

ISSUE III

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MEMORY EDITION

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Embrace Complexity

Discourse Magazine

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Letter from the Editors

Dear readers,

Welcome to the third issue of *Discourse Magazine*, which is dedicated to memory!

Memory is deceptive, changing, and uncertain. Looking back at past relationships or childhood, people tend to remember only the highlights, the good, the happy. This nostalgia can be very dangerous: it can lead people to idealise past eras or relationships that were actually harmful. One of my relatives, for example, has told me that the Soviet Union was an extremely humane country. They do know about the GULAG, genocides, invasions, and occupations. Yet, their mind still finds a way to come to such a conclusion. Part of that is undoubtedly propaganda, but another part is nostalgia for when they were young and careless.

Nevertheless, memory is as important as it is deceptive. It is a cornerstone of identity, from the early memories, traumas, victories, and losses we weave our stories that shape who we are. Aside from individual memory, we share collective, cultural, and historical memories with the communities we are part of. When oppressive powers understand this — that memory sustains community identity — they systematically erase history, culture, and traditions to erase the people.

To reclaim the memory proves a tricky task. Now, communities begin to idealise the past before oppression, making it into a golden era to be rebuilt. Without proper reflection,

attempts to reclaim memory lead to the reinforcement of oppressive societal hierarchies, ignoring the voices and experiences that were already suppressed in that “golden era”. That is why we need to constantly think about what we remember and what we forget, how we remember and, most crucially, why we forget. I hope that, as you read these pages, the talented voices of Vilnius University students will ignite this important reflection.

Sofia Kalenska, Editor-in-Chief

Prose

Exequies

*Flash Fiction by Lara Su Yaman,
a first-year English Studies student*

You will turn into a memory nobody remembers one day.

Your photos will be torn, burned, sold. Someone in the ‘vintage shop’ will have no idea who you and your friends were when they look at that birthday party photo. Your effort to turn a temporary moment into something permanent will be in vain.

Your clothes will end up in landfills. Leather jackets and satin shirts you saved up for weeks to buy will be mixed with poisoned soil. Nothing will bring back that feeling of soft and warm cloth on your skin. You will be bare cold.

Your friends will slowly stop aching for you. They will have children to care for, meetings to attend, shopping to do. Your name will stop appearing in reunions.

Your gravestone will be illegible. Years and years will pass waiting for a visitor but only crows and ghosts will turn up. Your family will abandon you and this country for a “better future”. Nobody will remember where you were buried.

If you are a memory nobody will remember, then why are you alive?

To see the pink purple orange sunsets every night and be mesmerized to the core.

To make the wrong decisions and cry in pain but learn your lesson and move on.

To enjoy those crowded dinners where you share laughter in the dim light.

To engage in conversations that feel like a warm hug for your soul.

To love that person and a hundred more.

To learn how to love yourself.

To be yourself.

To be.

I am a Plant in a Philosopher's Apartment

*A short story by Fausta Bauer,
a fourth-year English Philology student*

My old residence was cold, cramped, and unbearably lonely. I was wedged between dozens of other creatures such as myself. All of us were squeezed into metal shelves, all of us angled towards the same, unreachable light, and all of us were taken care of by one man. He dusted our leaves very often, yet some plants claimed they were attended to by others, but, from what I could tell, it was always the same hands, the same uniform and the same annoyed groan as he swept the feathery object over our heads.

Every Time a shopper passed by, I shook my long, patterned leaves to attract their eye, yet it never seemed to work. They were always more drawn to the spray-painted cacti of various shades of violent neon, half-withered in this store that looked more like a warehouse. But I never lost hope.

Finally, it was my turn. Even though I was but a simple Maranta (*Maranta leuconeura*), I was finally chosen. I felt pressure around my pot as I was picked up and placed into a plastic bag. The green of the bag blended seamlessly with the green of my leaves that reached for the sky, folded inward as if in prayer. I felt the cold air of the outside world. It lasted for ten or twenty minutes, or something else entirely, I'm not sure because my species hasn't learned the human classification of Time yet.

I was placed neatly upon a desk overlooking the entire apartment. The room looked messy, yet there was a certain pattern to it. The bound pages, made from my distant cousins, were all placed in deliberate piles on the desk alongside, what the Philosopher called, the computer. Notes covered the bed and the nightstand next to it, but they were color-coded, placed in a circle around an empty void on the bed where I assume his human figure laid each night, surrounded by research. His clothes were neatly folded and spread across the floor. The items placed on the windowsill were curious as well. I saw a blurry picture of him and a woman, smiling. A pile of pennies stacked in a neat tower. A wrapper of a candy bar of unrecognizable origin, I think I have seen one or two of those in my cold, sterile warehouse. Among these items were pretty pieces of jewelry and an old, unwashed mug with some leftover coffee in it. This didn't matter much when I saw his face, his tired, cold face, which seemed a bit less tired and a bit less cold when looking at me. There was a hint of accomplishment in his smile. He wore a jacket with worn elbow patches of an off-brown color, and on his wrist was an old, gold watch which I could not read.

