

the platform

shorts

winter 2023

OTHERNESSPROJECT

The platform is an initiative of five professionals in Arts and Social Sciences whose aim is to articulate and give voice to experiences and positions that are different from mainstream narratives.

Throughout 2023, we published texts, images, sound and video recordings that capture these experiences in accessible and contemplative ways. This is a selection of our work and experience.

Contact: othernessproject@gmail.com.

MEMBERS

Judit Hajdu. Hungarian psychotherapist living in Scotland. Interested in the narratives of people, marginalised or in authority, living 'everyday' or 'exciting' lives, including prisoners who are always left out of most lists.

Gigi Guizado. Bilingual American actor, literary translator, poet working in Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and London. Feminism, mental health, and cultural diversity are themes in her work.

Nikolett Pataki. Hungarian expat living in the UK. A curious mind with some background in sociology and psychology. Experienced in charity work and research.

Attila Budaházi. Edinburgh based dramaturg, theatre director, story shaper. Works with hidden connections and stories behind the real world, beneath the surface, parallel realities, dreamscape, multiverse, time travel, and butterfly effect.

Rita Sebestyén. Has lived in Romania, Hungary, Denmark and the UK. Works with object-based storytelling, modelling sustainable societies, and community creation.

STILL LIFE

Gigi Guizado

tall tarnished teapot
infinitely more intriguing
than her shining silver sisters
holds my gaze

as if to say
don't be persuaded by pressure
retin-a would ruin your patina

peruvian lilies
long lasting beauties gifted from an admirer
brim from her rim
changing with each passing day

black sand hourglass
and marbled porcelain clock
stand in the background still
silently steeping in irony

cigarette perched on crystal
marks time more effectively
in carcinogens and ashes

stamens and pollen
splattered on polished mahogany
look as if they jumped to their death

perhaps being the center of dining room
attention
proved too much for them
tragic scene
in perfect counterpoint to rising smoke
scented of clove

I consider cleaning up
but my aesthetic
at ease with green sheen and faded flowers
ponders the riddle

Wherein lies beauty
within the open air of free fall
or still life with botox

ME+U=L.O.V.E.

Gigi Guizado

Papa used to write me love notes in puns on his calculator.

Morse code was more fun
for the radioman stepfather and tap dancing daughter.

We lived in a four bedroom house with tres dormitorios.
El cuarto was at maximum occupancy with his other family
made of tubes and wire.

To be seen I had to get on his frequency;
learn his language of dots, dashes, numbers, slashes. I
learned the lingo
and bingo!- we connected.

Mama knew what she was doing
when she signed me up for electronics class, way
across town
against my will.

Spanglish was my language and dance class my
element;
instead, elementary electronics it would be.
There was a method to this madness; Mami is no
dummy.

I still recall arriving on the first day:
Mama led me through the circuitous public transit
system,
teaching me how to get there independently from then
on.

It was raining heavily. When the bus stopped,
we stepped over a puddle as wide as I was tall,
onto the curb beneath an old oak tree.

As we paused among the gnarled, protruding roots and
fallen leaves

to open our umbrellas and my stubborn mind,
the bus sped off to its next stop,

sending a tidal wave of agua sucia into the air and down
our fronts.

Soaking wet learning about electronics;
my limp enthusiasm and diluted affinity for this subject
embodied.

Displays of affection from Papa took some deciphering.
Eventually I came to see, the Timex watches he gave me
on Christmases or birthdays we could afford to
celebrate
were signs of love.

Cold and mechanical, yes,
but filled with cariño.

They had a pulse if you wound them.
They took a licking yet kept on ticking.
They were dependable; with me everywhere I went.

Affection from this parental unit was scarce, not
automatic.

It's transmission was often jammed by AC/DC bipolar
blasts of energy from dark pasts that had nothing to do
with me,

or the family tree
I had not fallen far from;
but then rolled away.

Papa's love was not the norm.
It came in digital form.
In red lines lit up like a Lite Brite.

A moment of fun in a glowing, numeric pun.
I gathered up those dots and dashes; stashed them
away in my greenstick heart;
saved them for a rainy day. ❤️

REMEMBRANCE

Gigi Guizado

Sitting at your parents table, I saw the faint
resemblance to your father;

the curve of your smile. Imagining you grey and
balding, I took a picture of you with my heart; to
outlast time.

