
THE EXHIBITIONIST

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THINK. ACT. XZBT.

THE EXHIBITIONIST is a monthly online magazine dedicated to the cause of creativity.

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COVER PHOTO *Little Boy Balloon* Khadija Ejaz

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FROM THE EDITOR

I don't have any children, but the XZBT is like my child. Except I feel pregnant all month every month before I have to deliver an issue, and then the whole cycle starts all over again. Imagine how exhausting that is!



Some days I feel wonderful, some days are not so great. Sometimes I wonder why I ever thought this was a good idea. It gets on my nerves often because it needs so much of my attention. It's not like it gives anything tangible back to me (yet?). I used to have a lot more time for myself before the XZBT, and sometimes I look forward to the day I won't have to do this anymore. But then I turn out an issue, and it looks so beautiful in my eyes that I can't wait for the next one. I feel so proud of myself when the issue goes out into the world and lives its life well. It's like what I always heard, that the delivery part of one's pregnancy is the worst; it hurts, and you yell and scream and want to blame the world, and you swear to yourself that you will never have another child again, but then you hold the baby in your arms and you've forgotten the bloody delivery from earlier. And you can't wait to turn out another one.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Khadija Ejaz'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Khadija Ejaz

GUEST EDITORIAL

They say that if you keep a thing around for seven years, you find a use for it. While tidying up the house over the holiday break in December, I found an old harmonica. A decade ago I intended to play blues so sweet and devastating to the soul that it would have killed you had you sat on my porch and listened. That never happened. The harmonica rested unremembered for well over seven years. And then a magical thing happened. I took the silly thing to my creative writing class and passed it among the students. I told them to transform it into a metaphor. My harmonica, for so long forgotten, visited Mars that afternoon. It became the song that soothed a run-over heart. It helped a character escape from death row. Suddenly fictional people had found a vital use for what I'd buried in an old drawer.



We must unbury those things. Somewhere in your past, Spanish doubloons await your shovel. Unearth that stuff, and if alone you can make no sense of it, share it with the other creative minds in your life. Only by joining our histories together can we rise above. Only through our collective story can we find that one universal theme that might heal our world tomorrow. I know it's possible; I read a student's tale in which my harmonica cured cancer. Maybe for now such a miracle exists only on paper, but paper is a fine place to start.

Lance published his first two novels under the pseudonym of Erin O'Rourke. He released his third novel, a murder mystery titled *The Tongue Merchant*, under his own name - and he hasn't looked back since. His writing has won over 20 awards. His novel *Fugitive Shoes* was named to the University of Oklahoma's "Books That Inspire" exhibit. Currently an Assistant Professor of English at Ranger College in Texas, USA, Lance teaches film, poetry, and creative writing courses. Visit his website at <http://www.lancehawvermale.com>.

XZBTs

The Cross

Diptanshu Kar



Diptanshu Kar is an Electronics and Telecommunication Engineering student from Mumbai, India. He enjoys spending time with family and friends, exploring new places, and trying different kinds of food. When engineering begins to mess up his circuits, he turns to sports and photography. At the moment, he is focusing on being happy and living his post-teenage life to the fullest.



Dusk to Dawn

Lydia Ashton



[Listen Online](#)

Classically trained in Sweden and the US, Lydia Ashton is an award-winning composer for television and film. She began her career writing concert music to be performed in the United States and across Europe. Since 2006, she's been scoring films and has worked on projects ranging from trailers to full-length feature movies. Lydia has over 1,500 placements on network and cable television shows. For more information visit her website at <http://www.lydialashton.tv>



Dream, After Falling Asleep at My Desk

Samir Patel

A palm over my head, soft
Warm blood
Pulsating.

The spasms
Of a crippled body
Curled up
In agony,
Eased, like a fetus
In a warm uterus.
As warm blood streamed
Into the palm over my head.

Day grows darker
A dark cold freezes
The river outside
And time—
Quietude curls up
Next to warm breaths
Under warm blankets,
Warm
Like the palm over my head.

Samir Patel was born and raised in Bhuj, Gujarat, in India, and currently lives in Philadelphia, USA. He is training to be a geriatric

psychiatrist and enjoys music, good food, heavy rain, running, and poetry.



Ambiguity

Marjorie Morgan Smitherman

So maybe he walks around naked. And, okay, maybe he talks to himself, and sings far too loudly in the shower. Maybe, perhaps, he dances wildly and with zero rhythm to embarrassing songs that he would never admit to knowing. Maybe he does all of those things on an alarmingly regular basis, and perhaps he's okay with that.

Maybe and perhaps, and maybe, and perhaps.

Because that's what living on your own is about, right? Finding yourself. And he found himself in staying up until 3am watching B-list horror movies. He found himself in unmade beds and empty soda cans and way too many cups of coffee between here and sleep.

He found himself on the eight o'clock that runs through Hoboken – because young single men with shitty jobs can't afford cars, and he lives this close to the city anyway so it'd just be a waste of gas. He found himself amongst the wreckage of missed calls from home; somewhere between the sheets that he had been too drunk to pull completely over himself and the alarm clock that blared through his dreams with no regard whatsoever for his love affair with his blanket and his hand.

He's beginning to think that he'd rather not have found himself. He is starting to wonder if he should have just left himself to rot, because

he is an ungrateful bastard that certainly wasn't appreciative of the help.

