August 2025

Eterna Journal

Reverie

Issue 3

Issue III

Eterna Journal

August 2025

We invite you to bask in quiet reveries.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Reader,

Between the dizzying lights and clamor of cities, we traverse through weights of expectations until the light in our eyes begins to dim. Concealing thoughts and passions behind shadows and facades, our minds desperately seek for outlets into the river of expression and authenticity.

Reverie prompts small moments of introspection—fleeting but powerful enough to transport us away from this bustling world. Sometimes, we can pause and wander inside our own souls, letting imagination and free thoughts unlock new horizons of insights—restoring our strength, courage, and innate creativity.

Issue 3 contains nineteen pieces from eight countries, each embodying a distinct perspective and experience. Some whisper nostalgia, remembering the past and what we have left behind, as HMH decides: “The halls - would soon be just an echo / Of what had once been.” While others chase unrestrained passion: “If passion must burn, if beauty must cry, / Then let me choke in the ocean of why,” as nefelibata exclaims. These fascinating pieces remind us to pursue, to express, to break free…They paint reverie as a profound, creative mix of discovery, recollection, passion, and imagination, inviting metamorphosis and self-reconciliation.

“Now, two half-circles combine whole. / The circle’s nature, / Forever here and forever there,” reflects T.U. Patir. Step into issue 3 with us, and perhaps you will find answers embedded within these lines. If you ever feel lost, hold onto these reveries through the darkest of nights, until dawn comes again.

With love,
Zhihan Zhang and Yixin Zhou
Editor-in-Chief and Art Director of *Eterna Journal*

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Summer Rain

-Gianoula Burns

Nothing like summer rain to make you feel the pull of earth, drenched but dry under the surface…it begs to receive it in a gentle flow. Nothing happens like you wish or know it should. I clean the bench top with a sponge and wonder whether this is me, this life I made, this me I became. I listen to the rain fall, now heavy, now steady, and know that I am not here, not beyond, but somewhere in limbo between this place and another that is or was or could have been. The rain falls heavier now, as my thoughts turn to the me within that is, or is not emerging, growing wings. I look around, things familiar are real but then not, perhaps I am sliding between parallel beings, lives lived, not quite dropping out or within, phasing in or out, like when you are in a dream and you know it is a dream but you keep on going, keep trying to reach the goal whatever it is, whatever it is you are meant to be reaching for. This sun that streams through the kitchen window reflecting off the stone bench and the cream laminate kitchen cupboards revealing to me the dust that does not show otherwise, I reach wearily for the sponge and cloth and mechanically wipe off the dirt that has suddenly appeared all while in a trance remembering or think I do some other life that I lead somewhere, in the here and now. I glance round at the furniture, the dining suite with the embroidered tablecloth, the solid wood chairs with their cushion seats now deflated, stained with years of raising children, who have grown and mostly gone. Yet the stains remain like the memories of past events, never linear, jumbled up in thoughts, vignettes of milestones, broken relationships, heartbreak, the push and pull of emotions as each one of us grows, expands into a being we create or is created for us.

How did it come to here? Which roads did I deviate upon, pause, retrace, regret and repress. This dream is like the others real but fabricated, I add my own plot, or think I do, rehearse some lines from someone's half-written script, words I recall in my mother tongue or what has become it. Nevertheless, this world continues, through the front window I see the car pull up, it is him, my son now twenty-two and six foot five, when once an armful who wriggled and squirmed as I held him in one arm while stirring something in a pot, tonight's dinner, feeling the pain and pull of motherhood that drains and saps and yet fulfills. I feel the heat now of a super-hot summer, they say global warming is

happening faster than predicted, time passes ever more quickly now, a year in 365 days or more, and yet years pass more quickly, I could swear the earth is rotating faster than before. There is the image of myself at twenty-one, a young idealist, unsure of what the world is or what I can contribute if anything at all, surely someone remembers that child then full of promise, but so uncertain that with each step I stumbled, but did not fall, too scared to fall, I had to run to keep the fear at bay but failed.

We reminisce of times past, of days spent idling as a couple, before children came and filled our days with dreams we never knew or could imagine. I sip my wine and look at the buffet opposite filled with little treasures gathered from family, friends, acquaintances, and there upon a shelf is a photograph of my father, aged but still smiling, broken but not yet shattered, but perhaps he was and the shards were disguised as beads of sweat that dripped from his forehead. Surely he knew, that dreams are fragile things easily broken unless protected, nay guarded with your life until life is no longer the dream you fashioned or imagined. In a dreamlike state I let my thoughts scatter, form shadows, shades of beings I once befriended but have since died or faded into that other realm, that life that is beside this one, or beyond it, in reach but elusive. Do I take that step and let the present dissolve into the myriad of things and places and people that co-exist but are not known to the conscious mind. I lay in bed and try to recall the dream, but each fragment becomes heavy and hurts my brain, immobile it will not move to the image I so desperately try to revive, it obstinately blocks it out and it falls into a black hole behind a screen I cannot open. It hurts to think so I fall asleep again and hope that sleep will resurrect the story I am being told by mind's eye, heart or soul, before soul defies death and life and takes me away to another realm unseen till now.

The rain has stopped and so has the rhythmic beat I hear in my ear, a constant warning of imminent disaster or event, they say, mother says that is what it means this so-called whistling in the ears. I wait to hear the coming of whatever it is that is being forewarned, a blasting of the heavens, a meteor dashing violently to earth at an unprecedented speed for we are human and know little of the universe, but it more likely signals a death of family or friend. Words spoken flow over me like a rain that is not wet. I hear little of what is said, this is not my preoccupation, the here, this present that I can touch in this moment. It is the sound of something else that I hear far more clearly, more urgently, that calls me to no longer ponder but jump without hesitation, or thought into this other world where I exist, or not, perhaps as a child or child's child, birthing lives, stories that have been told, retold or untold. How rare is a human? "Do I dare to eat a peach?" Funny how certain lines and phrases of poets with a conception or misconception reach us deep within and we

repeat them at each phase of life till we “grow old” and meet our demise “not with a bang but a whimper.”