I stood beside you at your father's bedside; your
profile echoing his graceful lines; your tawny
health a counterpoint to his pallid decline.
Illness, his midlife crisis, seized him before our
wedding or his first grandchild.

Upon your visage years have etched his image,
as if his ghost travels with you to see
granddaughter from time to time. She is a
woman now, unmistakably mine, maturing fast at
your bedside.

An ultrasound of your heart conjures memories
from when I lay supine,

and she was inside. You slept on the floor her
first night, making sure to hear newborn's breath
sigh. Unmistakably yours, it is now she who
sleeps uncomfortably, to be near you in ICU.

In the silent moments loud with worry, I see a
familiar chiseled grey landscape; middle aged
male patient, asleep mouth agape. I stop in my
tracks, stunned by genetics, as my heart stands
still and its film develops.

MAMA

Judit Hajdu

So it's in the bottom left corner in the more modern graveyard behind the church towards the sea. I walk past row upon neatly aligned row of little gravestones, none too large, none too pretentious.

There's a knot in my stomach quite inconsistent with the sunny morning and the peaceful environment. I'm clutching the little pot of pink roses, reading the names on the gravestones – McNeill, Stevenson, McLeod, Hamilton – but where is the one I'm looking for?

I'm getting more and more agitated.

In loving memory...

To calm myself I look around. The little cemetery is bordered by an open field on one side and a golf course that slopes down as far as the beach on the other. I see a man walking his dog, a happy collie, bouncing up and down in the high grass. I almost shout out to him for direction as he looks exactly like my friend ... looked thirty years ago.

In remembrance of...

I look back and immediately see the name. Thanks, Tom. It is his parents' grave and he's asked me to bring them some flowers as he is far away, in my country, and I'm happy to do it as I'm far away from my parents' grave, in his country, so in a way it is almost as if ... but is it?

Forever in our hearts...

I focus on handling the soil, it's nice and moist in my hands. I plant the roses, MY mother's favourite, and arrange them neatly, the heathers, planted earlier by Tom, have kindly left some room for them. Hope his parents like them, too.

Gone but not forgotten...

I water the plants and tidy away the little spade and pot and walk to a quiet part of the beach like the one I went when I heard she died.

SHOES ON THE DECK

Judit Hajdu

Put these shoes on quick, Uncle Bogdan can take us to the station. Daddy's managed to get us tickets. No, he's not coming. Yes, maybe later. I don't know.

Yes, you can take them off now. It's gonna be a long journey. You can sleep until we reach the border.

Have you got your shoes on? No, we can't stay here either. We are going to Scotland! I don't know, we'll see. It's gonna be all right.

Yes, you can leave your shoes in the cabin and explore all 5 decks. It's what you call floors on a ship. But don't go further than the carpeted decks!

You are right, sweetheart, they are too small now. Let's put them in the Duty-Free Shop, shall we? They might still be good for smaller kids.

No, your old shoes will stay here. We don't want to carry too much. I don't know. Let's hope it will be another interesting place. Back? We can't. Not yet. I don't know. But everything will be all right.



FREEDOM

Judit Hajdu



FREEDOM

Judit Hajdu

Free association, free cities, free-cycle, free enterprise, free fall, free-for-all, free-form, free-hand, free jazz the vice of the West ...

Free style practiced hours and hours in your free time.

Free love, free sex, free marriage produces free kids. ... Free from what?

Free market no-no, freemason absolutely not! acceptable in socialist Hungary. Hence, immediately after the fall of the regime, even before the first free elections, the Hungarian freemasonry was rejuvenated.

Free Saturday, the victory of the working class, where was it introduced first, I wonder. In the free West or in the Workers' Paradise? Apparently, it was first introduced by the arch-capitalist Ford in 1926. I had to go to school 6 days a week up until 1981. Free Saturdays were also the days when we could freely offer our time and energy on the altar of building the socialist state. (Amen)

Free speech in a free country, free media, Freedom house rating.

Are you free? You mean on Saturday or in general, from a

partner, from family, from religion or state?

I'm free on Saturday. I think. I'll check.

Free-lance

Free rein

Freethinker ...

Free will ...

Free bus pass for over 60s. A sure winner.

