for a toss between a trident and a crescent, both blunted and twisted to make them innocuously universal.

At this point, someone chides me, rotten signs! I exercise self-control and offer a cryptic reply. "Doesn't matter as long as they can recognize it. And what if they don't?"

"Absurd! The signs are all that there is to us. Marks of worthiness. So..."

I abort the conversation and concentrate on putting finishing touches to my showbiz face. Skeptics will always be skeptics. Unconvinced. Irreverent to the power that we possess.

Decked up, my frontal façade puffed up, I join them.

Their eyes fall on me, an additional glittering point.

From beneath the veneer of civility, one of them asks, what do you stand for?

Clearing my throat, I say, "Wellness." I cast my eyes far to appear highbrow. The wellness practitioners ought to be highbrow, my research showed me.

I Am Someone Else

Shrutidhora P. Mohor

There is silence, followed by partial withdrawal, for, who after all would want to engage with an entity that they cannot comprehend?

I pull up my socks. Can't afford to let them lose interest.

"There are life coaches available for personalized attention to one's desperate existential crises. Aromatic therapy, variable packages. A one-to-one session. Intimate counseling. An ascent into wellness, a higher state of existence. Guaranteed results, or else full refund."

They look impressed. I capitalize on the opportunity. "The logo. World famous. Clients from everywhere are drawn to this sign. Look here, yes, here...isn't it an automatic hit?"

The evening passes in high-pitch excitement. Each visitor is a potential buyer. The logo is a bait that they cannot avoid.

Hesitant ones ponder over the value for money, only to be prodded into paying for customized packages whose contents are secondary, the ingenious sign the main attraction.

My success story is manifested in a steady influx of clients that evening. Old and new, young and old, the wary and the enthusiast, the preventive and the curative.

The night over, I retreat to my corner. There, dumped upside down in a large tin barrel, I have been staying for the past two weeks, awaiting my eventual slaughter in the hands of a scrap buyer. My body is roughened, edgy, and soot-painted. I had been dismantled from the top portion of a shade a fortnight ago after the bankrupt owner of the tiny shop had decided to sell off his ancestral business.

How I had wanted to be in the hearts and minds of posh clients!

Damn this insignificant existence! All my life I have never seen anyone looking up to me, taking pleasure in my color and form, holding up their collars to convey their pride as they step into the space garlanded by my illuminated presence.

Half the alphabet on me has been erased by wear and tear. A careless ironsmith's hammer had dug a hole in one place.

I Am Someone Else

Shrutidhora P. Mohor

A signboard without a worthwhile sign on it.
No one had cared to know the name painted in
bold black lines, unimaginative, dull, archaic,
evoking no passion, no craze in the heart of the
potential buyer.

Damn this life!

Two weeks of quasi-garbage life.

Two weeks of awaiting ultimate destruction.

Two weeks of dreams of making it big, high
up there, with the ones who have never been
my peers.

Two weeks of expanding greed. Two weeks of
intense planning. Two weeks of research to
fake authenticity.

All for a moment of glory before the final
doomsday. For a few moments of glory one
night. The blindfolded trust of the long-time
client is matched by the untested conviction of
the new one. Aah, the taste of a worthy life.

The old skeptic is back here. Where have you
hidden the original one? The real one?

I pause. "Original? Real?"

Yes...the one you have pretended to be. And
what if they find out later that you are all fake?

I laugh out loud.

"There is no original!"

The skeptic is confused. Then how do you
qualify as an imposter?

I let my eyebrows dance ballet.

"That's the trick of the times, don't you know?"

You are still looking for the real. I am the
hyperreal! Please don't refer to me as an
imposter. Upgrade your vocabulary." I pretend
to brush off some soot from my face.

But...

"There. Is. No. Real."

The sceptic frowns.

Critics will be critics.

I give a damn.



Racial Crossbreed

Ian Jackson

List of Contributors

John Chinaka Onyeche "Rememberajc" (he/his) is the author of the following poetry collections: “Echoes Across The Atlantic”, “A Night Tale At The Threshold Of Howl”, “We Returned To Kiss The Cross”, “The Broken Fort”, “ A Good Day For Tomorrow’s Coming”, “ Stateless”, and a chapbook “Chapters Of Broken Tales”. Best of Net Nominee. A husband, father and poet from Nigeria. He writes from the city of Port Harcourt Rivers State, Nigeria. He is currently a student of History and Diplomatic Studies at Ignatius Ajuru University Of Education Port Harcourt Rivers State. When John is not writing, you will see him reading to stay in a good mood.

Emily Coppella (she/her) is a 24-year-old woman who lives on traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee territory. She completed her M.A. In English Language and Literature at Queen’s University and her B.A. in English at Carleton University with a concentration in Creative Writing and a minor in Women and Gender Studies. Her poetry has won 2nd place for the George Johnston Poetry Prize and has been published in a variety of literary journals such as In/Words and orangepeel.

Adesiyan Oluwapelumi (he/him), TPC XI, is a 17-year-old Nigerian writer with works published/forthcoming in BRITTLE PAPER, Kahalari Review, Lumiere Review, WRR, CultureCult Press, Literary Cocktail Magazine, Spillwords & elsewhere. His work is also featured in the Society Of Young Nigerian Writers (SYNW) 'Voices of Revolution' anthology. He writes to explore themes of boyhood & grief. He is also a chronic lover of rap songs, tomatoes & e.e cummings. Find him on Twitter @ademindpoems.