I am disembodied, playing with time, whether to stay or leave, carry thoughts to that dream where I am and am not, for others exist I do not recognise in dream scenes that show these other lives. A story I should be a part of, or familiar with comes and then fades into oblivion. I reach out to touch the photo frame hoping that by touching it I confirm my existence in then and now, how fragile is this grip on life, how rare is it to remember when we did not exist and still the question of whether I exist at all. The sun heats up the earth again and I feel the heat rise within, walking through the garden green leaves tinged with brown, soil drying ever so fast as the last bit of moisture from the rain evaporates into the air and I breathe it in. Forever on the cusp of life and death the plants like us so dependent on the rain. A wave of butterflies, some large white ones others with brown spotted wings fly gently past enjoying their brief spring, a call of birds that awakens a belief in something pure, unblemished, that we cannot see. Through my subconscious I feel the pull towards a path from which I hear the call, one that no-one else can hear, and wander unwittingly towards this other life I lead.

I remember too

-- Tanvee Tirthapura

Your bare feet follow a familiar path, footprints illuminated by the waning sun. You notice a fallen tree here, an overflowing patch of berries there, evidence of a life before this stolen pocket of time.

As you walk, you remember. You remember the time you climbed so high up a tree you became a bird in flight, leaping from treetop to treetop. You remember being ankle deep in mud, lunging for a gleaming gemstone and taking me down with you when you realized it was just the sparkle of the sun upon the crystal stream. You remember the time I said I could never return, our shared tears watering a bush we had picked clean of your favorite blackberries.

The crest of the hill comes sooner than your childish feet recall. The earth which was once solid crumbles to a fine sand in your hand, as you wait for me. Finally, when the moon burns brighter than any star in the sky, you hear my fingers scrambling to find purchase on the final rock which shades our sacred knoll. I return to my place, just to your left, close enough to merge our finite warmth. The language of a shared childhood stutters back to life, a drop of water trickling down my parched tongue.

Once our throats grow rough from old stories, our eyelids heavy from lost years, our kingdom welcomes us once again with open arms. Her damp soil cradles our soft bodies, fireflies dotting the air like scattered golden stars. My eyes slide closed, for dreams aren't meant to last but you stay here as long as you can.

If you squint, you think you can see the sun again.

Memory in Glass

-- Ugwu Kingsley Ikenna

In the heart of Africa
Where the red earth drums
Morning dew clings to the cocoyam leaves
We ran barefoot through the yam mounds
Endowed by nurture
Crowned by nature

Gazing at the beautiful wonders of the sky
Each star held so high
By magic hands above the sky
Counting each like a gift for the future
Beautiful pastels of rainbow
Colouring the vast dreams

Scent of corn and ember filled the breeze
Mama’s voice echoes like that of a nightingale
Singing lullaby that lures to sleep
Unique scent of Mama's wrappers
Richer than Arabian musk
A tale of where love begins

Papa's arm nested around
Battling fears no sword could wield
On his shoulder, solace was found
Which felt like the cradle of Everest
His voice rumbles like thunder
Each spark, a light on my path

Drank from the great Osimili
Each drop, a fountain of life
Hunted in the recess forest valleys
The soil caressed my soles
Moonlit tales under the Udala tree
Fireflies dancing to the chorus

We pitched our dreams
Weaved life out of leaves
Drums pulsed our names
The great Ikoro echoes life into us
Hearts aglow like the weaverbird
Laughter echoing beyond the horizon

Years blew by like harmattan mist
The roads cracked
With the winds, laughter faded
Once bright fields, now dark and cold
Not even the gods walk these paths

The place I once called home
The wind still whispers my name
My heart unfurls in boundless space
A place of roots, now filled with ruins
A place I once called home, now unknown

The only empathy I have is for art

-- nefelibata

The only empathy I have is for art -
The way paint mourns across canvas,
The way music shatters without breaking -
Not for voices trembling in the cold,
Not for hands that reach, not for hearts I hold.
The world is a Hollow thing,
Only the ghosts in paint and ink,
Only the stories never needed saving.
To be alive is to be chaos untamed,
A curse of fangs and silver, unnamed,
A fire with no hearth, an act of slowburn;
I enjoyed punishing myself with words
Letting my thoughts bloom like wild thorns,
My ideas scented with asylum's air,
Ghosts in the halls, but no one there.
My finger aches from pressing silence into my lips
Building castles with words I don't say
To tear them down till there's nothing left.
I devote myself to art -
To bleeding without breaking,
To burning without turning to ash;
Bury me deep in the arms of the sun
Where days unspool and come undone,
Let the colours swallow me whole
For you are alive while you still create,
While you still dream, while you still ache;
An ocean of salt and stars spills from my hands,
A love so deep, a loss commands;
If passion must burn, if beauty must cry,
Then let me choke in the ocean of why.

The Unwritten Soul

— Unwritten_Soul



In silence deep, where shadows sleep,
There waits a truth we never speak.
A voice unheard, a tale untold,
The pages blank, the ink grown cold.

The unwritten soul walks through the night,
No name, no face, no clear birthright.
It longs to feel, to dream, to be,
Unshaped by time, yet yearning free.

Not bound by rules, nor carved in stone,
It drifts through worlds it's never known.
A whisper lost within the breeze,
A candle dimmed by memories.

What stories hide behind its eyes?
What battles fought? What quiet cries?
No hand has traced its sacred line,
No poet dared to make it mine.

Yet still it shines, a distant flame,
Not seeking glory, voice, or name.
A mirror held to those who know—
The deepest truths, we never show.

So let it rest, untouched and whole,
This quiet light, this unwritten soul.
For not all tales are meant to be,
Some live in hearts, eternally.

Poetry Collection

-- T.U. Patir

An Elegy Half at the Most

Most nights I think.
Not about the world or the word.
And neither about myself.
Most nights, I think of you.
The only one who has ever completed me.