A NEWER DEATH OF THE HOUSEKEEPING BOY

Attila Budaházi

It happened just a few weeks after he started as a housekeeper in a hotel. His daily job was to remove every evidence of the rooms being used at all so that new guests could arrive in a spotless place. He also had to enter the rooms of long-staying guests every day. Tuck in the bed, wipe off dust, put fresh water in the fridge, and tea bags on the tea tray. Empty the trash, make the bathroom spotless. He was trained. Would have been. If he allowed it. But he wanted to help, even his trainer. That's why he never saw how others did it nor others how he did it. They only saw the result of his work and saw that it was good.

He went from room to room like this. He knocked and if there was no answer the second time, he could enter with the master key that opened every door. When he entered room number 2059, the curtains were drawn. He inserted his card into the small switch on the wall and the lights came on.

– What the hell? – asked the guest who woke up to the light. I'm going to complain that you don't let me sleep. How can one disturb a guest early in the morning in a hotel? She asked these questions louder and louder, in a shrill voice, as she jumped out of bed. This is unbearable! I will complain! I'll get you fired!

The housekeeping boy was terrified because he saw his fate in advance. That's why he took out his revolver and shot the screaming woman. Two shots were fired. Both hit. At first, he didn't understand where the feathers were coming from. He thought they were coming from the woman. Then he realised that the bullets, passing through the woman's body, opened up the pillows and the duvet. He just stood there, frozen in the bloody rain of feathers. He knew he couldn't erase the traces; even a trained cleaner would have struggled with that. At least the guest found peace, though.

The police arrived within minutes. They arrested him, later he was sentenced to death and executed.

LETHAL HUMOUR- ANOTHER DEATH OF THE HOUSEKEEPING BOY

Attila Budaházi

There was a conference in the fifth floor event-room of the hotel. The doors were open. The housekeeping boy was on his way to the pantry when one of the speakers thanked the audiences for their attention. They applauded. The housekeeping boy spun through the door, spread his arms as if at the end of a stunt, and then bowed low – wearing his uniform. Those present got the joke. They laughed and the initial polite applause for the speaker turned into a rhythmical, loud one. The manager was passing by and his sense of humour was not in as a good shape as that of the conference participants. He smeared the handle of the boy's mop with poison. An hour later, the boy was found dead on the fifth floor.

TAKE THE NEAREST EXIT

Attila Budaházi



TAKE THE NEAREST EXIT

Attila Budaházi

On the morning of June 3, 2007, shortly after the death of the famous actor Iván Darvas was announced on television, he was turning his back on an oncoming tram at the President St stop on a traffic island in Orczy Street, which, still having great momentum, whooshed just a few millimeters away from his left shoulder. For a moment, the boy froze at the thought of the close call..

Over the years he would recall this moment once in a while, wondering if he was still alive. Could it be possible that he had actually been killed by that tram, but because he was too afraid to admit that he was dead, he was still wandering in an in-between space pretending to be alive?

On Sunday 7 April 2019, after lunch break, he returned to one of the hotel rooms to continue cleaning. Lunch and his first cigarette of the day always left him feeling a little way-out. It was a particularly chilly and drizzling Sunday. The window was left wide open throughout the lunch break, but the heater compensated for the incoming chill. He reached over to make the bed, when suddenly, from outside, in perfect clarity, came the unmistakable jungle cry of Tarzan. He stepped up to the window. Tarzan, alias Johnny Weissmuller, was dangling on the lianas hung between the buildings with their upper ends pinned above the horizon. And yes: the whole scenery was black and white.

Everything that had happened up to that point in the day seemed completely real, so it was not at all reasonable to think he was dreaming. Yet that would have been one perfectly obvious explanation and, as usual, the next step would have been to wake up. But that was not what happened. He looked out of the window again and now Tarzan was racing across the dark pink sky between the skyscrapers of an unknown city, liana by liana, growing more and more desperate. A sense of the end of the world ran through the boy. He felt the time had come, the time to face what he couldn't. He turned to the door, but there was no door. Instead, a tunnel of swirling grey smoke.

Try as he might, he couldn't remember when he died. Just right now? Years before? He could not lift the veil off any related memories. He stood there, facing this vortex, feeling increasingly stronger gusts of wind against his face.

It was the spring of 2023, the wind blew through the window of the train.

He opened his eyes for a moment, then he closed them again.

CREDO I.

Nikolett Pataki

My arms, my legs, my skin. My infertility, my pleasure. My surprise, my pregnancy, my decision, my choice, my baby.

My birth, my surgery, my struggles. My move, my studies, my work. My sexuality, my boundaries, my tries, my loneliness, my friends, my thrills.

