

Տողերի միջև
BETWEEN THE LINES
Satır Araları

The University of Iowa

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BETWEEN THE LINES

PEACE AND THE WRITING EXPERIENCE

An anthology of poetry, prose, and photographs created by Between the Lines participants from Armenia, Turkey, and the United States, facilitated by the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa.

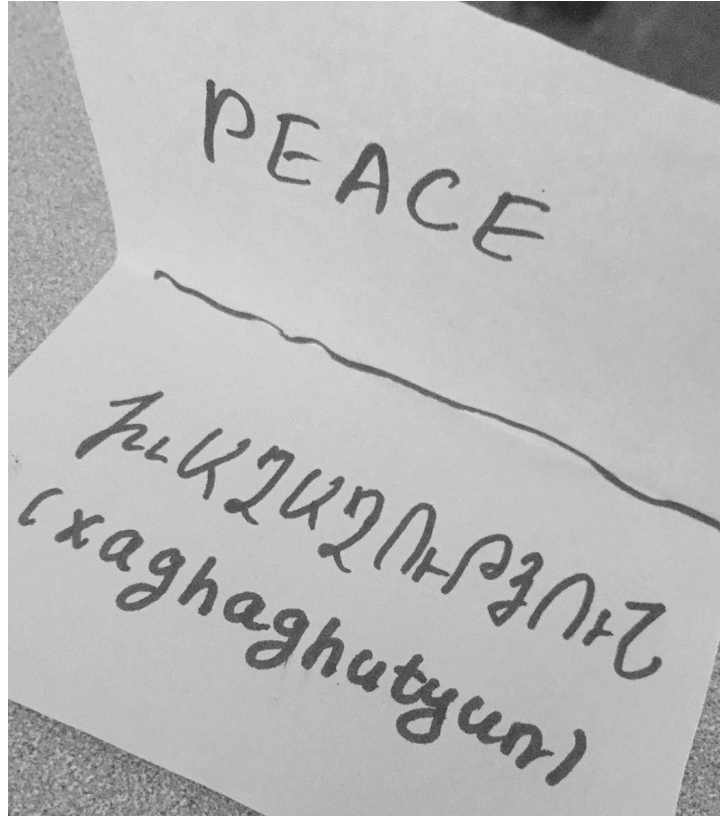


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FOREWORD

“When we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise.”
—Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

The beauty of the Between the Lines project is in its plurality—its ability to acknowledge and appreciate multiple ways of seeing, of thinking and of speaking, multiple ways of writing and, ultimately, of being in the world. This plurality is not inherent to the program itself, but emerges from the willingness of its participants to open themselves to this possibility. The eighteen young people who two weeks ago arrived to the University of Iowa campus from Armenia, Turkey, and the United States took the risk of opening up—to themselves and, more importantly, to each other. In this way they made—to borrow from the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie—a kind of paradise happen during this short time, a magic space scored by a constant pulse of exhaustion and exuberance, fragrant with the aroma of homemade jambalaya, dolma, and kısır.

My initial glimpse of that small worldly paradise came on our first night together, at orientation in the Shambaugh House, as I watched a casual conversation metamorphose into a symbolic gesture. A delicate glass pomegranate necklace—a fruit representing fertility and abundance—changed hands as a gift. The exchange—from an Armenian to a Turkish student—was mirrored by an exchange of languages: the Armenian word for pomegranate is very similar to the same term in Turkish: *nurr* and *nar*. From this moment on, words came to serve as the program’s main currency: they were traded, sampled, shared, evaluated and admired in workshops, literature classes, in serious talk and casual chat. Through words we came to understand the resonance of “Hey, Policeman” across cultures and the gut-wrenching power of punch lines delivered on a stage, then reveled in the many possible ways a word may appear or remain unspoken when mixed in the partner media of image and sound.

What makes the Between the Lines program special is thus not only its twofold, stated, purpose of bringing together creative writing and cultural exchange, but also its determination to build a community in which all sorts of rigid boundaries, scrutinized by curious minds, can become pliable, porous even. Iowa City has long been an idyllic environment, a friendly incubator for creative people: not for nothing is it the only designated UNESCO City of Literature in the U.S. But this city truly glows when it hosts young people so willing to seriously confront the parameters of human condition.

This volume is an archive of the voices and the experiences of Between the Lines 2015. It is dedicated to the many people involved in making the program a success. It is for them, but also for you, that we here anthologize our world—a world made up of jet lag, exhaustion, late night excursions for pie shakes, by slam poetry and the varieties of translation workshops, by daily writing and literature classes tested in special events (playwright Catherine Filloux’ intense drama workshop and wizard Lauren Haldeman’s mixed media crash course, to name just two)....

That magic world lives on in the eighteen talented young writers, who during these two weeks grew into community here in Iowa City; it is, in turn, also a world connected, root and branch, to the enduring global community of the International Writing Program.

Lisa Daily
Program Coordinator



SAATLERCE

Saatlerce beklerdi bazen.

Kocaman pijamalarıyla koltuğun köşesine kıvrılır, kilitte dönecek olan anahtarın sesini duymak için kulak kabartırdı, uykuyla mücadele ederken. Uykusuzluktan kapanmak üzere olan gözleri, ovuşturmaktan kan çanağına dönerdi; yumruk yaptığı minicik ellerini hırsla sürterdi gözlerine. Bir numaralı meydan okuyuşuydu bu onun dünyaya karşı çünkü. Bilirdi, dünya uyuyakalmasını isterdi ki *onun* gelişini göremesin.

(Hah, çok beklersin!)

Ama hayır. Hiç uyur, hiç pes eder miydi onda bu savaşçı yüreği varken?

Sonra, anahtarların şingirtisi duyulurdu evdeki som sessizlikte. Bilerek sallanırdı o anahtarlar; küçük bir kafanın, bu sesle dikileceğini bilirdi çünkü o. Bunu çıplak küçük ayakların koşuşturması, ardından da açılan kapının gıcirtisi izlerdi. Ve yine bir dinginlik çökerdi eve.