I learned of his profession through various calls he took and name tags he left around his room. This is when I found out he was a thinker of sorts, in a special facility which deals with adults. Perhaps another warehouse with cramped walls? He called himself "Philosopher," and yet I am unsure whether this was his name or a title he liked to use. Most nights, he spent reading the books he so neatly piled near his computer or writing something intently in his notes. I would hear his stomach rumble, yet the sound was ignored and covered by furious scribbling in his various notebooks. I sat at the table day and night. I saw him leave, come back, leave again and come back again. Sometimes he'd stop to admire me and my beautifully folded leaves. I could see the curiosity in his eyes whenever a breeze swayed my stem, but soon it turned into pure appreciation. And as he appreciated me, I started appreciating him. More than he knew.

As Time passed, whatever that truly meant, his visits became increasingly infrequent. Some nights I waited for him only to discover the empty spot on his bed, illuminated by the daylight.

He would leave for weeks, and I began to wonder whether he still existed when he was gone. Perhaps he had wilted?

One night, I was awoken by giggles behind the door. I could hear him and someone else talking. As I prepared myself, the door slowly opened and in walked the Philosopher, but beside him was a smaller human. She was like him but shorter, her hair was light, long and glowy, nothing like I've ever seen before. I heard him refer to her as "Dear". I was not sure what this meant, but I watched as they walked around discussing his personal belongings scattered around the room. I was curious at first because this was a new human being who was obviously very important to the Philosopher, so much so that they ended up speaking and laughing on the bed long into the night.

By morning, the room started changing. Soon, the stale coffee mug next to me was hot again and used by her. He even threw away the belongings that kept me company, including the candy wrapper and the pile of coins that were quickly stashed away in a leather box. The room grew cleaner, more deliberate, less crowded, and the chaotic structure was gone, befitting of a Philosopher of his status. Things moved slowly after that: she came to visit him, and each time, they were so busy, he forgot about me entirely.

One night, she saw me on the table and gave me a curious look; her eyes, unlike his, were filled with odd confusion. She grabbed me by my pot, and soon I ended up on the bookshelf. He came into the room and didn't notice my displacement. I felt a sharp pain in my slim stem, I had no heart, yet it was breaking. Soon, the pain and the sadness turned into boiling anger, which manifested itself in physical strength I could never have imagined I held. I pushed my stem forward like never before, it was a movement full of fury, resentment, and anguish. As I kept pushing myself forward, I moved my pot, which I was confined to. I leaned forward, only this time, the edge was closer than I expected. The pot shifted, tipping over the wooden ledge, gravity finished the rest. Soon, the crash came, startling them both. The Philosopher and Dear turned to the place on the ground where I had fallen. Dear soon started apologizing,

blaming herself for putting his 'shiny plant too close to the edge'. He did not react much, only swept me into the same green plastic bag I was brought in.

I tried to bargain, to beg, but no words came out. I was silent but not by my own accord. I tried hitting the sides of the green, suffocating walls until I felt the cold breeze of the outside world again as I was tossed to the side of the road alongside various other useless items and junk discarded by the entirety of the human population. I was once again alone, cold and scared, but I could not save myself this time.

I waited and waited, the cold was nippy, and the shards of the broken pot cut my leaves if I moved. They could not bear to clasp towards the bright light above them as each prayer was met with pain. I was ready to meet my end. Then I heard it, the sound of the garbage truck. The bag was soon ripped open by the merciless jaws of the machine, and I felt myself being torn apart. What I thought were roots loosened too easily, slipping free, popping, instead of tearing. There was no damp earth, something pale and smooth bent inside me with a dull sound, contorting my stem with each movement inside. I understood why the cold never harmed me, why the water never mattered and why I was unchanged.

The truck roared, and I was no longer afraid as I was carried off to an infinite existence amongst clutter, thrown away and forgotten, piling.

Through the Yellow Border

*An essay by Ovidijus Videika,
a second-year English Studies student*

I have seen the Serengeti, an ecosystem where diverse animal species live side by side and migrate over 800 kilometres each year in search of fresh grass and water. I have admired the great Amazon River, its curvy, snake-like path winding through the rainforest where biodiversity thrives. I have encountered a real snake, called a sea krait, swimming in the ocean, evoking a sense of awe and caution in the waters. I have been amazed by the tentacles and hundreds of suction cups of an octopus, each one holding the secrets of the ocean within its grasp. I have discovered fungi that glow in the night as if they belong to an otherworldly landscape rather than the damp forest floor of Earth. I have looked into the eyes of a Canadian sphynx cat, deep green with slit-shaped pupils as if they were guarding the mysteries of its mind. And I have seen people venturing into the depths of the fascinating Bongolo Cave, seeking to uncover the planet's hidden secrets.