My illusions, my intelligence, my co-dependency, my plans. My child, my life.

CREDO II.

Nikolett Pataki

My sacrifices, my struggles, my investment.

Your ungratefulness, your betrayal, your misunderstandings.

My intentions, my years, my isolation.

Your selfishness, your path, your struggles.

My life, my abandonment, my emptiness – Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.

Mea culpa.

WINDOW TO REALITY

Nikolett Pataki

B woke up at 4am, as usual. Loved these lazy hours when she felt as if she would have beaten the world. She's got time to catch up with herself, have proper space for her thoughts and ideas.

Just opened her eyes, checked her phone, as always, and saw the first line of an email, from her ex's mother. They used to love each other. It took a while for B to be able to close that energy flow, peacefully and gently.

But this morning was different, B somehow wasn't very surprised, so many things have happened to her recently, all good things, so it was somehow inevitable that she would sense it and would want to be part of it somehow. Email was the usual way for it. She used delicate words, was a real intellectual and B admired her for that. Despite the pain she and her son caused to her, B still loved them – from a safe distance. She knew if she opened that email, she would be sucked back into that reality where she felt powerless and vulnerable. But she couldn't help, she had already read the first line; "As I was sensing that you are in a welcoming state of mind..."

– God, not again – she thought and put the phone down. She felt a sinking feeling, into the dark. She put her phone down and started to reflect on herself. As she went through her feelings and emotions and embraced them all, she was able to convince herself that she is in another reality now, she doesn't need to explain herself and she made it (somehow, somewhere, even she wasn't fully clear with it). But as she was calming down, she decided to read the whole email, as felt strong enough to deal with it. She didn't know yet what her plan was beyond reading but that didn't matter. She wanted to face – whatever comes after those words.

So, she lifted her phone again and looked for the email. But it was nowhere. She felt a small panic again, now that she chickened out and somehow managed to make it disappear. She tried every option possible with other messages – still, they were recoverable. How on earth did she manage to get rid of it so quickly and without any trace?

Very slowly did she just realise and accept how she had a peek through a window.

MEETING SAM

Rita Sebestyén

'Are you open?'

'Course. Sorry for the mess.'

'No problem. I mean, it must be like this, right?'

'Sure, it's a workshop at the same time.'

'I figured.'

'Have you got some furniture to revamp?'

'What's that picture?'

'A famous one. Do you recognize the people in it?'

'Not really. The man seems familiar.'

'Claudia Cardinale and Rob Hudson having spaghetti in Rome.'

'Excellent.'

'A hundred quids.'

'...'

'If you want it, a hundred quids.'

'...'

'Are you looking for something?'

'How about those two portraits?'

'My grandpa. He was born in this house.'

'You... you take after him.'

'Thank you for saying that.'

'And the other one is your grandma, I suppose.'

'A pretty girl from Caracas.'

'She took a long way here. I wonder why.'

'For my grandpa. That's why. I can have your family picture blown up just like theirs if you want to.'

'And that mirror. What do you call it? We call it Blondell.'

'That's gorgeous. We call it old Italian style. And only three hundred quids.'

'Only? Oh, that's not much.'

'You're right... I mean... Do you want to pay more for it?'

'Oh, no. We actually own one like this.'

'It's gorgeous.'

'I hate it. We carried it across four countries. It used to be my great grandma's. I hate it, I just hate it. But it is ours, so we carry it with us.'

'Sorry.'

'So, you're selling everything. The copper pans?'

'Not everything. The drums are mine.'

'The drums.'

'What kind of music do you like?'

'Well, I'd say, I grew up on jazz.'

'It's rock and roll. What I am playing.'

'That's great, I love it.'

'Ok, just some rhythms here.'

'Go ahead.'

'And this? Do you recognise this?'

'Nope.'

'It's Bossa Nova.'

'Cool.'

'And now we're sliding into salsa.'

'Love it.'

'My friend plays the guitar. Every Friday evening we're jamming in this shop.'

'You're joking.'

'No, I'm not. People sit on those sofas. Original Chesterfield. They are for sale.'

'They are falling apart.'

'Some like it like that. Or I can restore it for you.'

'Course you can.'

'Come to one of our gigs. It's free.'

'I will.'

'What's your name?'

'Sam.'

'You're joking.'

'No.'

'My name is Sam, too.'

'Cool.'

'Look up Sam's restoration on the Facebook. Come to the next gig.'