And so he does laundry, and he washes dishes, and he goes to work where he spends hours that he can't count on his fingers doing addition that he can because the higher ups can't be bothered. They have important appointments to keep with 18 holes and also the golf course.

He spends his days in little grey cubicles full of little grey people, because corporate understudies can't afford color television.

He starts each morning with the man in the mirror, who politely flips him the bird and tells him he should sleep more to get rid of the bags under his eyes. He shaves away his shadow before it can mock him too.

He wonders when his sense of self became predicated on a coffee filter camera lens as he decides which of his many identical white shirts he should wear today. He picks any of them but his favorite because there's a lipstick stain on the collar and he knows that it's not recent but he's just not sure who it's from.

He thinks that maybe he's having a midlife crisis, and he tells the mirror such. The mirror smirks and tells him to get over it, that he's only twenty four and it's much more likely that he's just a loser who doesn't have enough upper body strength to climb the corporate ladder. He's a used coupon – no redeeming qualities whatsoever.

Except he does have them, if he would just pick them up from where he threw them on the floor. He finds them in spring while he hums to the radio, slamming the car door behind him but not locking it because it's new, and if someone wants something bad enough to steal it from him of all people then he'd rather they not break the windows to do it.

They know his name at Starbucks and they're making his drink before he's finished counting out the pennies. The girl behind the counter gives him change in the form of seven digits and a shy smile, which he reciprocates in the tip jar.

She is sweet and she loves movies and comic books, and she doesn't laugh at him when he admits one evening that he wanted to be a rock star until he was twenty two. She makes him clean his life up, and underneath the underwear and soda cans he finds laughter and stolen kisses that he had slipped in his pocket just out of camera view at the grocery store. She likes to play go-fish for compliments and he always has a pair.

He finds himself in quitting his job, because honestly, money wasn't making him happy so he may as well make shitty pocket change doing something he enjoys. Maybe he finds himself dancing stupidly more and more, perhaps not alone, and maybe he still walks around naked but she doesn't seem to mind. Maybe after several job interviews that he gets called back for but he's really not sure about, he decides to throw a middle finger to the desk life and start a garage

band. Perhaps he gets odd looks for starting a band after his twenty-fifth birthday, because isn't that a profession for young, beautiful people who have change to spare? He's too old to change himself now.

Maybe and perhaps, and maybe, and perhaps –

But isn't that what life is all about? Finding yourself? And he found himself kneeling in front of that beautiful girl in Madison Square Garden, because touring in a van on the weekends didn't pay for a black tie dinner at the best place in town. He found himself at the reception anticipating every moment of his life from here on out, but mostly the moment when they would be alone later tonight and he would get a little peek under that white lace that she must have had painted on.

He found himself in photographs of sandy beaches that they hung on the mantle of their tiny matchbox town house after the honeymoon, where he tripped over shoes and couldn't fit his damn clothes in the closet because she had so many but fuck if he had ever had a happier moment in his life. His cheeks were red from the combination of smiling too much and not quite having enough spare cash to keep the air conditioning turned up high.

He found himself in cutting his first album with these three people that had become his family, and saying good bye to a woman and her slightly extended stomach as they left for tour, and missing her face every step of the way but he loved his fucking life.

And when he looks in the mirror before he goes on stage, that man on the other side gives him a thumbs up, and he can't help but think that this is so much better than singing in the shower.

Marjorie Morgan Smitherman is a student at Ranger College in Texas, USA, who became interested in writing more while enrolled in Lance Hawvermale's creative writing class. Originally from Graham, Texas, she is a nationally competitive debater on the college circuit, and in her spare time, she enjoys working with animals and going to concerts.



The Letter P

Lance Hawvermale

Today at my mother's bedside I've become
a silent first consonant, the oldest child charged
with only standing, gripping aluminum rail,
representing everyone but unable to help.

My counterpart fills her lung with fluid.
If it were a man I'd reason with him or buy
him off or need be break the bastard's teeth.
If it were a god I'd tear his idols to the ground.

But its silence confounds me in the same the way
it vexes kids in spelling bees, a piece of it hushed,
secretive, a door without a key, accepting no one.
If only heaven were spelled that way as well.

Lance published his first two novels under the pseudonym of Erin O'Rourke. He released his third novel, a murder mystery titled *The Tongue Merchant*, under his own name - and he hasn't looked back since. His writing has won over 20 awards. His novel *Fugitive Shoes* was named to the University of Oklahoma's "Books That Inspire" exhibit. Currently an Assistant Professor of English at Ranger College in Texas, USA, Lance teaches film, poetry, and creative writing courses. Visit his website at <http://www.lancehawvermale.com>.



Tomato Soup

Stephanie Lowther

Instruct your children to smash
Crackers into tiny pieces.
Demonstrate this violence
With an ice brow and steady hand.
Questions will surface,
But defy their reason.
Pieces and grains fall
Dusty, shattered, and broken into your bowl.
A spoonful of cracker helps the soup slide down.
Someone's nourishment.
Someone's medicine.
Someone's death.

Or instead give them plastic straws,
And instruct your children
In a stern, clear voice
To suck it,
To absorb it all.

Stephanie Lowther is an International Communications major currently attending Ranger College in Ranger, Texas, USA. When she isn't busy with her school and duties in her position as president of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society, she is meeting new people, stargazing, writing, and traveling.





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