

# Transmigration



**MPC Literary Magazine - Issue 1**

## trans·mi·gra·tion (trāns'mī-grā'shən)

### *Noun:*

1. To move from one state of being into another, or from one body to another (esp. *of the soul*: passing after death into a new form. Like reincarnation.)
2. (*Loosely*) the work of writers: taking on new consciousness; seeing through new eyes and entering new worlds. Transcending of everyday existence.
3. The first issue of MPC's Literary Magazine. It captures our journey (of the soul) – it's never straightforward, but we are all on a quest for transformation. We may be going through that journey across lifetimes in many ways or in many forms: as people, as animals, or other things. It reminds us we are all interconnected.



The MPC Literary Magazine is published by the Creative Writing Club of Monterey Peninsula College and considers submissions of poetry, fiction and nonfiction (memoir or personal essay) from MPC students. Please submit up to 3 poems and/or up to 5 pages of prose as an email attachment in .rtf, .doc or .docx format to: [CreativeWritingClub@mpc.edu](mailto:CreativeWritingClub@mpc.edu)

Indicate Poetry, Fiction or Nonfiction Submission in the subject heading of your email.

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**Fecundity** ( Meaning: the intellectual fruitfulness of a creative imagination )

Wondering thoughts, displacing mind  
Duty calls, but I falter the line  
Focus distorted, blurred and morbid  
Yearning for anguish, absent deceit  
Longing for vigor, full of a trigger  
That sparks and embarks on shores of, fe-cun-dity

Ingenuity struck, come back to me please  
Leave me no more, without I'm displeased  
Revel in doubt, no more shall I be  
Focus restored, through the shores I adore, shores of the known  
Shores of the sea, shores that will last, and embark on the spark, lit by, fe-cun-dity.

Relapse takes place, in a mild mannered haze  
Amber and plum, nonsense of thoughts  
Covered in dots, of sickle and sword  
That tears at the air, without any care  
Forgetting the shores, that I yearn for  
Shores of the sea, shores of the air  
Shores that will last, and need no avail ( in which to prevail)  
For these are shores of, fe-cun-dity

by Javier Estrada

## **The sea**

endless blues  
filled with coral  
and  
muck  
smell and  
taste of dirt  
and  
green

clashes of gods  
conquest of men

mystery and grace  
have taken there place

salt through the air  
secret despair  
hearts lie within  
the bitterness spins

otters will swim  
sharks will bask  
dolphins will fly, done with a task  
and all held within  
eventually die

this is the green  
this is the blue  
this is the soul of somber lit tomb

this is the muck and this is the true  
this is the heart of deepest of blue

by Javier Estrada

## **That day by the Sea**

I walk into the ocean  
up to my knees.  
Waves are big,  
Powerful.  
The beach is shallow.  
A wave crashes  
and spreads,  
and another  
lays over it.  
They come towards me,  
now one,  
running wet love over my legs  
like a happy dog.  
Foam spreads out behind me  
to become the train  
of my wedding dress.

Soon I stood there  
emblazoned and small  
solitary vertical jewel  
centered surrounded by  
clear foam water  
water white horizontal  
water I have never  
been less alone

by Deanna Lynn

## The Disappearing Bride

Some people say that what happened that day was magic. Others say it was sleight of hand or witchcraft. The road that she lived on was called Witch Way after all. This was the eventual and local bastardization of “Which Way,” a temporary name given to the road some years back by firefighters during a summer fire in those mountains.

The day was cool and misty. A bank of fog had drifted up the canyon in the morning and now sheets of it drifted through the air. She had hoped the day would be sunny, but secretly she did not mind the fog; it reminded her of days spent walking down the dirt road in the fog and rain, tromping down old horse trails under dripping branches. Standing in the meadow as the mist and wind enveloped her in a secret world. It was at those moments that she had always felt something powerful and special; maybe that she was so alone and her spirit was in awe of nature, or maybe it was her connection to this place where she had crawled then grown, and had made the rocks and plants her playthings. This tree on the side of the canyon was a cluster of long necked dinosaurs, that group of small oaks was a stable of horses. The milkweed grew pods plump with silk at a certain time of year and its cracked stem dripped a rich milk.

