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GHOSTS

CONTENTS

006

Foreword

Words by *Hannah Yelin*

008

Commanded to Walk

Shivangi Mariam Raj

012

Untitled

Image by *Aditya Pande*

014

Words by *Ivan de Monbrison*

016

Excerpt from the Flaneur File

Impressions by *Sambaran Das*

Words by *Agnibho Gangopadhyay*

030

The View Across the Valley

Words by *Jonathan Willmer*

038

The Eye-Ghost and the Smoke-Ghosts

Story and Drawings by *Shyam Thandar*

Translation and Lettering by *Sourav Roy*

054

A Vision

Words by *AN Grace*

- 055
The Residence of All Our Problems
Words by *AN Grace*
- 056
History of the Arch-Spirit of Peyarabagan:
A Brief Outline
Words by *Swapan Panda*
Translation by *Sourav Roy*
- 062
À la Recherche du Temps Gagné
Words and Images by *David Szanto*
- 078
The Shoot
Words by *Paul Jasper*
- 086
Light Leaks
Images by *Sukanya Ghosh*
- 098
Decay Dan
Words and Image by *Mark Blickley*
- 102
Rhythm and the Small Hands of Violence
Words by *Megha Sharma Sehdev*
- 106
Images by *Phil Sawdon*
- 116
The Funeral
Words by *Robin Dennis*
Illustrations by *Estella Mare*
- 128
The Sparagmos Spreads
Sourav Roy
Design by *Vidha Saumya*
- 148
Ghost Notes
Words and Sounds by *Danny Bright*
- 150
Jonathan
Words and image by *Alexis Muiños Woodward*
Translated from the original Spanish by *the author*,
Sourav Roy, *Reyazul Haque*
- 156
Metamorphosis
Images by *Dorothy Englander*
- 168
MY PRINCESS, HER HAMLET
Words by *Hilda Kahra*



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ISSN 1746-8086

www.stimulusrespond.com

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FOREWORD

Words by *Hannah Yelin*

The ghost is a concept as hard to pin down as a floating sheet. In my work on celebrity ghostwriting I have pushed for a widening of our definitions of the ‘ghosting’ process to consider the ways in which we are all surrounded by hidden forces which work upon us. Benevolent, malign or indifferent, they silently coax and usher us towards one thing or another, one way of being or another, one set of possibilities and limitations or another. This is how Megha Sharma Sehdev imagines ‘Small Hands of Violence’ in this issue’s essay on contemporary politics in India. Ghostwriting can be understood as covering so many more dynamics than the traditionally imagined scribes who erase themselves to become vessels for stars to tell their life stories. For as long as there have been written stories there have been figures we might understand as ghosts hidden in the process. If we accept these intermediaries as ghosts, why not also the photographers, filmmakers, agents, managers, publishers and constellations of other intermediaries in the star’s orbit, who have their role in producing texts of and about her? And if we understand these various agents as ghosts, how broadly might we imagine the equivalent figures in our own lives. How do we collectively produce ourselves? How are our lives collectively ‘written’?