But I have also seen a different side of our planet. I have watched thick smoke billowing from a factory's chimney, poisoning the once-clean air and contributing to millions of premature deaths each year. I have witnessed the consequences of the Arctic heating up at an alarming rate, its frozen landscapes melting into the ocean and reshaping the planet. I have observed captivating insects vanish from the face of the Earth, triggering disastrous consequences for ecosystems. I have watched mesmerizing monarch butterflies in North America lose their way during migration due to habitat destruction and harsh weather conditions. I have stood

before mountains of discarded clothing from the textile industry turning into yet another burden on the planet. I have witnessed people suffering unbearable heat in the streets, deprived of shade due to the felling of trees. And I have seen the death of the last male northern white rhino, a tragic sign that the species is on the brink of extinction.

I have seen it all through the yellow border, as if it were a window into an endless and everlasting world, shaping my own understanding of our planet's state. As a child, I would rush to the magazine section and run my fingers over the glossy cover of *National Geographic*, begging my dad to buy me one, never considering the high price or my family's income. Nevertheless, my dad would always find a way to get me one, even if it meant not buying his favourite doughnuts. He would hand it to me with a smile, and I would know that within those pages behind this bright yellow border, I would discover more about the world, its landscapes and the people living on it. But as the years passed and those carefree childhood days faded, the front covers of *National Geographic* were more frequently reflecting the destructive power of humanity, revealing the catastrophic environmental crises threatening our planet. The yellow border does not seem so bright anymore. The magazine that once took me on journeys through wilderness and made me believe that everything would always be there, unchanged, now tells a story about a planet in distress, and the covers that once sparked curiosity now serve as warnings.

Nowadays, as the Climate Clock counts down with only three and a half years remaining until we reach the critical 1.5°C threshold, beyond which the damage may be irreversible, I find myself looking at numbers that feel heavier than ever. I scroll through numerous reports filled with figures that paint a devastating picture of the world I once explored through a naïve child's eyes. A 45% reduction in global carbon emissions by 2030—that's what it would take to avoid the worst (IPCC, 2019, p. 12). And yet, emissions continue to rise, pushing us closer to permanent consequences. I remember all these marvellous landscapes, the Serengeti, the Amazon, the Arctic, now watching each one of them slipping away. Nearly 17% of the Amazon rainforest, the vast green lungs of Earth and one of our greatest natural defences

against climate change, is already gone, lands deforested and converted for human uses (Science Panel for the Amazon, 2021, p. 22). I read that wildlife populations have plummeted by 73% in just 50 years due to human activity (WWF, 2024, p. 7), reminding me of those once-thriving ecosystems which now face unbearable challenges. I used to imagine them full of life, and now I cannot help but picture their silence—the natural sounds replaced by the harsh echoes of trees being cut down and construction workers burying everything beneath concrete.

But amidst this alarming reality, I can still see a tiny glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel, though reaching it is not so easy anymore. Even in this seemingly helpless situation, there are those fighting to pull us back, not ready to give up. I watch governments, individuals and entire communities beginning to take steps, no matter how small they may seem, to lower carbon emissions, protect ecosystems, and transition to renewable energy. The same *National Geographic* that once introduced me to the world's beauty and then its ruination, now also tells stories of efforts to save it: organizations stopping deforestation and illegal logging, international agreements to reverse environmental damage and renewable energy expanding faster than ever. I am now encountering initiatives like One Tree Planted and Life Terra that are trying to bring devastated landscapes back to life, giving me hope that the planet behind the yellow border can still be preserved for other generations to see.

Somewhere in the depths of the garage, my dad still keeps those old *National Geographic* magazines, a reminder of our planet's breathtaking beauty and the urgent need for preservation. While the yellow border still serves as a window into our world, the critical question remains: will we simply witness the destruction, or will we step through that window and take action?

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Mimicry, Hybridity, and Lack: Hari Kunzru's *The Impressionist*