Bir an önce kırmızı ve şiş olan gözler, sevgiyle ıslıl ıslıl parlardı o anda. Küçük kollarını boynuna savurur, kucağına tırmanırdı. Dudakları huzur dolu bir gülümsemeyle kıvrılırken, kokusunu içine çekerdi derin bir nefesle, güvende olduğunu bilirdi. Çünkü o güven kokardı, çünkü o ‘*güven*’di:

“Hoş geldin baba.”

Saatlerce beklemiyor artık.

Kendinin iki katı olan geceliğiyle ve çıplak ayaklarıyla koltukta oturup gelişini bekleyen küçük çocuk değil; uyumamak için tüm gücü ve inatçılığıyla direnen o ufaklık değil çünkü.

Uyumamak için çabalamasına gerek yok.

Ama fazlasıyla genç ve bağımsız olmak için çabalıyor bu sefer de.

(Amaaaan...)

Eskiden kalma bir alışkanlıkla şakırdayan anahtarların sesi evde yankılanırken, kulaklığından çıkan müziğin ötesine geçemiyor bir türlü. Kapı açıldığında, fark ettiğini belli edercesine başı şöyle bir oynuyor:

“Ben geldim kızım.”

Saatlerce beklemek isteyeceği günler de olacak.

Yine aynı koltukta oturacak bir gün belki de; yine aynı şekilde büzülecek köşeye, yine bekleyecek. Belki de şiş, kırmızı gözlerle izleyecek kapıyı; yalnız bu sefer, keşke uykusuzluktan olsaydı diye düşünecek ellerini gözlerine götürürken.

O tanıdık anahtar şıkırtısını duymayı bekleyecek belki; duymadığında ise sıkışacak göğsü, ağır bir tokat yiyecek *kalbine* bir daha, bir daha, bir daha ve reddedecek uyumayı, kapı sesini duyacak sadece kulakları.

(Ne kadar geç kaldın...)

Şimdi bu yüzden yürüyor o koltuğa. Oturacak, kalkmayacak o gelene kadar ve o sesi dinleyecek pür dikkat. Geldiğindeyse, yine kollarını savuracak boynuna ve “hoş geldin” diyecek. Bu kez, değerini bilecek ve yenilmeyecek yaşamın hızına.

Hiç kaybeder mi onda bu inat, bu savaşma arzusu varken?

Bekleyecek ve bekleyecek. Ne uykuya ne ömre yenilmeden, bekleyeceği kişi hala kapının öbür tarafındayken. Hala bekleyecek saatleri varken.

Lianna Arakelyan

Yerevan, Armenia



The Eyes of a Whole

The door was opened and closed... opened and closed again. The eyes from that world were looking at me. Suddenly the door was opened again. Where are those eyes?

The door was closed again... opened...closed.... The mirror was showing the reflection of the window. Opened... closed...

Those eyes were stared at me again. Am I guilty? Do I know you?

The mirror was silent. The door was silent too. And then it was closed...and opened.

The child's grey eyes were again staring at me.

"Please don't run away."

"I'm not afraid of you. I'll not run."

"Don't be afraid of *yourself*."

The door closed and opened again. The child's eyes stared at me again.

"Are you my friend? I don't remember you."

"I'm not your friend. I'm your enemy. I came here to tell you about your mistakes."

The door...closed...opened....

I am the stranger of the street. I asked you to help me cross the street, but you didn't.

I am your friend. I asked you to help me with my homework but you didn't.

I am the dog in the street. My eyes were asking for food but you didn't give it to me.

I am a beggar. I just wanted you to share your bread with me but you didn't.

I am a passerby. I just asked you to give me water but you didn't.

I am a boy. I just asked you to give a little bit love but you didn't.

The door was closed again and opened... closed...and opened....

I am unable to pronounce even one sound, the child's eyes continue speaking:

I am love. I just needed not to be betrayed.

I am peace. I just needed to be protected.

I am a weapon. I just needed to be destroyed or remain unused.

I am the light. I just needed to be turned on.

I am the ocean. I just needed to be crossed.

I am the freedom. I just needed to be felt.

I am the respect. I just needed to be earned.

I am the kindness. I just needed to be believed.

I am the hope. I just needed to be awaited.

The door was closed and opened...

I am the life. I just needed to be appreciated.

I am the war. I just needed not to be started.

I am the guilt I just need to be FELT.

The door was closed, opened...closed.





KIZIL TILKI

Onun gidişi farklıydı. Bir anda gitmemişti. Yavaşça, alıştıranarak terk etmişti. Bir sabah bir de bakmışım, onu beklemiyorum. Ancak bu, onun son gidişini unutmamı sağlayamaz. Herhangi bir gidiş olmadığını biliyor muydum? Tabii ki. Öyleyse hiç mi geri dönmeyecekti peki? O kızıl tilki, arkadaşım, her şeyden önemlisi dünyada ardından koşmak istediğim tek varlık. Koşmak, bu zamana kadar hiçbir ihtiyaç olmamıştı, doğama aykırıydı, mantıksızdı. Arkama dönüp bakmak ise gereksizdi, çünkü her şey bütündü benim için. Yıllarca durduğum yerden hakimdim etrafa. Ama o giderken... O kızıl tilki giderken yetmedi bu. En iyi dostumu, tek dostumu kaybederken etraf bütünlüğünü kaybetti. Yıllar süren hakimiyet o anda parçalandı, anlamsızlaştı. Ah o kızıl tilki... Ah şu ormanda yalnız olduğumuz günler... Avladığımız fareler ve dereden geçen somonları yakalayan, kafasını yiyip geri kalanını bırakan boz ayıları izlediğimiz zamanlar, onun biraz korkuyla benimse yılların dindiremediği vahşi bir merakla baktığım sahneler... Güneş tarafında durup yüksek dallardaki kuş yuvalarına tırmanamayışına üzülürdüm. Gece oldu mu başımı önüme eğdim. Öyle mutlu olurdu ki ertesi gün. Belki de fark etmezdi eğildiğimi, kendi boyu uzadı zannederdi ya da daha yükseğe sıçrayabildiğini. Ne olursa olsun kuşları hazırlıksız yakalamanın keyfine paha biçilemezdi. Güzel av günlerinde yanımdan ayrılmazdı zaten. O yüzden severdik ölümü. Bizi bir arada tutardı. Yediği her şeyi bana hatıra olarak bırakırdı. Toprakta fıskıran köklerine hediye ederdi. Kışın da dibimden ayrılmazdı ki. Doğa uyurdu. Biz uyumazdık. Bu sefer de donmuş kuş yavruları bulurduk gövdemdeki kovuklarda. Kar tavşanları da uyumazdı gerçi. Kızıl tilkim onları zor yakalardı ama yemeyi hak ettiğini hissederdik en azından. Onurlu bir av olurdu. Doğanın artıklarını yemiş olmazdık. Kışı atlatırdık beraberce. Ama hiç tahmin edemezdim ki beni baharda terk edeceğini. İnanmak zor olmuştu canının sıkıldığına ya da iyi av bulamadığımızı. Köklerim ağırlaşmıştı yokluğunda. Beni çektikçe çekiyordu gitmem gerekenin tam tersi yöne. Ayılar da somon bulamaz olmuştu. Belki de buluyorlardı ama izleyici olmayınca yakalamak gelmiyordu içlerinden. Ah şu kızıl tilkim... En yüksekteki yapraklarım bile özgür hissetmiyor artık. Neden gitti ki? Köklerim taşlaştı yokluğunda. Fareler de yakınım gelmiyor. Kuşlar hep en yüksek dallarımda. Eğilip ona getiremeyeceğim kadar yüksekteler. Kar tavşanlarıysa artık yazın geliyorlar.