Now she was grown and today was her wedding day. Her bank account was balanced and the checkbook sat ready in its leather book in the desk drawer in the big house. Aunt’s and mother’s fingertips were bruised and sore, but the cream dress with long sleeves and a high, ruffled collar was perfect. The groomsmen’s tweed jackets were pressed and waiting in the upstairs closet. A bouquet of green tinged flowers stood in a cool vase in the hall. She knew that between his crisp white shirt and his tweed jacket the best man would be armed. She had not asked him to, he was just a gun fanatic and he thought that a day in the country, even a wedding day, was the perfect time to carry a gun. This gave the bride a quiet satisfaction. She didn’t know who might show up. There was one part of her past that she did not like to

remember. Someone older, cruel had come into her life, nestled by her side like a rat. Even though she knew, believed through and through that it wasn't her fault, that despite the abuse she was pure, she still wished she could cut away that part of her life.

The parade of children came first, waving silk ribbons affixed to twigs. They walked the couple's garlanded, frolicking dogs on leads. Next the bridesmaids, each one wore a cream dress with a glittering bee pin affixed to the bust. The groomsmen squinted their eyes in the sun, the bride had insisted on no sunglasses. The bride emerged from the big house, she had decided to walk alone, not as a sign of bitterness, but with her father being gone that was how she had lived much of her life, alone. She stood face to face with the groom, the grey bark of the white oak behind them. They looked in each other's eyes and joined hands. The shot rang out and before people could turn and look; her cream dress crumpled to the ground, empty. The small crowd cried out and went into a pandemonium. The best man rushed forward weapon drawn and tackled the man with stringy hair and a grizzled beard. He had taken aim and shot, but now he and everyone on the scene was confronted not with her fallen body, but her disappearance.

Once or twice a year, he would hear a tap on his window, or find a milkweed pod at his door in the morning. He wondered and thought until he was dull and weary. The cushioned leather couch creaked with his movements. "One minute she was there, the most important day of our lives. I heard the gunshot and when I looked back she was gone. They never found a body...." He had wondered at times if maybe she had never been real to begin with; but no, he knew her mother, had seen her birth certificate: Mother's occupation: Actress, Fathers Occupation: Carpenter Name: Lucia Winter Jeanbert. The embossed seal added a final note of authenticity.

She rode the misty winds for a time. She was beyond the land of tears and she did not feel. She only acted on her instincts. When he woke she stood in the kitchen; colorful apron wrapped snugly around her waist, smiling. His dark messy hair was glossy



and smelled just the way she remembered. He rubbed his eyes and came towards her in an embrace, “Where were you,” he began to cry. “I’m sorry” she said, “there were some things I had to take care of.”

by Michelle Prejean

## **A drive home: A Sunset & nightfalls**

I am alone, a gliding fortress  
The cars are, isles of sky  
I watch them hover, I watch them float  
The flicker of red, flicker of yellow, and bright white light

A smooth tranquility comes  
A whisper goes from tree to tree  
floating on the petals and leaves  
A somber brush of wind caresses my face  
My supple cheek taken by the breeze and the dust

The mountains are green and brown and golden  
The hills are curved gently, imbedded into the rock

Hues of red eat the sky  
Swallows and nibbles  
Drenched in vivid yellow

The late sun falls to the west  
Taken by the night

The stillness  
Motionless and soundless  
Things get closer and things get farther  
But nothing ever moves

The event horizon is here

Its late now and cold  
As I quietly wait for the real self-  
My self to emerge  
No longer empty, no longer slued

As I am submerged in wake of desuetude  
Drowned by majestic ambivalence  
I can only gasp for scattered reflections of once held emotions

The light of street lamps and street corners and street houses  
Are like distant starts to the wondering eye

As I am myself sailing through night  
The flutter of grey and brash and dusk is gone  
( ahahahah)  
(..The dusk.. is gone)

by Javier Estrada

## **Driving to Castroville in the Early Morning**

The seven miles of highway I drive to work cuts  
through a patchwork quilt of browns and greens:  
thickets of artichoke plants,  
thorny leaves waving good morning,  
curly kale standing at attention by the roadside,  
seedlings, their species unrecognizable,  
just starting to make their debut  
above a sea of glossy plastic.  
In that square over there,  
plump strawberries peek out  
from under serrated leaves,  
tempting me to stop and pick a few.