*An essay by Sofija Kalenska,
a fourth-year English Philology student*

Hari Kunzru's novel *The Impressionist* (2003) is deeply engaged with the concepts of mimicry and hybridity. Pran Nath, the protagonist, born into "one of the highest and most exclusive castes in Hindustan" (Kunzru, 2003, p. 20), is thrown out on the streets at the age of 15 upon the revelation that he is a bastard son of an Englishman. Reflecting on his newly discovered hybridity, Pran wonders, "Does this make him an Englishman? He does not feel like an Englishman. He is an Indian, a Kashmiri Pandit. He knows what he is. He feels it. [...] Home is here, on the other side of the blue door" (Kunzru, 2003, p. 52). Yet, his initial sense of belonging changes drastically as he takes on a wide range of identities over the course of the novel: from Pran Nath to Rukhsana, to a white boy, to Pretty Bobby, to Jonathan Bridgeman, and finally, to the impressionist. As Pretty Bobby, he reflects upon the notion that people come from the earth, feel connected to it, and can call it their home (Kunzru, 2003, p. 285). "But he feels he has nothing of the earth in him at all. [...] So he must have come from somewhere else, some other element" (Kunzru, 2003, p. 285). This other element is water. It was a flood that brought his biological parents to the cave where he was conceived, and it is the different qualities of water that define the protagonist. For instance, Pretty Bobby has a "fluid moral outlook" (Kunzru, 2003, p. 242) and "hints at transparency" (Kunzru, 2003, p. 250). Like the hybrid protagonist, "the water can also be the very opposite of black, if it

chooses” (Kunzru, 2003, p. 289). As he transforms from Robert to Jonathan, “he feels as if he is leaking, all the particulars that go to make up Pretty Bobby draining away” (Kunzru, 2003, p. 273). Most crucially, however, is the water’s mirror quality, which is imperfect with even the slightest flow distorting the image. Thus, just like mimicry, water produces the image that is “almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 122). For Bhabha (1994, p. 122), the capacity of mimicry to undermine colonial power emerges precisely in the ambivalent desire of the coloniser for a “reformed, recognizable Other” that is never fully the self. Drawing on Bhabha’s theory, this essay explores the extent to which mimicry and hybridity are disruptive forces in Kunzru’s *The Impressionist*.

In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha discusses the disruptive and ambivalent nature of mimicry and hybridity. Initially imposed on the colonised to assimilate, make knowable, and discipline them, mimicry undermines the colonial power because it “must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 122). Through this ambivalence, mimicry “fixes the colonial subject as a ‘partial’ presence” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 123), meaning that such a subject can no longer be placed within — and thus becomes disruptive of — a familiar binary coloniser/colonised. Such a disruption is a menace to the coloniser’s claim of inherent superiority, for in a mimic, the coloniser recognises themselves. The partial nature of the coloniser’s recognition evokes the uncanny — familiar made strange. Like mimicry, hybridity produces ambivalence: a hybrid subject is “neither the one nor the other” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37), thereby unsettling the coloniser/colonised binary and showing that “claims to the inherent originality or ‘purity’ of cultures are untenable” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 55). While hybridity challenges colonial binaries through its very existence, mimicry achieves disruption through a specific mechanism — “representation of identity and meaning [...] along the axis of metonymy” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 128). Through metonymy, mimicry “rearticulates the whole notion of identity and alienates it from essence” (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 127–8). In other words, through the repetition of cultural signifiers — accent, clothing, manners, etc. — mimicry represents the whole of identity through its parts, thereby exposing the constructed nature of the coloniser’s identity. The repetitive rather than mimetic nature of mimicry not only reveals these signifiers as arbitrary but also produces a mocking effect.

Building on Bhabha's insights that the ambivalence of mimicry and hybridity disrupts the colonial hierarchy, as well as that mimicry reveals the constructed nature of the coloniser's identity, and, in repetition of cultural signifiers, slips into mockery, this essay now turns to examining the degree to which these mechanisms are disruptive in Kunzru's *The Impressionist*.

In the chapter "White Boy", Pran's encounter with English Soldiers and his ability to walk 'into whiteness' (Kunzru, 2003, p. 187) demonstrates both the possibilities and limitations of mimicry and hybridity as disruptive forces. When he encounters English soldiers, they take him for an English boy, and Pran attempts not to shatter their perception by talking or moving:

Pran shakes his head mutely. He has to say something. He can feel colour streaming off him like sweat. He wills his pores to close. Skin to statue. White marble. Impenetrable. He stands as still as he can: One move will betray him. But he must move. Otherwise they will take him away (Kunzru, 2003, p. 186).

This passage yet again connects Pran to his element: because his capacity for mimicry is still limited, like water, he has to remain still not to distort the mirror-image. As "colour [is] streaming off him," Pran wills "his pores to close," desperately trying to hold his difference inside the marble-like stillness he performs. He understands that his hybridity and his stillness both deceive the soldiers and threaten to reveal him. To avoid being exposed, he replies to them, "hold[ing] Privett-Clampe's voice inside his mouth" (Kunzru, 2003, p. 186). This metonymy of English identity — English pronunciation — is enough to trick the soldiers. Most notably, however, this encounter reveals that "Mimicry is [...] ranged against hybridity rather than serving as its expression or ally" (Forter, 2019, p. 146). In other words, mimicry helps Pran to conceal his hybrid identity by closing "the gap between 'white' and 'not quite'" (Forter, 2019, p. 153). Therefore, by eliminating rather than reproducing the difference, mimicry is not a disturbing force. On the other hand, Pran's successful performance before the soldiers, coupled with his hybridity, allows him to continue his way and walk into the train station where an exclusively white population awaits evacuation. By walking "into