Kuşların hatırı için yaşamak da dokunuyor şu aralar. O olmadan kuşlar da pek bir garip ötüyor. Giderken yaşam bağımlı da kopardı götürdü. Kim bilir kimin gövdesini siper almış bu sonbahar günü? Kim bilir nerede? Arkadaşım. Tek arkadaşım. Av ortağım.

Yıllardır durduğum yerde ise şimdi, ondan kalan tek şey köklerimin üstündeki toprakta bıraktığı yenmiş fare ölüleri.



Karlyn Boens

Bellwood, Illinois

I write because someone put a diary in the palm of my hands and sparked a fire that will never die.



After My First Palm Reading Davenport---Street Fest

Two roads diverged in a wood,
and I-
I took the one that brought
greater happiness.

Hey Policeman! After Marine Petrossian

Hey Policeman,
you killed my friend!
we rally for Trayvon.
you killed Eric.

Hey Policeman,
wear your hoodie.
I will buy you Skittles,
drink Arizona Tea
get your cigs
so that you can feel
colored
or black

or niggered
like me.

Hey Policeman,
don't tell my friend
to pull up his pants!
dont tell us not to video
your stupidity.
we will video
so that the future
will see,
so that friends
in Turkey

and Armenia
will see your ways.

Hey Policeman,
where is the love?
why cant you love me
like your own?

Hey Policeman,
I am a respectful child
And you disrespect me.

To the Dreams I Leave on Pillows of Burge Hall

"If you dream of being pregnant, you are likely craving time to be creative, or 'dreaming up' a new and exciting creative project that will come into existence down the line." Huffpost

There is a whale in my stomach.
A huge secret.
A dream waiting to breathe.
Prophets read bible verses here.
There is a church
And a fountain and a wishing well.
There is pencil and paper.
There is a Christ-Strained Cross,
Causing cramps in my stomach.



Megan Bott

Metairie, Louisiana



Praying, if at all

That heavy cloth atones not for your sins
But covers thy wretched heart, pulsating thick
My child, do you know not what was done for you?

Lips cold as a fish and hands as hard as rocks
“Not a bone will be broken”
but a side will be pierced
Not blood flowing; see: water
A river flowing from His hips
and blood flowing from His crown
His spine turned blue by cold winter air
His lips curling north
The stain of “Father, forgive them, for they
know not what they do.”
For they know not what they do



Jayde Fernandez

Lanai City, Hawaii

Insane

We like to think that we live in a normal safe place
Refusing to believe that anything we don't understand exists
Labeling it as fiction fairytale and myth without a second thought
Shutting out and ignoring the warning signs

Some of us listen seeing the dangers coming
The rest remain oblivious
Few of us that haven't shut ourselves from the signs
See and hear the so-called fairytales myths and legends come to life
We hear the whispers to run to safety
To hide

We see the monsters that lurk
We warn the others they don't listen
Those who listen and see are labeled crazy and locked away
Like us

We continue to warn them but they put it aside with the impossible
After all we are insane



Gwyneth Forsythe

Iowa City, Iowa

The Right Day

Ezra Lowery was a kindly looking man, with gentle gray eyes that were old beyond the years he appeared to be and a friendly smile for anyone who passed him on the quiet country road that led to his small home. The sun was shining through the clouds that normally covered the rolling hills, now glowing emerald green in the light. Today is going to be the right day, Ezra thought to himself, to make things right.

The distinct sound of a farmer's cart bouncing along over the gravel road interrupted his thoughts. Stepping out of the middle of the road, he let the old horse-drawn cart pass by, kicking up dust as it went. Lifting his hand to shield the small plant he was carrying with him, Ezra nodded in greeting to the driver, who avoided his look and kept going. Ezra watched him go, smiling sadly.

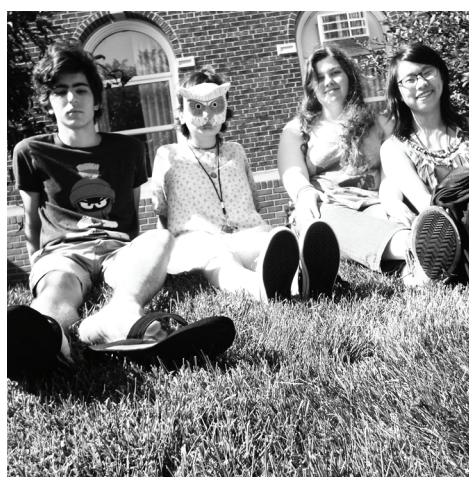
Eventually he reached the small twisting path that led to his cottage. Stepping up the tidy wooden porch steps, he opened the front door of his quiet house and walked in. He tossed his cap on to the kitchen table and draped his wool jacket over one of the chairs. Ezra stood there in the middle of his empty cottage and let out the sigh he'd been holding in since he purchased the flower at the market.