I know they can't hear me in my toasty SUV,  
but I thank the stoop-backed farm workers,  
muffled in jackets and hooded sweatshirts,  
who weed furrows,  
straightening the seams of this blanket  
teeming with vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

by Cristy Shauck

**October 6, Driving Home**

the faintest rainbow  
arcs through the trailing fog and  
the massing gray clouds  
of the season's first rain storm:  
my drive home is wonderful.

by Annette Lee

## COYOTE UGLY MORNINGS

My life stretched out next to me this morning, like one long “last night”,  
it was a coyote ugly morning.

But I was a seamstress grandmother,  
I was a nun at knitting,  
cutting this coyote ugly morning  
into manageable strips, and so fashioning anew: plaid makes  
everything (bearable),  
and if you’re gonna make anything of your life  
make a whole jacket,  
the world’s got enough bloody sleeves.  
Wear your contexts on your arms and elbows, and make your own  
order.

Let what links your statements together be the inside jokes you  
make for you alone  
the correlations, not chronologies,  
that allow your laugh to swaddle the newspaper’s crispy  
dead cities  
that allow your smile to lantern over the darkening moor of  
a coffee-less kitchen,  
of a love-less bed.

Shut up and make yourself some damn oatmeal  
read the cartoons  
make a portrait out of colored macaroni  
whatever you have to do and don’t wonder  
how many other people care for themselves like children.

This morning, my life stretched out next to me, like one long “last night” and  
it was a fuckin’ coyote ugly morning, starts like everything else:  
I wanted to wrap  
and tin foil the Dawn’s Flashlight in my elongated  
bones

but only so long as it wasn't possible.

I wanted to teach It how to sing

but only so long as it was deaf

and to hold conversations

(Sun, my Son, my sunny sonny Lad, what do you think  
about death?

About Kafka's use of shame?)

so long as there were no answers.

My life stretched out next to me this morning, and I woke up  
drenched in ugly,

woke to a sun disgusting and foul

(Squawk, my pretty!)

and I wanted to shred the hands that held it.

But sometimes you wake up to coyote ugly mornings

with a head on each shoulder,

one Dawn's and the other your own,

a morning that begins with the question of which arm to  
gnaw off first.

So shut up and cover you belongings with stickers

wear different colored socks,

hell, wear all your favorite clothes today

wear your mother's make up,

borrow your father's tie,

get a balloon,

and go to the bank

just to give yourself one of those sugar lollipops in the

glass bowl in the lobby

(lemon, grape, cherry), hell,

get two,

don't worry about cavities and don't wonder

how many other people care for themselves like children

by Sarah Goodman

Listen:

If I were to shout wide and clear:  
Turn off your televisions!  
Stop driving your cars!  
Stop buying things you don't need!  
Take time to make dinner from scratch,  
to read, to garden, to take a walk, to sing!

Would anyone listen?

There exists inside, somewhere  
dim and swampy, some  
where dank and sticky  
somewhere  
a disquietude  
an insatiability  
a fear  
Inside that dark and mossy  
cave of the human  
something silent and stunted  
itches to glow.

by Deanna Lynn



## Inside-Out

My freaking guts are spread across the table,  
Because I was looking for my soul  
inside this tiny house of bones but-  
I've just made a tangled mess of red and liver purple  
and black,  
My brain and my heart-  
They're impossible to sort through  
No show of fate, no conclusions I can draw-  
My rationality has failed me now

Look at me-  
This is me, every last piece and part-  
Can you see my soul where I cannot?

My component parts  
lying in a pool of memories and blood,  
Pins and stitches, my hopes and wishes-  
But there must be something more than that which makes me whole  
Or else I've become my fear: the ghost in the mirror,  
a shadow grown old and cold,  
her frostbitten extremities  
grasping handfuls of dust

How much of me's alive,  
and how much of me is dead?  
Will you put me back together and hold me tight?  
I've kept you out so long

I've carved the words I didn't say  
across these sterile metal walls,  
yet still can't save my self from my regrets

But tell me, what more can I do  
to make it up to you?

by Sandra Videmsky

## Former Novitiate Tells All

I was ashamed of my conscience. It had dropped its guard (“Just for a minute!” it protested; “Can’t I get a break for Christ’s sake?”) and I fell from grace.