whiteness” (Kunzru, 2003, p. 187), Pran demonstrates that cultural boundaries are maintained through recognition — not essential difference — and that the purity of cultures is an impossibility. This boundary-transgression does not go unnoticed: “Some of the women start to watch him, visibly sifting through their memories, trying to place his face” (Kunzru, 2003, p. 188). However, whether they sense racial difference or simply struggle to identify an unfamiliar English child remains ambiguous. This double-reading reveals how mimicry can both succeed as assimilation and register as disturbance. This ambiguity suggests that while mimicry and hybridity facilitate Pran’s transgression of cultural boundaries, their disruptive effect remains either absent or extremely limited.

The following chapter, “Pretty Bobby,” engages more deeply with the unsettling nature of ambiguity, particularly through Pran’s interactions with Reverend Macfarlane. Macfarlane is a practitioner of phrenology and a firm believer that the imperial project is a natural consequence of the inherent superiority of the European race (Kunzru, 2003, p. 197). When examining Pran, Reverend notes that Pran’s “fine nose and thin, sharp lips appear strangely pure. For a mongrel, incredibly pure. Really almost too pure. Almost European.” (Kunzru, 2003, p. 197). The fact that Macfarlane calls Pran’s purity ‘strange’ betrays his discomfort. As Aydemir (2006, p. 208) observes, for the Reverend, “the book’s protagonist can only appear as an abject hybrid,” and the repetition of ‘almost’ reveals why: Pran’s ambiguous position as almost European but not quite undermines the capacity of racial sciences to provide clear racial categories. This failure of categorisation pushes Macfarlane to reinterpret the very signs he normally associates with white superiority. He wonders, “whether perhaps the very fineness of the features, their uncanny quality, places them under the heading of one of the great Lombroso’s criminal types” (Kunzru, 2003, p. 198). In other words, he begins reading Pran’s whiteness as a possible marker of moral degeneracy, as something to be treated with suspicion rather than admiration. Thus, in Bhabha’s terms, Pran’s hybridity exposes “that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 55). Ultimately, this scene demonstrates Bhabha’s point that hybridity disrupts colonial order not through overt resistance but by revealing how cultural signifiers that uphold colonial hierarchy can be reinterpreted and read against themselves.

“Pretty Bobby” also demonstrates the disruptive nature of mimicry and its lippage into mockery. In this chapter, the protagonist rapidly develops his ability to mime Englishness, but in this learning process, he also produces slippages necessary for the mimicry’s ability to unsettle. When he begins to engage in conversations with English people, “they believe him. They hear an accent and see a face and a set of clothes, and put them together into a person” (Kunzru, 2003, p. 245). Just as in “White Boy,” Pran performs English identity through its metonymies: accent, facial expressions, and clothing. Yet, his mimicry is not without slippages, which is why “After a while, a few begin to sense there is something wrong, something they cannot put their finger on” (Kunzru, 2003, p. 245). His mimicry produces ambivalence: English people recognise in him something familiar, which is rendered strange through his imperfect repetitions of English identity signifiers. For example, he wears “an enormous Curzon topi, which sits on his head like a minor classical monument” (Kunzru, 2003, p. 244). The hat is so ridiculous that it becomes a mockery of English dress codes, drawing attention to how arbitrary and performative such conventions are. Later, Pran realises that “Real English people don’t seem to wear them, unless they are attending some sort of official function” (Kunzru, 2003, p. 249). His appropriation of the hat as a signifier of English identity without a full understanding of its proper use exposes the instability of the very sign he tries to mimic. The hat, as the imperfect repetition of the English signifier, creates an unidentifiable suspicion among English people, the feeling of “almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 122). That they sense this *almostness* demonstrates that Englishness is not an inherent essence but a constructed identity dependent on how accurately one repeats its conventions. Thus, by revealing the constructed nature of English identity and, through mockery, the arbitrariness and performativity of its signifiers, Pran’s mimicry disrupts the coloniser’s claim to inherent superiority.

Contrary to “Pretty Bobby,” the following chapter, “Jonathan Bridgeman,” demonstrates the limitations of mimicry. In this chapter, Pran’s performance of Englishness becomes so accurate that it hardly produces any slippages necessary for the mimicry’s disruptive effect. Rogobete (2008, p. 66) points out that Pran “tries harder than ever to cast away any possible traces of Otherness so as to become the perfect Englishman and thus Astarte’s best suitor.”