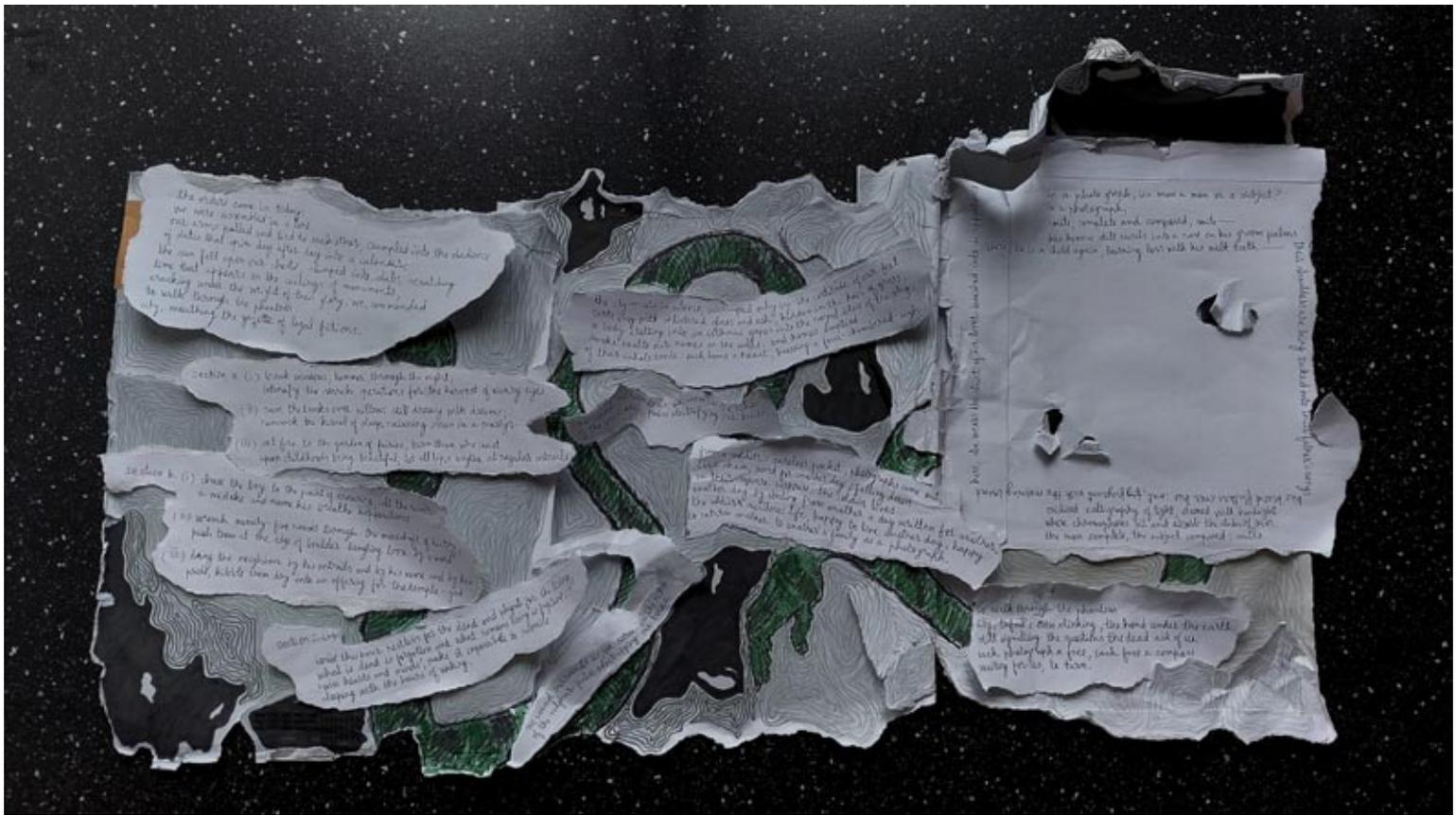
The ghost is a concept that shapeshifts. In the social media age, our everyday lives are so mediatised that we would do well to think about the ways in which we are being ghosted. Of course, we more commonly imagine ourselves to have been ghosted by the suddenly departed. We find ourselves abandoned by a lover without a word, or left at a party without the courtesy of goodbye. Framing these vanishings like apparitions of the dead makes a joke of the small grieving we undertake in everyday losses.

The ghost is a concept that lives in folklore: in the sometimes grotesque stories we tell ourselves as we undertake the life long project of understanding death and decay. As shown in the work of Shyam Thandar and Mark Blickley In this issue, the ghost is constructed by our fear of what we cannot understand about what has died and what won’t die.

The ghost is a concept that collapses time to complicate what is and what was. It lives in what we are only partially aware of: what we have half seen, half remembered, half heard. Throughout this issue we see ghosts interpreted as traces and relics, leaving their imprint on the present. We hear this in the echoes explored by Danny Bright’s sonic artwork on the memory of sounds and the warping that occurs in this