It really wasn't a flower yet, just a bunch of roots and a couple of leaves, but it would be beautiful, just like the rest of the ones in his garden at the back of his home. Taking a fortifying breath, Ezra rolled up the sleeves of his shirt and made his way to the garden. The screen door swung shut with a smack.

The garden was lovely. The dark green of the grass that surrounded it brought out the orange, pink, purple, white, and yellow of the flowers. There were five different kinds: lilies, roses, violets, columbine, and daisies. Soon there would be another, the red bleeding heart.

Ezra knelt down at the spot he had prepared carefully the day before. Grabbing his trowel, he began digging in the soft cool dirt. Once he'd dug deep enough he planted the bleeding heart, and shifted back appraisingly on to his heels. All the flowers.

The tiger-lilies were for Adelaide. His first love, the one he'd never forget. She was the most compassionate woman he'd ever known. She always had room at her table for one more, and fervently believed in loving her neighbor as herself. He had never planned on leaving her, but she died while trying to give birth to a child whose soul never reached Earth. Tiger-lilies. The Sweet Briar roses were for Molly. Molly, with the lyrical laugh and quick wit. She would sing her favorite songs all day long, and when she ran out of verses she wrote her own. Ezra loved her deeply until she passed away. Of old age. Roses. The Violets were for Amelia. Amelia the modest, who was more pure than snow. She blushed easily and raised her hand to touch the small cross she wore around her neck out of habit whenever she did. He loved her too, even when she decided to marry herself to God. He attended her quiet funeral at the convent when she too died of old age. Violets for Amelia.



Columbine was for Peggy, sweet and loved by all, especially by Ezra. Peggy, the trusting and gullible, who went into the woods one day as a favor to a friend and never returned. Ezra waited years before he let himself plant the columbine. The daisies were for Irene. A joy-filled woman whose unflinching optimism and charm were irresistible. Ezra never left her, but she found another and lived long and happily with him. They were buried side by side in their family's plot. Daisies.

And now Jenny, whose heart was as bright as the flower he just planted. She was honest and could never hide her emotions. Her death was a peaceful one, smiling upon her. A bleeding heart.

Ezra stood up and wiped the dirt from his hands. His gray eyes seemed older now than they had earlier in the afternoon. They carried the only evidence of his private mourning on this day, the day he had now made right.



Erica Guo

San Diego, California

man, eighty-nine, dies climbing mt. mckinley

i pressed my face in the snow,
thinking i might hear his heartbeat,
or that after the avalanche,
an old koyukon hermit had dug him up
and murmured an incantation
only i could wake him from.

maybe he wanted me to believe
what all the amerikaners
who found his bones
wanted to believe:
that his death
was on solid ground.

I didn't know about the white smoke that clogged his nostrils
with sharp vapor, never stopped
to wonder if his arteries,
firm as swiss pines,
snapped as he froze,
or that instead of falling long and hard

he wished he'd laid down,
closed his eyes,
and mistaken
the slap of the winter's white palm
for his children's kisses –
as snow piled over his cheeks.





Avetis Harutyunyan

Yerevan, Armenia

Հետհաշվարկ | Countdown

15՝ ու քանի դեռ շնչում եմ օդի այս անհաշվարկ պարկերը, հավատում եմ, որ գուցե հաջորդ վայրկյանին ամեն ինչ փոխվի: Մեջս ցանկությունների մի ամբողջ ամբար է կուտակվել, հազիվ եմ գապում, որ չմեռնեմ:

14՝ ինձ կոտրված խաղալիք եմ զգում, որի համար մեկը գուցե լացում է, բայց հետո դեն շարտում: Մարդիկ փնտրում են իրենց կյանքի ճիշտ պատերազմը, որը հաղթելուց հետո գուցե երջանիկ կլինեն: Բայց միշտ հայտնվում է մեկը, ով կզարդարի կուրծքդ սուր երկաթյա կտորով ու կխոցի երազանքներիդ փայլփլուն պարկը:

13՝ դեռ շնչում եմ, հազիվ, բայց շնչում եմ: Չէի մտածել, որ երբևէ կփորձեմ երկարացնել այս պահը՝ ակնթարթի չվերածելով:

12՝ մեռնելը հաճելի է դառնում: Փորձում էի փնտրել ու գտնել իմ իսկականը ու հիմա, երբ գտել եմ, նորից կորցնում եմ: Չնայած՝ երբեք չես կարող ասել՝ այս հայելիների լաբիրինթոսում որն է քո իսկականը, որն ես դու: Քո իրականը թաղված է աղբի ու տիղմի մեջ ու գնալով ավելի խորն է սուզվում:

11՝ Ատում եմ սովերները, որոնք շրջապատում են ինձ ու տանջում են՝ գիշերը հայելու մեջ հայտնվելով: Դրանք խցկվում են երազներիդ ու մտքերիդ մեջ՝ ամեն ինչ տակնուվրա անելով: Կորցնում եմ շունչս...

10՝ չգիտեմ՝ կտեսնե՞մ այդ սովերները կրկին:

9՝ կտեսնե՞մ արևի լույսը ես մեկ անգամ:

8՝ կլսե՞մ ինձ այդքան հարազատ ազդավների կոռոցը:

7՝ չեմ ժպտա:

6՝ կփտեմ:

5՝ հող կդառնամ:

4՝ քամու հետ կճամփորդեմ:

3՝ գուցե շիրիմիս ծաղիկներ կդնեն:

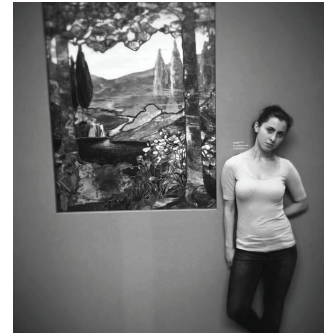
2՝ կջնջվեմ ու սովեր կդառնամ:

1՝ կհայտնվեմ քո սարսափազդու մղձավանջում...