Poor old dog, old me.
It is true that I have lived my life in a strange manner.
Two of my feet in two different streams.
Half here, half there, and yet complete nowhere.
What was missing was a link,
to bind my two forked hands into one.
I was younger, and unrooted,
rebellious and rambunctious.
A mark of youthful will,
When my tousled hair was raven still.

Fear not, I lived a happy man.
Though I had seen loneliness.
And I had tasted the garrot meant for my wounds,
the metallic taste of blackened blood
Resonating long after time staggered on.

And it is true, I may not have been the most gentlemanly of the lot.
Heaven knows I have much to learn about the world.
And truly a man is lucky to have second chances in life.

When I came of age, I tried being a man earning my keep.
I did not know how to farm, nor how to fight.
The events of my story, you see, preclude softness.
Not the kind that squirms in the face of the blackened dog.
But that was when I was with youthful will,
When my tousled hair was raven still.

For later, the strangeness emboldened; I embraced the softness I once rued. I sang and proclaimed my fate, my tunes, my desires.
At the prayer halls of poetic mischief, and through children asking, "when were you ever young?!", I drank from the lyrical horns,
That had not yet tasted tar and rust.
Fate as would have it,
Today, I am no longer here and no longer there.
Of course, even though you had left, you held me true here. Helped me to run.
So, I learnt that even halved, I am completely whole.
The marks on my legs prove this fact.

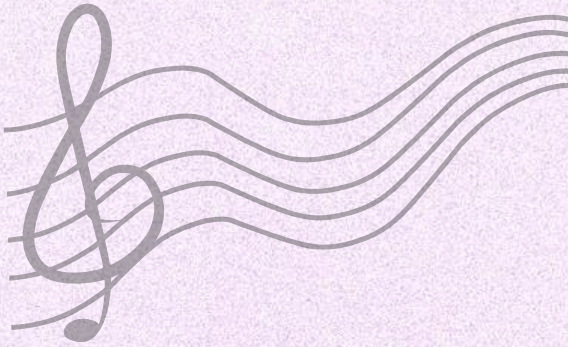
Now, two half-circles combine whole.
The circle's nature,
Forever here and forever there.

When you had gone far away from me, you inevitably took half of my heart.
But years from now, when I will bid goodbye at the end of the pier, I will weep.
And yet you will keep…
…all of me.

In my dreams I see,
A lifetime ago in Samarkand, my memory persists.
When we promised a promise that never came true.
We never kept fighting on.
If only…

Such is life when you are young, with energy and youthful will, When your tousled hair was raven still.

Time is a Chord



– T.U. Patir

In the summer bed, I lied beside her once more.
Nearly twenty years since the last time.
Grown man, yes, but her child, just the same.
I remember when she was young, with her flowing black hair in the wind. My dear father, beside her. Those moments seem like centuries ago now.

And though I don't remember this, she lost her parents young. Yet, she resolved to be my constant light.
So, we kept talking in the summer bed.
"And do you remember when your father went to the hospital? That mangy dog 'cancer' ate all his hair out! How bald he looked!"

A child left behind. Merely thirteen.
She was devastated, and yet she raised that child alone.
The grey seeped in her hair a good few years earlier than she deserved them.

That child of yesterday is grown now. But how do I tell her that so has the sadness?
And though I did not understand then,
her frequent trips to the hospital,
and to still return at night to put me to bed,
was far more than her tiny body could ever handle. Yet she was there.
I think…
I understand now.

Then, when I had to leave for college, that now grey haired woman packed my bags all by herself. It was his anniversary.
Eight years since she became my only light.
That day, I saw her holding a photo. Me, her, and dad out in the park.
I was young enough to sit on his shoulders, then. Before high definition appeared on film. How happy we all were.

I want to ask,
If she misses him still.
But of course she does. I'm stupid.

I end up asking if she is okay, instead.
She simply turns to me, and suddenly I see the young woman again.
"You have not packed well enough, silly!", she says, and swiftly leaves for my winter clothes. Not caring she will remain alone after I am gone, too.
There is pain there, I think.
But also a bravery—

The likes of which I may never know.



Finding Myself

-- Travis Opdam (Unspoken Truth)

A vivid dream, a cloudy reality, your darkest nightmares, the scariest truths.

Running through the woods chased only by your past, stop and see it's your reflection looking back.

See how far you've come, chasing dreams like you run from yourself.

It's your control which way you run, even when you feel chained by a demon of paralysis.

Break free and show them you're the real monster inside your head.

Midnight Reverie

-- Sofile

When it's late at night,
Different thoughts linger in my mind.
It can be the regrets that I've been trying to hide,
Or the decisions that ended up breaking me inside.

When it's quiet,
My mind is the loudest.
It tells me things that I should've done,
And it brings back the past that now is gone.

When it's dark,
My mind reminds me of something I can never have back—
Something so beautiful
That I ended up losing like a fool.

When the moon is up,
I can only think of what I used to have.
The memories play nonstop,
Reminding me of what I lost when I gave up.

《灌云》

-风桃子

出游的女画家，在不起眼的灌云服务区，邂逅卡车司机，收获一夜美妙的畅谈，然而上路后惊诧的发现又一次次回到了原地……

一切都像做梦一样。发生爱（正）情（缘），我们会说像做梦，也说命（不）中（现）注（实）定。

现实是比梦还梦幻的梦境吗？红尘中，又有谁不是梦游人？

p.s. 小说中的斜体字均引用或改编自《一堆谎言：安东尼奥尼的故事速写》。所以说这桩发生在灌云的情事，是对意大利导演安东尼奥尼所编织之艺术梦境的做梦，也是未尝不可。