Matthew O'Rourke is an eighteen-year-old Irish poet and short fiction writer whose work has been recognized by VIBE, Chinchilla Lit, Rotary, and Immrama. He was shortlisted for the Edna O'Brien Writers Bursary in 2020. His writing traverses cursed settings, matters of healing and release, and identity.

Claire Griffin is a twenty-five-year-old fiction and poetry writer from the United States. She lives in Iowa with her fiancée and their two cats.

Archana Dineshkumar Manhachery is a 24 year old freelance scientific editor based in Kerala, India. She is presently pursuing a master's degree in Psychology and holds an MSc. in Forensic Science from the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. She enjoys writing about the wild and often neglected metaphorical life

Editor and author **Philip Athans** has been a driving force behind varied media including Alternative fiction & poetry magazine and Wizards of the Coast. He lives and works in the Pacific Northwest..

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Jim Young is an old poet (73) living in The Mumbles, Gower, Wales, UK. He does most of his writing in his beach hut on the Gower peninsula. Jim is widely published but is still waiting to discover this side of the grave.

Keira Armstrong, a young author and poet, is the founder of Verum Literary Press and a staff contributor at Cloudy Magazine. Their work has been published or is forthcoming in Healthline Zine, Corporeal Lit, Sage Cigarettes, Anti-Heroin Chic, and more. You can find them at <https://keira-armstrong.carrd.co>.

Joshua Merchant is a Black Queer native of East Oakland, CA exploring what it means to be human as an intersectional being. What they've been exploring as of late has been in the realm of loving and what it means while processing trauma. They feel as though as a people, especially those of us more marginalized than others, it has become too common to deny access to our true source of power as a means of feeling powerful. A collective trauma response if you will. However, they've come to recognize with harsh lessons and divine grace that without showing up for ourselves and each other, everything else is null and void. Innately, everything Merchant writes is a love letter to their people. Because of this, they've had the honor to witness their work being held and understood in literary journals such as 580Split, Eleven Eleven, and The Rootwork Journal.

Irina Novikova is an artist, graphic artist, and illustrator. She graduated from the State Academy of Slavic Cultures with a degree in art, and also has a bachelor's degree in design.

Megan Joubert is a 29-year-old artist and photographer located in Central New York, US. She uses digital and film photography to make one of a kind, handmade photomontages. Using imagery ranging from floral to figurative, she puts together new worlds by cutting and reconstructing photographs, which she sees as a palette of sorts.

Sugar de Santo is a gay, queer, disabled, visual artist and poet from Berlin, Germany. He works mainly with paper from magazines. His work has been published in „The Storms“ Magazine, and some more work will be published soon in The „Brack Magazine, Issue 1“. You can find him on Twitter and Instagram @sugar_de.

Theresa K. Jakobsen (they/them) is a German creative, who after spending the pandemic on the remote Faroe Islands re-entered the colorful streets of Berlin city. The challenges of living in another country were propulsion to their creativity. Theresa creates mixed media art and writes multilingual pieces that circle around the theme of identity and relationships in a digital age. Their works recently got published in Variety Pack Mag, Alien Buddha Zine and The Gamut Mag.

List of Contributors

Emma Tolliver is a twenty-one-year-old artist, writer, and student. A lifelong Californian, she is an undergraduate at UC Davis studying English and Political Science.

Elena Cosmos is a Russian artist who likes cubic art and abstract art. She likes bright colors and making people happy with her work.

Ian Jackson is an aspiring creative, born and raised in Tampa, FL. He attempts to produce art that discusses the unsung, unacknowledged, and unappreciated. His literary and visual art has been published by Media Renaissance, Retro Press Vol 1, the Independent Florida Alligator, Rowdy Magazine, and the Harn Museum of Art.

Tosin Okewole (she/her) is an 18-year-old writer from Nigeria. She loves to write about the unpredictability of love and the frailty of existence. Her work has been published in Brittle Paper and NantyGreens and is forthcoming in Oranges Journal. Outside of writing, she is an avid cat lover, a potential plant mom, and a crossword enthusiast. She tweets @tosinnokewole and runs a medium page <http://tosinokewole.medium.com>

Amina Radonic (she/her) is a sixteen-year-old writer from Long Island, New York. She is a lover of classic literature, her favorite reads include To Kill A Mockingbird and Little Women. While she chooses to spend most of her time reading or writing, you can also find her watching history documentaries, listening to music ranging from Taylor Swift to Vivaldi, and spending time with her dog.

August Blaine Centauri is a trickster in a human's body who has been spinning yarns since around three years old. They are currently 31 and reside in the southwest of the USA. Thon is a proud weirdo. In their spare time from working or writing, Blaine practices piano, lifts weights, and spars in Muay Thai.

Zary Fekete has worked as a teacher in Hungary, Moldova, Romania, China, and Cambodia. They currently live and work as a writer in Minnesota. Some places they have been published are Goats Milk Mag, JMWW Journal, Bethlehem Writers Roundtable, and Zoetic Press. They enjoy reading, podcasts, and long, slow films. Twitter: @ZaryFekete

Shrutidhora P Mohor (born 1979) is an author from India writing literary fiction. She has been listed in several international writing competitions like Bristol Short Story Prize 2022, the 20th Bath Flash Fiction Award, the George Floyd Short Story Competition 2022, the 16th Strands International Flash Fiction Competition, the Retreat West monthly micro competition in April, September, and October 2022, and the Retreat West quarterly themed competition in March 2022.