My conscience was out walking the Seven Deadly Sins (Lust: think great Dane, Pride: French poodle; Envy: chihuahua; Greed: junkyard dog; Sloth: bearded collie; Anger: pit bull; Gluttony: Newfoundland) in the park--jerking on their leashes if they dawdled to sniff the grass or take care of any bodily function--when it encountered my ego out for a stroll with my self-esteem (miniature wire haired terrier). My conscience and my ego sat on a weather-beaten park bench to chat in the tree-dappled sunshine, and my conscience let the Seven Deadlies explore as far as their short leases allowed. My ego got cocky and let go of its charge’s leash, thinking the itty-bitty morsel would stay put. Nope, self-esteem had picked up the scent of some wild critter and trotted off.

Envy, who had been watching self-esteem, started yapping; that set off the other Deadlies, and they tore after self-esteem, that yummy-looking snack, in a pack.

What happened next is mostly a blur, but I went to a strange bar, laying back Tequila shooters, snorting something white with the other girls in the bathroom, and eventually doing it doggy style on the billiard table with some guy who kept hollering, “Bark for me, baby!” And I did.

I realized I couldn’t trust my conscience alone with those Deadlies, so I asked Mom to lay some guilt on me. Now when my conscience’s attention wanders, parental guilt gives it a whack upside the head and says, “What are you thinking!”

Lately I’m prone to migraines.

by Cristy Shauck

## No Talking Animals

There was a café on 10<sup>th</sup>, across from where Laurel meets Cinnamon Ave, and on the brassy nights of my youth I used to go there. They were collectable weekends, those, each bus ticket was like a movie stub, a receipt. I was subscribing heavily to my twenties then, and I used to go to this café for intellectual conversations, used to pretend to be a college student and talk about Nietzsche and Hannah Arendt, unable to distinguish at the end of the night which made me feel more crazy: the caffeine or the philosophy.

It was a café that had no name, was simply known by its location. It was owned and ran by a man named Sugar Dillon, a skeletal figure with a pencil mustache that served everything with a little more flavor or at a higher temperature than one could really ever get accustomed to. He called everyone honey and smiled as sweetly and as readily as if to punctuate his words with his gestures, but when he rolled up his sleeves on the way to the kitchen, you could catch a glimpse of his tattoos, harsh and curling, how they were woven and webbed with scars.

He had one rule, pained along the counter in large block letters across where he served his customers: “No Talking Animals”.

He was a gentle man and one felt that he was sincere in his mannerisms, friendly in a way that made a person say too much too soon about herself, but at the same time, he wasn't a man that invited personal questions. There were things, most things, in fact, that you simply couldn't ask. Sugar once threw a man out who for questioning too deeply the movie “Philadelphia” ‘s right to an Oscar.

“Honey,” he told the woman waiting next in line to order, as the door to eh café slammed shut behind the offensive critic of films, “I make as many rules as I want, when I want. If I need a temporary rule, I'll establish a temporary rule. Now is it going to be your usual cranberry scone and house coffee, or is there a movie you'd like to discuss tonight?”

But the rule on the counter was one that did not change, and one night, near closing, I got smart, high on double espressos and Sartre.

I asked, “Y’know, Sugar, how much of a risk do you actually run of serving a talking animal? Is it an animal rights thing? Do you have something against parrots?”

“I don’t have anything against parrots,” Sugar Dillon said, putting chairs up around the few remaining customers. “Parrots are just mimics. I’m against animals talking.”

“What’s the difference?”

“Will,” he said, “let me tell you a story.”

When Sugar was a young man, he lived right above where the café would be, which was then a hair salon, and worked a few blocks away at the public library. He had a dog then that used to share that apartment with him, a black and white border collie he named Nelly, short for Chanel, as, through a long chain of unfortunate circumstances and busy traffic conditions, this was to be his fifth dog. Now the man Sugar was seeing at the time was also a pet owner, and, being both a Hitchcock fan and a first class narcissist, Sugar’s lover got himself a parrot, whom he called Alfred. Sugar’s boyfriend taught the bird to flatter him whenever he hosted dinner parties.