四十岁生日那天，我总算完成画了十几个年头的《妇科病》系列，同时从一段根深蒂固的亲密关系中解脱出来。

甩掉一个同居六年的情人可不是开玩笑的，何况对方是作家。

毋庸置疑，我的生活又得从头开始。

把往日旧作和业已完结的感情生涯打包之后，我将溢出的时间用于观察。

九月底，夜还真是来得十分轻巧。是安东尼奥尼在他的故事速写里谈道。

那是城市极抽象的时刻，那是女人出游的时分，而我化身为其中的一员。

随便裹了件褪色陈旧的洋装就上路，开上沈海高速的时候，尚不知晓即将去往何处。

很显然，我远去的程度大大超出自己的预期。

是突然的想象，和由体液失衡所产生的瘙痒，在怂恿我。

沿着海滨大道飞驰，勇往直前地奔向中国北方豪迈而狂放的广袤大地。

夜已深沉，而全无反悔之意，我想这类行动的自由和责任，就是所谓无法逃离的命数。

记得我第一次驶入灌云服务区是礼拜四的午夜。

那一小丛建筑物坐落于江苏省连云港市境内一个小县城的边缘，看起来摇摇欲坠的样子，向四处打发出一些作用不大但表情魔魅的光线。

我把车停在停车场里一块略显谨肃的小角落。若我确实在**下车以后四处张望，仿佛受到惊吓或是在赶时间，**但实际上只是在忠于情面里片刻的停滞或说漠然。

一个男人走向我。**忽然有一股惊骇的预感涌上我的心头。**

“都什么时候了！”他笑着跟我讲。语气里没有探问，没有抱怨也无催促。

我们开始攀谈。话题旧的很美。包括大段的虚度的沉默时间。

从表面上看，男人是卡车司机，但又不拘于此，他的谈吐出卖了他的身份。

他说在我没来之前，艺术在灌云是属于过去的事情，他很明白我是个为艺术而生的人，他知道我是作家的情妇，有过一段为**自己的身材和死亡着迷**的日子。

“都已经结束了。”我告诉他。

并非逃避他的注视，我把眼睛转向另外的方向——暧昧不明处。

引而不发的情愫被掩盖了。**夜轻盈的流逝着……**

冥冥之中，他揭穿我**希望别人总是带点醉意**，而我则扬言他总抬头望天，倒不是心气有多高，只是颈椎太疼。

车前灯在不经意间一同亮起，说再见的时间就到了。

之所以没有开房，我想，他是碍于经济因素，而我，所在性别**被诅咒的拘谨**，和我出生的南方水乡**所特有的安静的愚昧**。

故事到此就应该结束，现实中往往如此，而文艺作品里尤如是。

无论出于何种初衷，我信赖并且希望这段迷人的一面之缘不会再有下文。

然而当我从后补的长睡眠中醒来，怀着遗憾的满足感继续北上之路，却在新一场次的午夜，再次看到前方惊现灌云服务区的指示牌的时候，完全丧失抵抗力的想要一探究竟。

多么古怪，我又回到了灌云！

我以为我被骗了。自己骗自己。我回到跟昨夜同一时刻的同一个位置。

眼看着矮小的建筑物和杂草丛生的未知某处在怀疑和层层假象的气氛里铺展着，我恍惚了，飘忽不定的迷醉着，难道大自然也有谎言？我知道我又在四处张望。

眼见前不久才刚刚在此地共度长夜的男人奇迹般地朝我走来……

“都什么时候了！”他笑着跟我讲。他的笑容是如此散漫而轻率。

我确定他已经不再能够记得我和昨夜的一切。

“你经常来灌云吗？”我问他。

“是的。”

他说灌云**是一个从不属于他的故事和世界。**而这是他喜欢在此停靠和休憩的原因。我采信这个说法。

由于故意而为的纵容，我被卷进他的北奔重卡的驾驶室。

忘情的，淹没在，应接不暇的柔吻，和粗野潮湿，洋溢着浓稠悲伤气息的机油味里，除了继续对自己说谎，我不可能重拾这桩删除待续的情事。

我一厢情愿的将之视为因未按照预设剧本演绎，而不得不重新来过的修正措施，说白了，既然是命运的安排，那就让它发生！

是我引诱他。也引诱了我自己的想法。

激情一刻，丝毫不加节制的坠入爱欲的漩涡，把感觉推向无憾的巅峰，恰恰因为虔诚的信奉，天一亮，就会跟这个男人再无瓜葛。

我错了。

当发现自己鬼使神差的三度驶入灌云服务区，我被搞糊涂了，被逗乐，被惹毛，四处张望着，试图捕捉命运还需要我去弥补或完善的事情，顺便恭候那人的到来。

他来了。

“**都什么时候了！**”我抢先讲。

暮色苍茫的他的面部，流露出不言而喻的笑容。

“为什么会这样？”我几乎是在询问他。

“哪样？”

“总是遇见你。”

“我们见过吗？”

从某种程度上，这是个没法解释也无法被解释的问题。

“我想我陷入了意愿的困局。”我告诉他，不开玩笑。

而他说，一个人总会在某个地点迷失于雾中，尤其是内心的浓雾里。

他叫Z。分手之前我问了他的名字。

“**驾驶员，一个复杂的灵魂，优柔寡断，终日惶惶。**”他如此评价和推介自己，自始至终都不曾过问我是谁。

紧随其后的第四个夜晚，夜凉如水的夜晚，或许我已经倚靠在Z的肩头，在沉默无言的时候，我没有披露跟他的关系中那些多说无益的问题，也免除自己问问题时的麻烦。

我重新问了一次他的名字。

很显然，我在他眼里又成了素未平生的陌生人了。

有一种惊奇的力量牵引着我们彼此靠近，乐此不疲的重复相遇而又分开的故事，保守情感的姿势上的若即若离。

“**都什么时候了！**”我专程等他先说出这意味深长的暗号，再以女性的修养领受这份好意。

漫漫长夜里，他持久的捧着我的脸，他用看海的眼光看着我，令我陶醉而脸红。

缘起，光阴，投下谜样的影子。

依然在黎明破晓前就说再见，以此保护缠绵悱恻的神秘性，不遭到日光的侵袭。

白日的梦里都是悲剧，醒来之后我又做了一个甜蜜的悲剧的梦，**悲剧中的角色、地点、所呼吸的空气，比悲剧本身更叫人着迷。悲剧的前奏及余韵行动果决，连话语也静默无声。**