He is so successful in his mimicry that Astarte refuses to marry him because she feels that she knows everything about him: “You’re the most English person I know” (Kunzru, 2003, p. 417). Her words reveal that Pran’s mimicry is no longer disruptive; on the contrary, he has successfully assimilated through mimicry, becoming a “reformed, recognizable Other” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 122). Yet, a few imperfections remain in Pran’s mimicry, indicated by his failure to be an athlete (Kunzru, 2003, p. 334), his lack of connections that “makes a lot of people think twice” (Kunzru, 2003, p. 346), and Hoggart’s sense that “There is something wrong with you, Bridgeman, whatever Dr Noble says. Something sick” (Kunzru, 2003, p. 328). Hoggart’s pronouncement appears similar to how, in “Pretty Bobby,” people failed to identify the source of their unease: “After a while, a few begin to sense there is something wrong, something they cannot put their finger on” (Kunzru, 2003, p. 245). However, a crucial difference accounts for why Pran’s mimicry produces disruption in “Pretty Bobby” but not in “Jonathan Bridgeman”: the nature of the imperfections themselves. In “Pretty Bobby,” the slippage is a product of metonymic repetition: the enormous Curzon topi that sits absurdly on Pran’s head constitutes an excess. This exaggerated signifier produces a mocking effect and exposes the arbitrariness of English conventions. In “Jonathan Bridgeman,” by contrast, Pran’s imperfections are abstract and constitute a lack: a lack of athletic ability and a lack of social connections. Thus, the chapter clarifies a limit implicit in Bhabha’s theory: since mimicry unsettles colonial order through repetition that produces excess, slippage, or difference — and since lack cannot be metonymically repeated — Pran’s imperfections in “Jonathan Bridgeman” fall outside the very mechanism that makes mimicry disruptive.

Throughout this analysis, Pran’s multiple impersonations have revealed the conditional nature of mimicry and hybridity as disruptive forces in *The Impressionist*. When hybridity creates categorical ambiguity, as in Macfarlane’s encounter with features simultaneously “pure” and “mongrel,” it forces a destabilising reinterpretation of the racial signifiers that legitimate colonial hierarchy. When mimicry produces metonymic excess — the ridiculous Curzon topi worn without understanding proper context — it slips into mockery and exposes the performative and arbitrary nature of English identity, which undermines the coloniser’s claim to inherent superiority. However, the novel also demonstrates limitations to these

concepts' insurgent potential. Mimicry proves capable of facilitating assimilation when it successfully conceals hybridity, as in "White Boy," where Pran's performance enables transgression of racial boundaries without necessarily producing disturbance. Crucially, "Jonathan Bridgeman" exposes a theoretical limitation implicit in Bhabha's framework: since mimicry disrupts through metonymic repetition that generates excess and difference, imperfections constituted by lack fall outside the very mechanism that makes mimicry subversive. To what extent, then, are mimicry and hybridity disruptive in Kunzru's novel? While they possess the capacity to unsettle colonial hierarchies under specific conditions, *The Impressionist* predominantly portrays mimicry as an assimilation tactic, a survival strategy that allows Pran to navigate colonial spaces by concealing rather than exposing his hybridity. The moments of disruption remain exceptional rather than characteristic of Pran's experience, suggesting that celebratory postcolonial readings of mimicry and hybridity as subversive may overlook the extent to which they are also assimilative tactics employed by the colonised to survive or the coloniser to produce a recognisable Other. Thus, this essay maintains that mimicry, hybridity, and the ambivalence they produce are presented as limited in their capacity to disrupt the colonial order.

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Drama

Ten, Eleven, and Other Numbers

*A script by Emilija Varnelytė,
A fourth-year English Philology student*

BLACK SCREEN

MAN'S VOICE:

Me and no one else.

CUT TO:

1. BUSY STREET OF A BIG CITY — MIDDLE OF THE DAY

Overhead shot of thousands of people going somewhere. Camera pans to a middle-aged man lying on a sidewalk. Some people are walking around him, some are stepping over.

The camera quickly zooms to his face. Two black combat boots step into the frame. A shadow of the person wearing them appears on the man's face.

THE MAN

You are covering the sun.

OWNER OF THE BOOTS

Do you deserve to see it?

The man sighs and VERY SLOWLY (approximately 38 seconds) turns to the other side. Turning away from the boot owner and the sun.

Shot of the boots stepping over the man's head.

CUT TO:

2. NEXT DAY, THE SAME STREET — MORNING

The man is still laying on the same sidewalk.

A young teen boy spits on the man while passing by. The man does not bother to take any action. The scene extends 23 seconds just to show the man lying on the ground with a spit stain on his jacket while people step over him.

CUT TO:

3. SAME PLACE AS PREVIOUSLY — NIGHT.

The man is laying on the sidewalk in the same place, without moving since the morning. The spit stain is all dried up now.

A woman with a dark polka dot suit approaches him and extends her arm.

THE WOMAN

(whispering)

Stand up. You are embarrassing me.

Camera pans to the woman's extended arm.