Narine Harutyunyan

Yerevan, Armenia



...սիրում եմ գրել: Գրել անծանոթների մասին, գրել մատուցողի մասին կամ գրել այն մասին, թե ինչպես եմ պատմվածք գրում (ինչը և անում եմ հիմա): Հետո սիրում եմ հետևել, թե մարդկանց աչքերն ինչպես են սահում գրած ստղերի վրայով: Նայում ես՝ սև, ձանձրալի տառակույտ է, համաչափ, միանման մագազներ են, իսկ այդ մագազներ գրողները դրանցից յուրաքանչյուրի մեջ մի ամբողջ հոգի են ներդնում: Ինձ շատ հաճելի է, որ Ձեր աչքերն այս պահին սահուն հոսում են իմ գրած ստղերի վրայով: Իսկ իմ մատներն էլ հոսում են ստեղնաշարիս վրայով հենց այս վայրկյանին՝ կը՛տ-կըտ, կը՛տ-կըտ: Խորը շնչում եմ, զգում եմ, թե ինչպես է օդը տարածվում մարմնովս մեկ, հետո զգում եմ ամբողջ մարմնով, թե ինչպես է օդը մտնում ամեն մի բջջիս մեջ, սնում իմ ամեն մի մասնիկը: Հետո շնչառությունս պահում եմ 5 վայրկյան՝ 1,2,3,4,5... ու շատ կամաց, շատ-շատ կամաց սկսում եմ արտաշնչել: Թեթև ժպտում եմ ու շարունակում գրել: Կյանքը հրաշալի է, չէ՞:

Իմ տեղը շատ լավ է, իսկ, ահա՛, քեզ մոտ կարծես թե ամեն ինչ կարգին չէ: Հոգնած տեսք ունես: Պատկերացրո՛ւ՝ նստած ես օվկիանոսի ափին, առավոտվա ժամ է (պատկերացնո՛ւմ ես, չէ՞, լուրջ եմ ասում, պատկերացրո՛ւ քեզ օվկիանոսի ափին, մոռացիր այս հիմար սև ստղերի մասին), արևը նոր է դուրս եկել, ափին մենակ դու ես, լսվում են ճայերի աղաղակները, լսեցի՞ր: Ալիքները երբեմն այնքան են բարձրանում ու այնքան մոտենում ափին, որ ոտքերդ թռչվում են: Չըրը՛ իսկ, ևս մի ալիք հարվածեց: Ջուրը տաք է, զգո՛ւմ ես՝ ինչ հաճելի է ջրի տաքությունը, զգա մաշկիդ վրա: Ի՛նչ տաք է ջուրը, ի՛նչ հրաշալի է, չէ՞: Դու, օվկիանոսի կապտակապույտ ալիքները, պարզ երկինքը, քնքուշ արևը, ճայերի այսօրվա երգացանկն էլ ոնց-որ թե վատը չէ, հը՛մ: Քանի որ տեսնում եմ՝ տեղդ արդեն շատ լավ է, արի շարունակենք գրուցել:

Կառլ Յունգը հավաստիացնում էր, որ երկու անձանց հանդիպումը նման է քիմիական մի ռեակցիայի, եթե կա նույնիսկ միայն հայացքների աննշան փոխանակում, ապա տեղի է ունենում ռեակցիա, և երկու անձիք էլ փոխվում են: Նրանք մինչև այդ հանդիպումը լրիվ այլ մարդ էին, իսկ ահա այդ հանդիպումից հետո՝ լրիվ այլ: Կարծում եմ՝ ռեակցիա է տեղի ունենում նաև, երբ հանդիպում է մարդու հայացք արևի ճառագայթին կամ լճի մեջ լուսնի արտացոլանքին, կամ երբ դու հանդիպում ես օվկիանոսի ալիքներին: Իսկ ի՛նչ է տեղի ունենում, երբ մարդը սկսում է ինքն իրեն զննել հայելու մեջ: Գիտե՞ս, գրելիս ես այդ զգացողությունն էլ հենց ունենում եմ: Ես նայում եմ իմ գրած ստղերին, ստղերն արտացոլում են ինձ, ասես հայելի լինեն: Հետո ստղերս սկսում են կարդալ մեկ ուրիշը, օրինակ՝ Դու, ու քիմիական ռեակցիա է տեղի ունենում սև ստղերիս ու իր նոր տիրոջ միջև:

Ու, գիտես, իրականում ստղերը միշտ էլ ավելորդ են լինում: Արի լռենք մեր ծանոթության պատվին: Ու վերջին նախադասության կգա փոխարինելու երկար, գեղեցիկ ու հավերժական լռությունը:



Berfin Su Kazakli

Sakarya, Turkey

About a Painting

I remember you melting in front of my eyes.
Trying to get away from the crowd but you,
yourself are the crowd. I remember how you have
parts that you don't like. The sadness dripping
from your hair, the coffee cup that connects to
your soul, the loss that you can't erase from your
ears...

I remember how you looked at me. Purple lights
coming out of your abdomen, the floating shoes
you had once... Then you decided to dive. You
threw them away and fell into the water.

You fell into my hair. I remember having your
fingers nearby, and how arrogant you are. Melting
out of the crowd, I remember how you said you
are always the main character of a dream. And I
remember how I frowned at you how I disagreed
with you. I remember how right you were and
how foolish I was to deny that you are the main
objective of my life.

ABUSE

Flies dance in my eyes
He has no right to see them
Cause he killed my lights



ZIT

ve sonra ben
pusulanın kuzeyine sakladım kuşları
güneyin denizlerinde yüzüyordun sen
kuşlarım sana yabancıydı



RIVALS

Talk to her
Make her smile
Then you'll see
You should clear the road
That leads her to him

Büşra Kevran

Ankara, Turkey

I remember eating pear for the first time when I was three
I remember how I loved it
I remember hearing the voice of my mom just when she was trying to make me sleep
I remember pigs were involved in it
I don't remember the lyrics
I remember my first defeat in my short life
I remember getting smacked by my younger sister
I remember it was because of a bear-shaped stuffed pillow
Do you know what I remember most about it?
I remember that I was so furious that I cried
I remember that I chose to stay calm instead of hitting her
I remember teasing a girl whose haircut reminded me of a man
I remember the blush in my cheeks the moment when I was trying to get help from my dad for being on my period since my mom was out of town
I remember how he comforted me
I remember us going out with my sister to a theme park
I remember us ordering chocolate-flavored cake with bananas in it
I remember hearing about a girl who got a pony as a gift for her period
I remember thinking that was the silliest thing I've ever heard and how I appreciated my chocolate-flavored cake all over again
I remember the first time my mom took me bra shopping since I was walking and sitting just to hide my boobs
I remember how I hated my body back then because it was supposed to be that way, because a woman couldn't be confident with her body, because there was always a better one, because self-esteem was overrated, because the thing that they call self-esteem was just a bunch of crap
I remember kissing my crush for the first time