第五夜，我直接把Z约进了旅馆。

实际上两个小时之前我才刚刚退的房，而现在，Z在这儿，打量周遭。

“你没进来过吗？”

“没这个必要。”

“你时常找女人吗？”

Z耐人寻味的看着我。他的姿势，他看我的动作混合在姿势里，比任何答案都清楚。

混合了漫不经心的他的睿智布满了临时的床，我的思潮滑向比远方还远的远方。

完事以后Z甩给我一笔钱。我想当着他的面撕成碎片，却收下。

“你是令人难忘的。”Z奉承我，“**你有双美丽的栗色眼睛，而顾盼的神采也非常奇特，看来十分利落。**”

我问Z是否想再来一次。“不用加钱。”

“奋不顾身啊！”Z问我真名叫什么。

“S。”我骗他。

我只有两样东西能给他：一堆爱液、一堆谎言。

“还有什么需要我办理的吗？”我请示上苍。

再次上路，我加足马力，屡过灌云而不停。我已经搞清楚想要搞清楚的事情，之所以坚持不懈的兜着圈子，不是为了考察路况，而是考察自己。

我承认自己陷进了怪圈，既没有退路，也找不到出口：

每到一个服务区，都是灌云服务区，都

会遇见Z。但又不能说是同一个灌云服务区，不是同一个Z。每次都是被刷新过的灌云服务区，被一键还原的Z。

就像在出生的轮回中承受行动结果的人，我想，我历次经验到的Z，相对于前世中完成这些动作的Z来说，既非同一位，亦非另一位。

Z有变化，但不大，就算面目全非，我也一眼就能认出他。

像他那样的人格，再怎么轮回，也完全看不出所来自的时代、地域和国家，他每次都总是带有那么一丝彪悍的倦意，都可以聊，都，不是不可以，上床。

而我当前能做的，只能是听天由命地继续谱写这份无法保存的一面之缘，不断的推翻重来，去加重，开端的动机。

但我至少可以更自信，更优雅，主动出击，或，只要愿意，狡黠一点。

第六次驶入灌云，我直接把车停在旅馆，以最快的速度办理入住，而后躲进房间闷头睡觉。

防不胜防的醒来，有点心烦意乱，想起前夜那场床笫之欢的荒唐，后知后觉的发现自己已经在向窗外张望。

夜是破碎的。宽阔景致的平地上方，云的动作叫人不悦，树冠呈现出不守成规的形状。

唯有一处光晕有实际的内容，所照亮的是一块严肃的角落，那里停放着我所熟悉的卡车。

那至今仍是叫我魂牵梦萦的一幕：看到Z，很专注的锁定在那，如谶，一块耐心的隐言。

“**都什么时候了！**”我会心一笑。

就这么，从他方注视他，目送他离开，我僵成一道艰涩的阅读题。

第七夜就是第六夜的重复。

第八夜，第九夜，第十个夜晚，我重复做着前几天的白日梦。

第十一夜即将消散的时候，我热情洋溢地奔下楼去，而Z已不见了踪影。

总觉得天亮的赶早了似的。**拥有空荡荡的过去和空荡荡的未来**，灌云是个永远年轻的服务区，什么也不曾遗留下来。

第十二夜，我特地在停车场等他。

他的笑容焕然如新，他焕然如新的看待我。

看问题的视角总是保持新颖，这不能不说是他的闪光点，也是他的弱点。

他孜孜不倦的说着什么？

我冒失地尾随他开上高速，半途起了很大的雾。

据说不远之处的海上，有一尊高耸入云的观音，而我把自己丢在意乱情迷的浓雾中。

第十三夜，Z出人意料的不知所踪。

第十四夜，我故伎重演的下落不明。

第十五夜，十分默契的同时出现。

第十六夜复制了第五夜的扑朔迷离。

而第十七夜则再现了第二夜的捉摸不透。

第十八夜是第十一夜的升级版本。

到了第十九夜，我给Z讲故事，那是一段持续了十八个夜晚却不曾存在的关系，就发生在灌云。

“在历史上。”我说。

我想Z会错了意。

“**女人是会耿溺在自己突发的热情，以及可能会发生的事情里的。**”