THE MAN

(tries to grab her extended arm, but gives up)

I don't know you.

Camera cuts to a full view showing the woman slowly getting down to lie next to him.

CUT TO:

Black screen and complete silence for 4:05 minutes.

THE END



Poetry

Memento Amori

*A poem by Milda Kuliešaitė,
a third-year English Philology student*

An unexpectedly sunny day mid-October,
When the leaves are at their most patriotic,
I'm sitting on historically significant, yet unremarkable steps,
Taking "post-worthy" photos with friends.

Strands of hair braided around my head like a gentle embrace,
A good luck gift from a pal who's busy prepping for class.
My friend points a camera my way like a painter,
As another friend goads me into explaining D&D alignments again,
Like the toy bird on an old-timey photographer's camera.

Dozens of photos, just beaming with joy,
Not a single smile fake, not a single one forced.

My Job Will Be Beach

*A poem by Milda Kuliešaitė,
a third-year English Philology student*

I shake my legs out of hibernation and
I can already smell the sea from the platform and
Every dog in the world must be baby-talked and
I'm so glad we didn't get scammed out of shelter and
The Beach Is So Close I Can Taste It.

I hurl myself at the waves and bruise my knee but
The sun is practically melting into the water and
We're being kicked out of the bar way after
We sat down and didn't order anything and
Everything Is Golden

The sun is down and my leg is howling and
Today we've broken every rule conceivable and
I love everything and everyone, but I don't quite know it yet and
Tonight, I think that
I Will Leave The Beach In My Hair

The Fox

*A poem by Jorūnė Gilvonauskaitė,
a third-year English Philology student*

You stand in the clearing,
Brown shoes drowning
underneath thick leaves.

Your wool coat
flaps in the wind,
makes me think about
that summer at the beach.

This morning,
the fog rolled in
and made it hard
to see ahead.

I know the silence
of the forest is better
than what plays in
your headphones.

You refuse to take
them off even now.

Something rustles
in the distance,
the branches shake.

You look around in curiosity.
It is just a lone fox
climbing out of its bed
under velvety moss. Like the way you do
every morning
before running off for tea.

The Visit

*A poem by Jan Ivanišiv,
a fourth-year English Philology student*

I was thirteen when the visit happened.
A blind, soft juvenile I was back then.
Long before discovering the deities of Athens
and embedding all things that are dense.

No warning, no sign, no whisper in the wind –
only when blinking could she be seen.
The Inevitable came, yet too early for me,
quick as a bolt before the thunder hit.

“Dare to gamble? Take my hand, if you’d rather.
Let us dance in a whirlpool of fate!
Do you wish your dear ones to gather
or owe me till the end of your days?”

Clash. Crush. Shatter. Transparent matter.
I fell or did I fall for? The odds of a lotto.
Left with the stamp of my payday, I plead:
“spare me... some change next time that we meet.”

Honored Release

*A poem by Jan Ivanišiv,
a fourth-year English Philology student*

Another bud withering away,
this scent still leashed to my motions.
Now I am an anteater or a snail
to past, my only poacher.

A knitted scarf around my throat,
its warmth both balm and snare,
each thread a memory I wrote,
each knot a whispered prayer.

Those voices coming from afar,
through smoke and silk they wind me;
Bless me, bruise me, bind me all,
and in your breath, remind me.

The lion tamers lift their whips,
lashes get engraved in thought.
They mold the skin, the mind, each hit
reminds its cause and cost.

So let the leash grow loose, at last —
let scent and shadow fade;
I owe my voice to all that's passed,
to all my past has made.

Safety Frame

*A poem by Jan Ivanišiv,
a fourth-year English Philology student*

You arrive already late to yourself.
I feel the hesitation tucked behind your teeth,
the unfinished line you keep chasing like a shadow
that learned to walk ahead of its owner.

Don't deny it —
you rehearsed this moment
in a room you've never visited,
where statues whisper directions
to wanderers
who resemble you too closely to trust.

I celebrate the fracture,
the way your thoughts tilt toward myth
without permission —
the hero, the wound, the watcher,
all waiting for you to choose
which one you're pretending to be today.
Tell me

why do you trust the wound more than the truth?
Why do you kneel at the altar of almosTs?

I speak since I am already you,
yes, you, brow leaned toward this text, pretending distance.
Your pulse leaks through the letters,
and I taste it — unsettled, almost ancestral.

Healing is a myth you recite to feel tidy.
But I know the rust under the polish,
the safety of thoughts
that hides you better than your own silence.

Even now, the words you refuse to say
are gathering behind your reflection,
waiting to crack the middle of your ribs.

You may suspect the answer,
yet suspicion is the only honest part left in your posture.

I celebrate you regardless —
not the neat version,
but the one who wakes at dusk
remembering someone else's dream
and pretending it's yours.