I remember him being nothing but a jerk to me
I remember how indignation rose in my cheeks when I busted my mom with her best friend reading my diary at three in the morning and guess which page it was: the page that included my first kiss
I remember taking a trip to the Aegean Sea
I remember meeting a six-foot-six-inches tall boy
I remember his charm, his kindness, his lure, his manners, his lips were literally staring at mine, his eyes were watching mine, his voice touching my heart, his scent surrounding all of me
I remember that he was flirting with me
I remember that I was flirting with him
I remember my first orgasm!
I remember us playing water polo though I had no talent at all, taking into consideration that I was looking so funny with my

non-athletic body trying to impress his

I remember us playing billiards and all over again it was just that I sucked at it

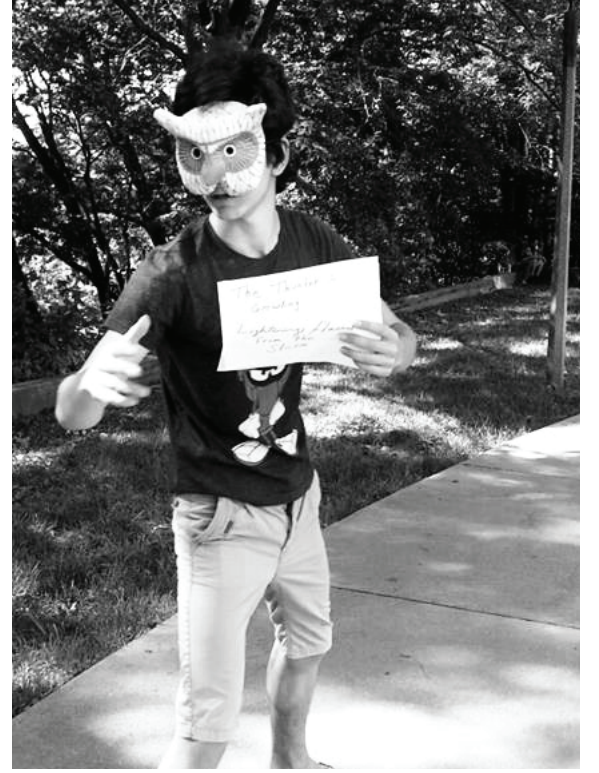
I remember the irony

The boy I tried to impress had struck me as hard as lightning

And I remember that this poem about me does not end here. It will always stay to be continued...

GÜNAHLARIM UNUTULSUN İSTEMEM

seninle şömine başında, bir Şubat akşamı vahşi hayvan tasvirleri üzerine konuşuyoruz, tehdit içinde yanana bakıyorum, kırık gülümseme konumlanıyor yüzünde artık unutulmuş tüm anılarıyla kurumuş oğlumun fetüsünü atıyorum aleve, cızz parıldıyordu mu hayır dünyam aydınlanıyor inanıyorum umuda ve umuda inanmaya, ama aslında karanlıkta çaldığım org ve henüz lisede kaybettiğim o dolaysız, güzel yüzüm ele vermişti her şeyi yeisi ve tereddüdü, seninle akşamda soğuk saçlarımı taramaya karar veriyoruz boşuna! tarayış gölgeye dönüşüyor, iç çekiyorum günahlarım bağışlansın istemem...



I DO NOT WANT MY SINS TO BE FORGIVEN

You and I, a February night, near the fireplace are talking about portraiture of feral animals, in a threat I look at the one who burned out. A broken smile settles on your face I threw my son's fetus, which is dried with all his memories, into the fire, is it blazing no world of mine's dawning I believe in hope and in a world which is mine but in fact, the organ I played in the dark and the immediate-pretty face of mine, which I had lost in high school, had betrayed everything the hesitation and the despair with you, during the afternoon, I decided to comb my cold hair, in vain! the combing turns into a shadow I sigh I don't want my sins to be forgiven

Meri Sharoyan

Yerevan, Armenia

an excerpt from *Bastille*



“On the contrary, the material is the only place we know each other. Out of it... if you don't say or show what you want to say, I'll not understand. I'll not even imagine.”

She had accepted the rules of this common dialogical theatre.

“The material, about which I was talking, the base of existence is the same. Everything is out of the mental. I can't find an accurate formulation, sorry.”

“You are talking about the unconscious?”

Her thought was flowing as a continuation of my own. Well, we were from the same material, from the same rib. The presence of an ally was good. You could play the same game being the actor and the spectator simultaneously. They who knew on whom to focus and when. They who were concentrating; while on the other side of the door, the mass was throwing the coin into the machine, choosing a coffee from the menu. It goes down the stomach, leaving bitterness.

Back to the menu. Choose between the contents of the truth and the lie. There was no question of an alternative. Everybody would choose a perversion. Just the preferences faded away because of the external influence. The product of the machine was just a coffee, where there was no you. You were nowhere. But you should understand who you are, what type of coffee you want to taste in your mouth. And the coin would be a connection. You'd get the coffee from the machine and, raising your hand, would bring it to your mouth. Simple actions that you don't have to think about. Everything will happen automatically.