索性第二十夜，我又把第十九夜的故事讲了一遍。

第二十一夜讲第二十夜的故事，第二十二夜讲第二十一夜的，以此类推。

这是个越说越不能说破也越说不破的故事。

当它被描述，幻化成无法言喻但一再出现的意象，令我怀念憧憬，却难以驾驭。

它不归属于我，也不属于Z或任何一位对这故事有所耳闻的人。

它只属于过客。那些愿意相信，但毫不期待，最主要是，对它一无所知的灌云的过路者。

我把对它的感觉，记在笔记本里，就一直留在灌云，遗忘在小旅馆的房间中。

我忘不掉墙面上那些精致过时的花饰，还有被褥里充满哲学芳香的色情。

那是我在灌云徘徊的第二十九个夜晚，或许是第二百零九夜，又或许，初来乍到的第二十九个小时，谁在乎呢？最靠不住的就是时间。

夜深人静之时，我跟Z又一次的“初次见面”，他对我微笑，我也对他微笑。

我停止微笑，问他是否愿意带我走一程。

“能捎我一段吗？”我问他。

他的脸上闪烁着深沉的惊奇，可是没有比清楚认定而直截了当的探问更奥妙的了。

被有限的视觉遮蔽而不曾露面的东方之海，才是灌云真正的背景。

“你确定跟我同路吗？”Z问我，在驶离灌云的路上。

“你要去哪儿？”于是我问。

“这是我的自由。”所以这是个谜。

所以这就是Z。

成为过去的灌云服务区永远都正在被消化，保留在很快就将荡然无存的那一瞬。

Z就是我的丈夫。你见过他。我们一起吃过饭。

是的，Z在名义上不叫Z，就像我本不叫S一样。

伴侣之间是会开采出深入内心而又不为人知的另一重自我的，那是一种抽象的忠贞，作为对彼此的认同和酬答。

后来的事你就都知道了。

我们共度了三年的婚姻生活，直至Z车祸身亡……

全然奥妙惊奇的三年。

Sea of Consciousness

-- Peta Sherburd

Floating. Fluctuating. Drifting on top of the subtle current of water on an endless sea. So close to being rescued the longer I hold on and stay above, yet so close to drowning if I were to give in, let go and sink. No one's there to help, just me, my mind, and consciousness. the water trickling to my face with every little sway of the waves, yet there's no panic. It's warm, adjusted to my body temperature, i'm not cold and shivering as i should be. Just numb. I don't know what's below me, are there sharks circling waiting for me to descend into the deep? would they not take me now? There's content in the confining situation, it's comfortable and familiar. The sky above is forever dark, tiny lights twinkling spread out as far as I can see. The dark isn't scary, it's surrounding me like a warm embrace of a loved one. There's no moon light to guide my way, only my own instincts and strength to drift me where I am needed to be. I breathe in 1..2..3.. and breathe out 1..2..3.. I'm calm, at ease and relaxed. I can only look straight ahead at the sky, in awe of the simple beauty of darkness and little light. It reminds me of a box, closed up and punctured with holes so I can breathe. My arms and legs sprawled out, limp, and bobbing up and down with the motion of the water. My mind is still and vacant. For the first time no thoughts, no voices invading my head, like a cavity left open. Just numb.. It's not annoying though, it's constant, freezing my thoughts to allow me to envelope in the moment. The feeling of being drifted away gives people the idea that I'm at peace. Maybe the sky is my peace, a sanctuary, and the water tilting me is my doubt, my end. Only I control this sea of my truest conscience.

Childhood Home

-- HMH

The pale-yellow siding on the house –
The dark green tiles of the roof –
Sat on a dead-end, quiet street.
The cold brisk of the early morning –
The bird's singing, the howling of the wind -
Spring is near.

In this house, magic filled the air –
The laughter that would ring through
The halls - would soon be just an echo
Of what had once been.
The clock in the kitchen ticks -
As I sit at the round wooden table -
A reminder that my time here in this
Place is meant to be short lived.
This house is made of memories -
The good, the bad, the in-between.
A place that was not built to last forever.



Rest

– Matt Standing

I walked home through a park I'd never seen
to try and shake the feeling that the path
of least resistance was to vanish. Keen
to lose a moment in the green and grass
I trod through twisting trails, tailing bees,
inclined to speak aloud how lovely it
can be to miss the forest for the trees.
I came across a garden, navel split
with wild-flowers like an open wound.
I listened as she said "I'm ninety-three,
replaced my veg with honeysuckle, blooms,
and clover, kinder on my aging knees."
Alive with butterflies, sun setting west -
A testament to knowing when to rest.

Poetry Collection

--Linda M. Crate

a sweetness

lost in the musing
of the music of the past,

you can find me
wrapped in the reverie
of better days;

i pray for a future as
beautiful as my dreams—

a place where you & i
still have
adventures,
where we've made our bond
stronger rather than sitting
in the seas of all this
silence;

i miss you but sometimes
knowing you still feels like
too sweet a dream—

like my soul waters for a sweetness
it has never known.

better days

captured in the
reverie of better days

i think of little me
picking black berries
with my mother,

of any of my many
adventures
with the brightest sun
i have ever known;

of how easily the kindest
moon i have ever
known accepted me fully
in every piece of who i was—

how easy i fell into friendship
with a girl who was just
like me in so many ways,

of my roleplaying days with
many of my favorite story tellers;

days where the music of
the world made sense and we
could dance through everything
with laughter—

i pray for the reverie of dreams
like this to touch me once more,
for lately everything has felt far too heavy.

Collecting Receipts

-- Sarah Yao

My mother's receipts overflow like the clogged toilet in our bathroom a week ago, before my father frantically ran to Lowe's to buy a plunger. They fall out of her purse like the thin toilet paper from our school bathroom when she pulls out her wallet, scrambling to find her credit card, telling me, 宝宝 (*baby*), *remember to grab the receipt, okay?* I open my mouth to say something, but my lips are dry and cracked, and her hand is outstretched and open. I watch her and I obey, because she is my mother. I tug at the slip of paper spit out by the cash register. My mother's receipts never end up in the trash, because they are sacred; she holds onto them, as I hold onto her.

Since I was little, my mother has collected receipts. The tomatoes she bought from Walmart, oh so red today; the shirt she bought from Target, my brother is growing up so fast; the pineapple cake she bought from Costco, she misses the taste of home. When I ask her why, she tells me they were for her "records," the little notebook she would rummage out of her drawer each month, receipts scattered across the table, recording each one like tax reports. I sit at the table, watching her brows furrow when the math doesn't add up, the pen in her hand drumming her notebook in perfect rhythm. I watch in admiration, in love with the way her forehead crinkles when she thinks, in love with the way the corner of her eyes crease when she smiles, in love with the way strands of soft gray hair fall across her face when her tie slips loose. I am in love with the way she writes, loopy, yet not cursive; I try to imitate it on my own. My mother is my first love, and I have never stopped loving her. I sit there, her quiet, obedient daughter, watching, as if to say, *Mama, I love you,* or, *You're my everything*, or, *Please don't go.*

But to love is to lie to yourself that it is forever, to live in a state of constant paranoia when you realize it will be gone one day.

***

I get so scared now, Mama. Time goes by so fast, so fast we cannot catch up. I get scared when I repeat the same thing three times, but you still say "Ah?" because you didn't hear. I get scared when I talk about my friends, and you forget who they are. I get scared when you walk up the stairs, and I can hear your knees cracking. I get scared when I tell you

about my day, and you only blink, still processing the words I said minutes ago.

I am so scared of losing you, Mama.

I am scared of you losing me, too.

***

I do not know who I would be if not my mother's good daughter. My mother talks, and I listen. My mother instructs, and I do. I'm always the mom of my friends; they admit it themselves, too, too mature and anxious for my age, too worried about getting in trouble, too cautious of breaking rules, too conditioned to speaking with adults. I cannot imagine leaving home, and the thought of college scares me; I get homesick so easily. I don't know how I would do my laundry without my mom, which colors to mix and not to mix in the wash, when to use bleach, or how to use Tide Pods; I can only clumsily stain my clothes. I don't know how to use a stove, how much oil to put in the frying pan, or how much rice to put in the pot.