Toward the end of their relationship, Sugar taught the bird a few more useful pieces of information with which to share with prospective guests and some rather illustrative gestures to go with them, but that is a story for another time. The point is that this boyfriend was very proud of both his bird’s skills, which, he often said, pointed to a higher intelligence, a kind of character, and a stronger fabric of soul.

“More than you could say for that mutt’s.” Sugar’s boyfriend would mutter looking at Nelly, who was happy at being acknowledged and broke into a large grin because she loved everybody who entered her apartment.

This would hurt Sugar Dillon’s feelings. He felt Nelly to be very intelligent. *And who wants to live with a mimic anyway?* He

wondered, *Isn't the world full enough with pretentious flatterers? Aren't there enough talking birds?*

"Fine then," he said one day, "I'll teach Nelly to talk, too."  
And he did.

It took a while to get her to not bark what she was saying, to smoothly enunciate and not pant through her words, but at the end of the year, Sugar had taught Nelly to say, calmly, and with a sing-song compassion: "Okay."

*Would you like to go for a walk? Okay.*

*How was your day, Nells? Okay.*

*How do you feel about that Healthcare bill? Okay.*

"So I was going about five miles an hour over the limit, right?" Sugar was explaining once to Nelly.

"Okay." She replied.

"And the cop pulls me over and says, 'What about the children? The children have to cross that street; this is a school zone, right?'"

"Okay."

"And I say that it's *not* a school zone. The school zone ended three blocks ago, officer!"

"Okay?" she cocked her head.

"No," He said with a sigh, "I still have to go to court about it. I'm telling you Nelly, the world doesn't cut you a lot of slack these days."

And she looked sad, downcast and gave her own sigh, saying, low and melancholy, "Okay."

But it was not long after that conversation that she started heading downhill. She moped and dragged her shoulders against the cabinets. She stopped eating. Sugar Dillon would take her chin in his hand and look into her glassy eyes and murmur, "How you doin' honey?"

And she would only look away and say quietly and sing-song, "Okay."

And it was shortly thereafter that she began to disappear. She ran out when he would leave the door open, she'd chew through her leash when they'd go out for walks. She'd yell at the

other dogs when he'd let her loose in the park, putting an authority and anger in her voice that Sugar didn't recognize. She'd bark out, deep and dark and hoarse, "Okay?! OKAY?!" the other dogs would cower in shame.

Nelly never left for more than a couple of days, showing up a little leaner, scratching at his door. The first couple of times she came back, Sugar was inclined to forgive her. On his knees in the doorway, he'd stroke her face with his hands, and say "I was so worried. Don't do that again."

"Okay." She'd say, sad and slow and he'd retreat as though stricken. For he sensed there was no longer any affection there for him.

The last time she left she was gone for months. Sugar had given up waiting for her by the time she did come home.

She came home in a storm, and who knows who let her in from the street because the hair salon was closed and the door leading from the apartment stairwell to the street was locked, but there she was, standing in the hall still dripping, not bothering to shake off the water that collected beneath her, just standing there, staring up at him, and carefully enunciated at him, "Bowl."

Sugar almost smiled, but didn't move from the door, didn't let her in, just stood because there was a look in her eye that made him uneasy.

"Bowl!" She said again, accusingly this time, and louder, "Bowl! Exhaust-pipe, moon! Limp pigdeon hail! Moon bowl exhaust! MOON BOWL EXHAUST!"

She lifted up her wet head in the hall and howled "Nelly! Nelleeeeeeeee!"

And it was then that Sugar moved towards her, to silence her, to shut her mouth but she leapt away, growling and half whining, in increasing decibels of desperation, "Okay? Okay? Okay? Okay? Okay! OKAY?"