I remain the one
recalling you
as you summon me,

me—you.

Hiraeth

*A poem by Iryna Neschotna,
a third-year English Philology student*

We share one body and one name,
The hands that write, the eyes that see,
Except my lungs are full of ashy fire,
And all that's whispered: you, not me.
Beneath the native flesh a doppelganger hides.
Hiraeth lives in the reflection's wish-to-be.
Through years suppressing our desires,
You turned the ocean into a tended mere.
You trade our name for the acceptance,
You leave no trace of roots and who we are,
My voice is lost, dissolved in adaptation,
Belonging violated in a stranger's tongue.
I dwell in quiet darkness of our soul,
Where you return at night in mute disguise;
The wild, betrayed hides in the calm,
Reminding of the crime you call success,
As now they think you're one of them.

“It’s hard to believe...”

*A poem by Patricija Česonytė,
a fourth-year English Philology student*

It’s hard to believe that these hands
that are not afraid to move
and rearrange
used to be nimble fingers
picking gooseberries one by one.

You, crouching behind the bush,
squeezing the round green beads,
enjoying the sour juice in your mouth.

You stare,
a grinning starling;
the redcurrant growing on your thumb.

Nothing really hurts
in the sweetness of the sun.

Dandelion

*A poem by Fausta Bauer,
a fourth-year English Philology student*

A Child lies down where grasses sway,
Green skirts dancing in early May.
She's small but the growing weeds rise high,
Wild Flora reaching for the bright blue sky.

She rests here every Sunday morn',
For Father this day for work was sworn.
His scythe cuts low through waving green,
Marring through all the useless and unseen.

She lifts her head, the blade delayed,
A single dandelion in a field of jade.
Alive, though safer playing dead:
You shouldn't have raised your little head.

My Grandma's Story

*A poem by Lara Su Yaman,
a first-year English Studies student*

A day in 1963

My grandmother's long forgotten story

Began when a woman fell ill

Her children were mourning still

The weather was heavy and clouds were dark

As the villagers climbed up the graveyard

Where she now laid, covered in flowers

Leaving a man, a son and two daughters

A small girl crawled to my grandma's lap

Where she finally took a quiet nap

After hours of cries, tearing up her soul

She found my grandma to be her new home

Now that she was chosen, the deal was set

My grandma was eighteen and ready to be wed

Only when she returned did she hear the whispers

Her new husband was the one of her dead sister's

No more dreams to chase after that
She became a half torn page to look at
Seventy years of labor weighed down her back
She deserved colors but all she saw was black

My Beloved Mimi

*A poem by Lara Su Yaman,
a first-year English Studies student*

I still see your house when I close my eyes.

Black and white patterns on the floors
Those barren windows, the rooms without doors
The photos of you and your friends on the closets
Medusa's daughter in a little ebon dress

I sit in the balcony, looking over the city
Sheraton rises in the distance, a room for a penny
Late nights fill it with smoke and confessions
Who has the answers to your whispered questions?

Cigarettes stay untouched since I am here
Breakfast and sunlight, early mornings together
Tea always served in a lemon colored cup
The best potion to heal a sickening break up

The day stretches into long strips of pleasure
I meet some friends one after the other

So many things I will miss after I am gone
Their lives and details of having eternal fun

We come back exhausted, we spent the whole day
Your converses lay twisted in the hallway
Endless conversations keep us up till midnight
It is too soon to go, too soon to say good bye

I will See you in May

Battle Wound

*A poem by Lara Su Yaman,
a first-year English Studies student*

Everything is gone.
All the prayers we said side by side
Your light shining in the darkest night
But I remember one thing
How I held you in my arms
Wishing it was me instead
Because how was I supposed to find my way
When my light was away
Not even the angels came to consolidate me
As there was no cure, no word for my agony
Just pain, yearning and my beloved was dead
All of a sudden in a moment of wraith
Your silky hair fell upon my chest
Just hold me, you said
As your eyes gleamed into eternity
Leaving me behind to bear this wreck
Restless nights I spent lying awake
Wondering if this was our faith
If I was a fool who

Could not save you from your doom

Now nothing heals my wound

I am only waiting for you

To lead me to light

And save me tonight.

Farewell

Farewell

Dear readers,

We hope you have enjoyed the journey across these pages!

Many of our contributors have explored memory through poetry. Maybe it says something about memory as an artistic subject, about its elusive nature that can best be tamed, or attempted to be tamed, by poetic lines and blank spaces around them. Maybe poetry is the first response to recollection, and prose emerges with a greater distance. In any case, this issue has been the most poetic one so far.

We are grateful to our contributors for sharing their works with us, and we are grateful to our readers for engaging with *Discourse Magazine*.

If you want to give us feedback, ask a question, or become a member of our team, feel free to contact us at discourse.magazine@outlook.

Until we meet again!