I can't make my own decisions, use my own brain, or think for myself without frantically searching for my mother's approval. I don't know what to wear; her eyes scan over my body as I pull on my jeans, the corners of her mouth twitching, 宝宝*, have you gotten bigger? Let Mama look again, the waist looks a little tight,* so I take my jeans off. I can't choose what to buy from the store without sending her a text, *Mama, does this look good?* And her *Ok* leaves me deprived of satisfaction; I crave her validation constantly.

Sometimes I feel selfish for how much I need her, but I don't know how not to be a good daughter, how not to embrace my mother's arms, how not to stay with her warmth forever, because it is all I have ever known.

I cannot untie my identity from hers.

***

I begin to collect receipts wherever I go. When the cashier asks if I want one, I always say yes. My eyes linger over the cash register, and I wait patiently, like the good daughter I am, for it to finish printing out. My friends never ask for receipts, but I always make sure I do, because you have taught me so.

I collect them madly, the cardholder in my backpack no longer full of cards, but stuffed with receipts—from the bookstore, from the coffee shop, from the mall—documenting my life, taking the place of my diary. I never throw my receipts away, though I know they are just paper guaranteed to become waste, but I'm so attached to them, to holding onto them, to the thought of holding onto you.

***

I do not know who I would be without my

mother. My flesh is born from hers, my body more hers than mine. She has sculpted me since the day I was born, into the shape she wants, and I have simply become it; I let her touch me. I want to experience life without my mother, but my mother is me, and I am her.

I am wild, too. I want to kiss a boy without worrying about sex; I want to dance at clubs without fearing I'll get drunk; I want to bungee jump without wondering if I'll survive because I know I'll be okay on my own.

I can live with the consequences of being myself. I'm scared that my mother can't.

One day, someone will ask me a question, and I won't be able to whip my head around, searching for her nod before I answer. I need to know who I am without her gaze. I need to find myself, too.

***

Mama, tell me that story you told me years ago, about the farmer who found a snake in the winter snow, frozen and dying. Tell me that story again, about how the farmer saves the snake, bringing it to shelter, only to be bitten and die. Tell me again, how this is my life, how you need to protect me, how I need to learn to protect myself when you are no longer there. Mama, please tell me this story again, please don't forget it like the last time I asked. But you only tell me, 宝宝, *Mama is old and forgets, please be patient with Mama.* I can tell you are tired and exhausted, so I smile and nod, hug you, because I am your good daughter. I am always your good daughter. But in my head I say *Mama, please try, please stay; I am not ready yet, I am scared; don't go.*

***

I want to grow up without leaving my mother behind. It scares me when I don't need her, when I am 970 miles away. When her texts, 宝宝*, where are you?* or 宝宝*, are you having fun?* or 宝宝*, Mama misses you*, pile up on my phone for days and I don't respond, it scares me. When I stop picking up her phone calls and her FaceTimes, it scares me. When I figure out the laundry machine by myself and my clothes come out normal, colors unmixed, it scares me. When I realize I am okay without her, it scares me. It scares me that I don't need my mother anymore, that she is becoming out of reach, that I am growing up on my own.

When I come home this summer, my mother begins to talk, 宝宝, *Mama wants you to go to college close to home; it is good there, we have family there, there is a church there, you will be safe there; Mama wants you to ED there, it is best for you there, best for us there,* but she has said this many times already and I want to scream for the thousandth time, *Stop, stop it. Let me talk. I want to talk.* I open my mouth and tell her I don't want to, that it is a

good school but I know I can do better, that she should trust me if not believe in me, that this is my life and I can make my own choices even if I'm scared and uncertain, and she sits there in silence because I am her good daughter who has talked back. When the silence grows too loud, she responds, 宝宝, *Mama supports you*, and I begin to cry because I don't know who I am anymore.

***

I collect receipts, one by one, each one a lost prayer I'm too scared to whisper out loud. Let me be with my mama. *Let me be her* 宝宝. *Please, let's stay this way forever*. I hold onto these receipts, perhaps because they feel like fragments of you, fragments that are tangible even when you are slipping away. I hold onto these, because I am so scared of losing you, because losing you feels like losing me.

But I want to be freed.

Tonight, when you reach to stroke my hair, 宝宝*, come here, let Mama hug you*, I gently catch your hands midair. I hold your hands in mine, caress them softly the way you used to do to mine, feeling how worn, how rough your skin has become with age, but I do not pull you in. *Mama, I am alright on my own.*

You give my hands a tight squeeze, your knuckles pressing into mine, before I unravel my fingers from yours, turning around, letting go.

That night, in my dreams, I spot a crumpled receipt on the counter, ink fading. In my dream, I feel so grounded and concrete that I begin to walk with purpose, without fear; I walk on my own. The receipt is the one I grabbed from the cash register for you that morning, a familiar sight that feels so distant now. In my dream, I smooth it flat, fold it in half, and slip it into my pocket.

A piece of you I carry with me, not in place of me.

Poetry Collection

-- Jack Smith

Gusto Wind

As I watch the homeless man
take a look
at the very same sunset
that the owner of the World looks at
I try not to cry
I think,
It took 400,000 years for the light from the big bang
And 11 days for Truman to change his mind on the atom bomb,
It took one week for Jacob to leave his Father for his dream
And Beethoven a month to write symphony #9,
It took Hemingway a year to write Old Man and The Sea
And eight years for Joyce and Ulysses,
Almost a lifetime for Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel
And many lifetimes for the pyramids,
But,
what too often
can be forgotten
is always the fleeting shiver
of a snowflake
on the back of the wind
falling from Heaven as the Angels did,
In time
so many were not Jacob or Beethoven or Truman or Hemingway
just people
looking up on the way
to their melting place.