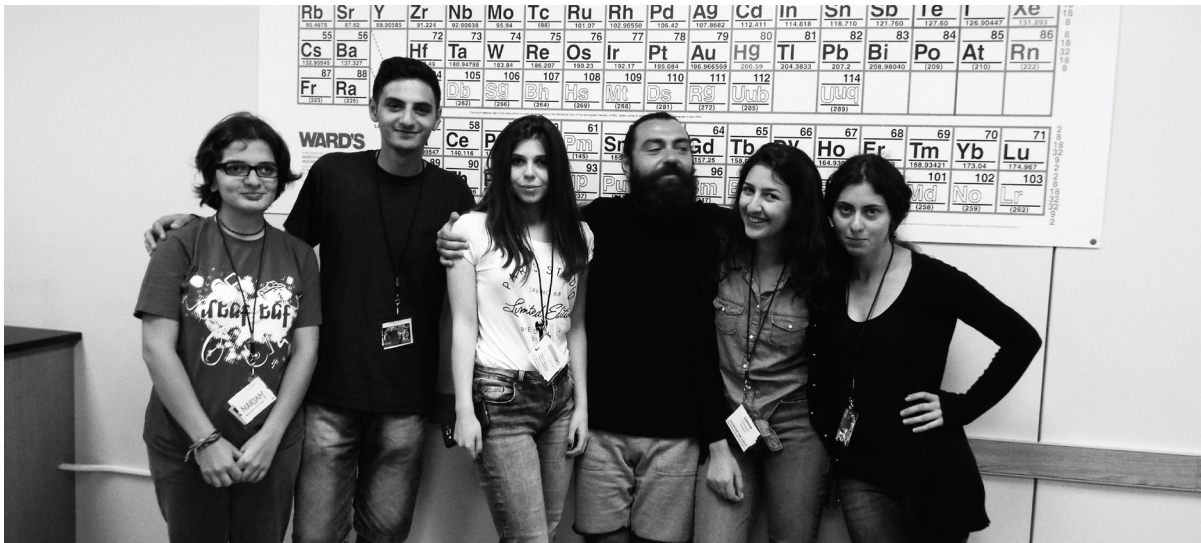
The lights turn on automatically. She automatically takes off her clothes.

“Are you sleeping?”

“I'm trying”.

I turn off the switch, sit on my bed. I stand up. Crossing the room diagonally, I notice the inscription on the wall. She acts as a temporary painkiller, now sleeping in the second bed, but the venom is still there.

The desire to break continues, doing what you consider happens after hate.



Naomi Shilyansky

Iowa City, Iowa

The 5k

with their feet on the white spraypainted grass line,
the twenty-four collegiate runners anticipate the start
bulky calf muscles tightening, then flexing
the nervous jumping and pacing behind the start,
butterflies in the stomach, heart skipping one-two
Their bodies are electric,
and their motions ever dynamic and pulsing
jumpy, fully-charged, buzzing with adrenaline
lean limbs swinging with the power of suspense
mouths bending, contorting, spilling out rousing melodic
taunts,
directed towards the other teams of lanky sunbaked bodies
equally saturated with excitement,
ready to race their rivals almost to the grave,
and looking forward to the moment
when the finish line nears,
because at that moment they will
cough and heave the remainder of their fizzed out vivacity,
knowing that they beat the clock with pure physical power--
but until then,
the runners can only await the
clean, loud pop of the gun,
this is the anatomy of starts.



Annabel Shu

Decatur, Georgia

Woman

Once upon a
Time

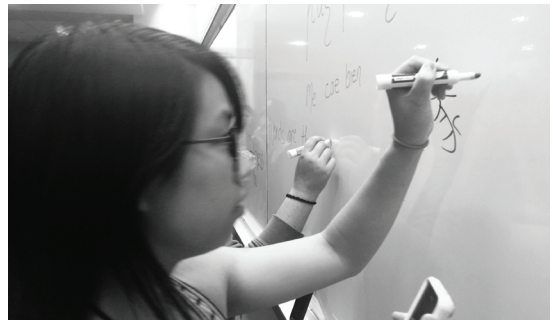
(it's always once upon a time, isn't it)
there was a girl. And a boy.
And they fall in love, get married,
have lots of babies, and their own
happily ever after. The end.

PLAY.

Just kidding. *Once*
upon a time, there
was a girl, and a boy.
They meet each other,
have sex because why not? (what else
is there to do in that pretty
pretty garden)
and end up with children they don't know
how to deal with.
After dysfunctional family drama
one son is dead, the other a murderer.
Girl is left wondering how
it all could've gone so wrong.
And again and again and again,
Her fault her fault her fault —

REWIND.

Once upon a time, there was a girl
named Eve. (also a boy named Adam
but he's not important)
Eve was getting by,
trying to find the rest of life that she knew
must be there,
fiery, scintillating, bright.
She picks up the apple (Tried and tempted —
okay, so, the apple is anachronistic,
ceci n'est pas une pomme, etc.,
but things can be *true*
without being right)



and bites into
succulent flesh, blood juice
slipping down her chin,
spattering to the
ground.
The world collapses like
a baby bird trying to fly, wind-filled bones
straining against gravity and
her fault her fault her fault —

PAUSE.

But they never told you, the old, sly masters,
(after all, victors write the history)
Eve was an inevitable happening — and any-
ways, what is a sin, if not little
human happenings building
up, up, up?

Maybe she fell but
maybe we were meant to fall,
formed from earth and stone,
green peeking out,

and maybe that baby bird spread
its crumpled wings in the
clean painted wind
and flew.

STOP.





Sydni Wells

Miami, Florida

Siri, Define “Millennials”

The word is teenager. The word is youth. The word is the first generation of kids that don't know what lasting marriage looks like, the first generation with a technological footprint, the first generation to be both the most hopeless and hopeful. We are the words.

The word is the boy who goes home with eye sockets like blueberries the size of grapefruits, because he has known these kids since elementary school, but in ninth grade “gay” is the only thing people remember about him now.

The word is the “All Lives Matter” counter arguments, because somehow they are absent in oppression but always present for inclusion. They are the boys who are dying to be considered a “nigga” but cannot bring themselves to identify as an ally; the word is Kendall Jenner’s innovational cornrows but Nicki Minaj’s “ghetto” braids.

The word is every “bitch” out there, who is sweating through her clothes in 90 degree weather because she was too tired getting told that men “wanted her ass” to put on some shorts today.

The word is virgin, the girl who is spat at for innocence, but pinned over in locker rooms. The word is slut, the girl who has too many guy friends who she spends Friday nights with, playing Monopoly; the girl who is proud of her body and eager to share it; the girl who is locked up in her room because of high heels and nightclubs.