She was shrieking now, ("Okay!? OKAY?") as she ran in short bursts, looking back at Sugar, leading him to the stairs that led to the street from his flat above what would be his café, and he followed her until they were both at the top of the stairs and then

she lunged at him, latching onto his shoulder and dragging him down the stairs and they tumbled onto the sidewalk over the curb, a chaos of hand and claw and teeth and pleas, the screaming of man of dog of rubber over asphalt and failing breaks and the final urgent lurch of gravel rage and panic in the last question posed *Okay?*

It was the first time I saw his arms clearly, when he told me that story: the carving of life on him, the jagged marks of animal pain, the even parting of flesh caused by machine, interwoven with the vines and the intricate gothic curls, a bushy tail on the outer edge of one spiral, as though a dog were walking on his forearm and had just stepped behind a structure on its path, the tenderness there, on the curl on his forearm, of the effort to make such a transitory moment permanent: the dog was never going to be seen and yet it continued to travel on his arm, tail impervious to doubt.

He saw me looking and crossed his arms, “The only idea worse than walking into a ink parlor to get your lover’s name tattooed, honey, is to run off with the inker himself.”

And then he smiled, “But that’s a story for another time.”

There were no other times, though. His mood faded fast and whatever friendship we had for the time that it took for him to tell me the story of his rule withered after that night. I don’t even know if it’s true; it probably doesn’t matter. I stopped going soon to that café after I met your father. But I heard through friends, a few years after you were born, that Sugar Dillon got himself another dog. And that he never spoke to it, not even to name it.

by Sarah Goodman



Tiger, Tiger, white-hot fire  
Lava, ice, and Asian spice  
Cinnamon, saffron, curry powder  
Charcoal stripes, branded scars  
Fiery face and ember eyes  
Looking to the peppered starlit skies

We burned the body after a blood-red sunset on an enormous funeral pyre. The flames rose above his shaggy coat, and he was alive again, a spirit unchained. It was restless and it roared. A thousand fiery tongues stretched to lick the moonlight, defiant and brash. Emotions raged out, smelting in the furnace and threatening to lash out at anyone who came too near. No one could contain it, and no one was foolish enough to try. He threw out sparks for the purely kitten-like fun of swatting them back with a flame.

He was every tiger: the mammoth Siberian, the regal Bengal, the snowy blue-eyed white, the copper red, and even the one called Tony with a blue nose and abs. The fire made him whole again. He may have been the last tiger, and he may have not. He was too proud to tell us his story. We bowed our heads to him like we would to a martyr or sovereign.

After the catharsis was complete, the fearsome bones slept peacefully, curled up on a kindling bed which would keep them warm all through the night. Every pointed tooth was revealed where it protruded from his jaws, clenching fast to a dream from beyond this life that no force could pry from him now. This was the funeral to benefit a king – a grand celebration of a funeral. The only funeral worthy of a tiger.

We gave him the mercy of fire, enshrining him on a burning throne for all memory. His nobility traveled up to the heavens with the smoke.

And if our places had been reversed, would the tiger-kings give us humans mercy? If we were the dying species would they honor us? Would they burn our bodies in a fire of songs, a blaze of

symphonies, a sparkling of hymns? Would we be consumed by letters and words, poems to wrap around our sinews and stories to ignite them? Would moving images and beautiful pictures smolder with our remains?

Fire

Fire

Tiger

by Sandra Videmsky

## silent sister

the archeologists dug the hole in the spring  
at the mound that had such promising shape  
on the dry, cold steppes of far, far Russia.

and they found her,

the lady,

still beautiful,

buried with her jewelry,

buried with her horse,

lovingly arranged,

the lion-hearted lady

who, thousands of years ago,

burned with the fire that is in all of us,

yearned with ferocity

to belong only to herself.

the archeologists were stunned by the find,

and their minds reeled with dreams of who she might have been:

across the frozen steppes

she rode, her scarf and long black hair streaming behind her

like a flag, a flag of defiance.

she tangled her long, slender gloved fingers

in the horse's mane.

the tiny bells on the saddle were music

in the stinging wind.

she was a princess

running from her tomorrows.

she had the heart of a lion

but the body of a woman,

and women were chattels

even princesses.

she is our sister,

our silent sister

buried with her beautiful horse,  
choosing this because  
freedom would not be hers.

by Annette Lee