Fable for a Friend -- Jack Smith

The dream itself is a rainbow
that fastens itself to every cell whirling color,
Through artery streets, ligament tenements and organ cities.
Behind every shadow that casts down are silhouette walls
of flesh that can never quite block out its shame.

As it rained, it began – Kansas City, 4am!
Burnt orange saucers stringing smoke above moonlit
eyelids. Light on. Whole apartment was watching.
Dead. Dead Asleep.
No food in the fridge except Grandma's cookies n' barbeque box,
five days old and Mr. Coffee machine dripping,
sweat dripping, ink dripping off that secondhand pen.
It was mad! Mad, mad(e) poetry from thin air. And sometimes,
You or I would turn in those stupid short stories to Mr. Gene.
And we both had girlfriends from that same class.
And both of them were profoundly odd. And neither worth
a scratch at writing! Man. And, we both dropped out.
And now,
I live in a town far away.
The mountains are like shark teeth.
The sun rays band down on my face. Writing, Writing, Writing.
Day after day,
in the sane sadness that is synonymous with life.
I wade through it.
But just for a chance
To hear your name once more
Trembling blue beneath the floorboards
Baltimore Avenue racing below
Cigarette in your mouth. At my door.
With your poems,
With your stories,
With a friend and not alone.

I think of this -
and the color melts back in.

Seeds

-- Sharon Rose

When someone says something to invoke anger
As if I would ever feel my power in danger
It makes me stop and wonder
Where there's lightning, there's thunder
That came from somewhere deep
From a place of pain, they want to keep
I see how far my words have sown
Seeds of truth in the unknown



Thank you for reading issue III -- "Reverie"

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You can also find the online-text version on our website!

Our Contributors

From Gianoula Burns: Writer and poet of Greek origin. I have published short stories in "meniscus", "Antler Velvet", and "Pendulum Papers" and poetry in "Brindabella Press. I love walking and reflecting on how the past shapes us and our cultural roots define us.

Tanvee Tirthapura is a student-writer living in Saratoga, California. Her work has been recognized by the Journalism Education Association of Northern California and the National Poetry Quarterly. Besides writing, Tanvee enjoys cooking, watching TV with her family, and playing with her cats.

Ugwu Kingsley Ikenna is a Nigerian of Igbo descent in his early twenties. Although trained as a medic, Kingsley has a deep passion for the arts, particularly African literature. His environment has played a significant role in shaping his artistic perspective. One of his poems was published by the Chimefule Research Center (CRC) in its poetry anthology. He is also a contributor on Spillwords. For Kingsley, writing is a channel to captivate, educate and enlighten.

From nefelibata: A walking contradiction. Most of the time may relate to Sylvia Plath's words about feeling everything or nothing at all and nothing in-between. That's what you can see in my poems. I may feel something at its fullest but I won't ever reread those cus I'm going to vomit in an instant questioning whether is everything okay within my mind. You may notice that my poems are a bit outdated. Yes , they are. I like them that way.

From Unwritten_Soul: Half written, half wandering. 🕊️" . "verses from an unwritten soul" . "Ink-stained soul, searching for its own chapters." . "words > wounds"..

T.U. Patir grew up in the misty foothills of the Eastern Himalayas of India's Northeastern frontier. It was there that the magic of the spoken word was imbued in him. He believes philosophy is not opposed to poetry, and by extension, metaphysical explorations - teaching the same at the university level. His book, "On Eventide's Coattails: A Collection of Poetry" is available globally on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kyobo Book Centre, etc.

You can also find the online-text version on our website!

Our Contributors

From Travis Opdam (Unspoken Truth): Spoken word and poetry has been my escape from the reality the way to process emotions and convey them with impact and purpose.

From Sofile: I'm a simple girl who have always loved making poems. It became my escape, my solitude in this chaotic world. I hope my work heals you as much as it did to me and I hope my words spoke what's on your mind when it's midnight.

风桃子，清华大学美术学院本科和硕士，社会身份是艺术总监，地下身份是默默无闻的写小说的人。偏爱艺术性和实验性的写作。作品有长篇《asdfghjkl》《鸟取奇谭》《地图小说》，短篇集《艺术与情欲短篇故事集》。微信公众号（个人作品集）：搞文学的风桃子（MrsWriter）

Peta is a young adult that thrives in using her emotions and putting them towards craft. Her words allow a keyhole to her mind and the way it works, expressing her personality, her light and her dark. Peta enjoys various hobbies from crocheting, art (painting and sketching), music (particularly live) and reading. Her favourite published books are The Time Traveller's Wife and The Serpent and the Wings Of Night.

From HMH: I'm a big reader and love to write. I received my degree in English; I absolutely love and adore Emily Dickinson and her writings. "After great pain, a formal feeling comes (372)" is one of my favorite writings of hers.

Matt Standing is a midlands based poet who has often been accused of being several thousand bees in a trench-coat. This is categorically untrue, though he would appreciate directions to the nearest blooming grove of wildflowers. You can find him at @mwrites.poet on instagram, where you are permitted to enjoy yourself, if only briefly.

Linda M. Crate (she/her) is a Pennsylvanian writer whose poetry, short stories, articles, and reviews have been published in a myriad of magazines both online and in print. She has fifteen published chapbooks the latest being: not your piñata (Alien Buddha Publishing, June 2025).

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Our Contributors

Sarah Yao is a rising senior at Ames High School in Iowa. She writes creative nonfiction and poetry, with recognition from the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. She also contributes to her school newspaper and enjoys attending writing workshops to further develop her craft.

Jack Smith resides in Columbia, Missouri with his family and loyal dog. A caseworker by profession, he weaves ethereal, non-traditional and exploratory elements into his poetry and work. He has a love for coin collecting, crystals and comics. His debut collection, Greenpatch, showcases his distinctive voice, blending whimsy and depth. Jack's work invites readers to explore uncharted landscapes, reflecting his passion for uncovering beauty in the unconventional and the everyday.

From Sharon Rose: I found myself through writing during a difficult time in my life. Writing has become my way of understanding myself.

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