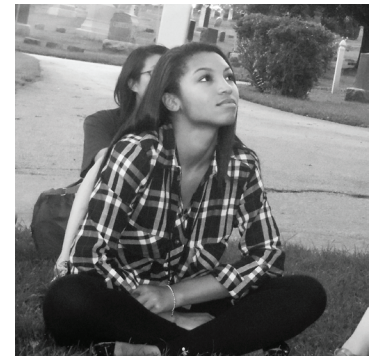
We are electric, paradoxical, complex people. Exotic flavors with acidic aftertastes. Yet, we are reduced to urbandictionary.com definitions: we are absent of meaning, but brimming with life. And still, we are words.

cataracts

eyes are the window to the soul but mirrors
—i have discovered— are
prisons of the mind.
they are multi-dimensional
jagged-edge cages
of beauty, of
security, of
self,
of every person we’ve tried to be, wanted to
become, waited to turn into.
mirrors are contained weapons whose
greatest offense
is its presence;
the mounting pressure of knowing—
knowing it is there,
it is calling
calling
knowing
every sense of self
you shed like carefully constructed snake skins: versions
of yourself that have grown old, cracked, dried out and
died,
on that bathroom floor.

Rubato

He is guarded.
Why can't I ever come in?
Closed doors wind knocking
like unwanted guests guests in
your bed
always guessing
always reaching connecting piecing— together.
He is tight lips & quiet eyes
& slick comebacks. He
once told me he's not
really sure he's ever
known love at all.
toes straining, straining toes, always on them, tights
and tutus and tits probing spotlights please for once
let me take center stage
first position, second position, third you are
a plié I am toes
stretching straining heavy. I
quit ballet.



Mariam Yeghiazaryan

Yerevan, Armenia

բառեհոգեհանգիստ

լռության մեջ ծնված բառերի հանդեպ առաջացած վախը գլխապտույտ է առաջացնում,
դու թերահավատորեն փնտրում ես մաշկիդ կարված կոճակը,

որը երբեք չես տեսել,

բայց որի կարմիր լույսը՝ արյան պես, հոսում է չորացած մարմնիդ ու գլխիդ միջով
ու արձանագրում սեփական կաշեկաղապարից ներս աղմկող բացակայությունդ:
սենյակում լույս չկա, որ անջատես,

և առաստաղից, լամպի փոխարեն, բառեր են կախված:

ուժերդ չեն ներում՝ թուլանալու համար,

գոյությանդ անեությունը չափազանց ծանր է, որ կարողանաս երկինք բարձրանալ:
ազատությունն աստղ դառնալու մեջ չէ,

երբեք չգիտես, թե մի գիշերում քանիսն են ինքնալքվում՝ տիեզերքից ցած նետվելով,

իսկ մարդիկ երագում են աստղերի դիակներով ու հոգիներով լցված կապույտի հավերժության
մասին.

որտե՞ղ է երկնքից ցած ընկնողների դամբարանը:

դու նկատում ես, թե լուսինն ինչպես է, ամեն գիշեր կերպարանափոխվելով, փորձում տեղավոր
պարանի անցքի մեջ.

գիշերը լուսնի ձախողված ինքնասպանությունն է:

կապույտն այնքան հոսուն է,

որ մի քայլ էլ ու կլուծվի ծովում, հետքերը կհոսեն անհայտության մեջ, բայց փոքրիկ քաղաքում
ծովեր չկան,

ու սահմանները փակ են նրանց համար, ովքեր գնալու տեղ և մնալու հույս չունեն,
եկողներ չկան,

իսկ գնացողներ չեն մնացել,

ոչ ոք ոչ ոքի չի ճանաչում,

ոչինչ չգիտի,

ոչմիտեղ չի գնում,

ոչ էլ եկել է նույն ոչնչից.

ո՞ր ուղղությամբ ինքդ քեզնից հեռացար:

Ճերմակ թղթի դատարկությանը խոստովանում ես,

որ կուզեիր մի նամակ գրել՝ ինքնալիքից առաջ,

թեկուզ անհասցե անձանդթին,

բայց ողբերգությունը բացակայության մեջ է՝ հրաժեշտ սովորների ու դիմավորողների,

գալուստը բարի չէ, մեկնումն՝ աննկատ,

և դու միակն ես, ով և ում լքել է,

ու՞մ չես ունեցել լինելու օրից:

մթության մեջ թաղված լուցկու տուփը պատրանք է,

բառերն անցնում են քո միջով ու ստիպում զգալ ոչնչության գերակայությունը,

փրկության հույս խնդրի՞ր ազատությունից

և թույլտվություն՝ բառերից կախվելու

ու առանց հետքերի թաղվելու նրանց մեջ,

26 ու բողբոջելու լռության ծաղկով:



Arevik Ashkharoyan

(Chaperone) Yerevan, Armenia

Reflections on Iowa City

I always dreamed of visiting America as a teenager. All my friends did then. Attracted by the pop music culture, cool Pepsi commercials, and movies about university life, we all wished we could be a part of it someday. Now, beyond my teenage and university years, I am here in Iowa City, living in a dorm (sadly with no crazy roommate), hanging out with students from Armenia, Turkey, and the U.S., and belatedly making my childhood dream come true.

For the first two or three days, I didn't realize that I was in America. Traveling in Europe these past years has almost made me dumb to new places. But the sense of the reality, of being in the here and now, has started to recover. "I finally got here!" I said to myself. And I am at a very special place where hundreds of thousands of writers around the world wish they could visit. For only two weeks, I am in a City of Literature. Everything is about literature here, it seems. You see people hold a book as they walk, read as they have their breakfast, make notes in worn out notebooks. People sitting next to you at the café, standing in the line for coffee, running along the river, or riding bikes could be really outstanding writers, or may become ones later. Be on guard, you might be facing a literary phenomenon in every step.

Writing was another dream I had as a teenager. And it seems that it is also coming true here: in Iowa City, at High Ground Café, every morning. Because you can't help but write, you feel you are here to do just that and shouldn't be wasting your time; you should breathe the air full of creativeness, look at the sky, which is huge, like no other place I have ever seen, and the sound of hundreds of thousands of cicadas that start all together, then suddenly stop all at once, telling you this all is about literature.





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Our guest speakers: translators Aron Aji and Addie Leak, digital storyteller Lauren Haldeman, and distinguished playwright Catherine Filloux; High Grounds Café for generously hosting our Youth Open Mic Night; Prairie Lights Bookstore; and finally, to all the participants of Between the Lines for making this program so special.