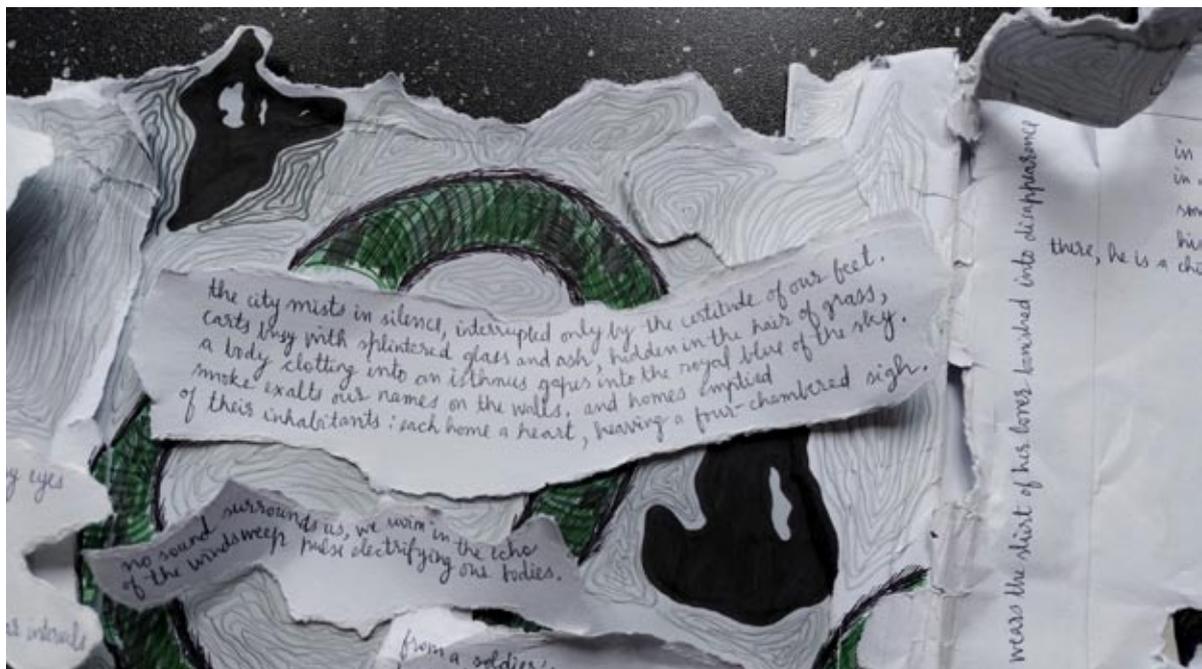
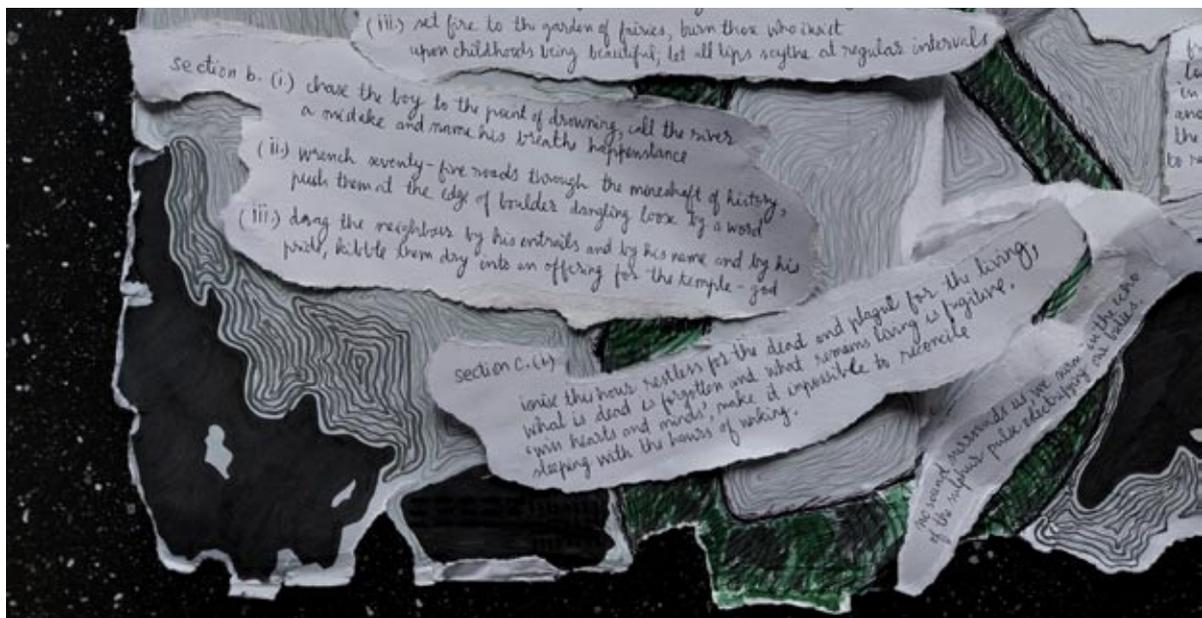
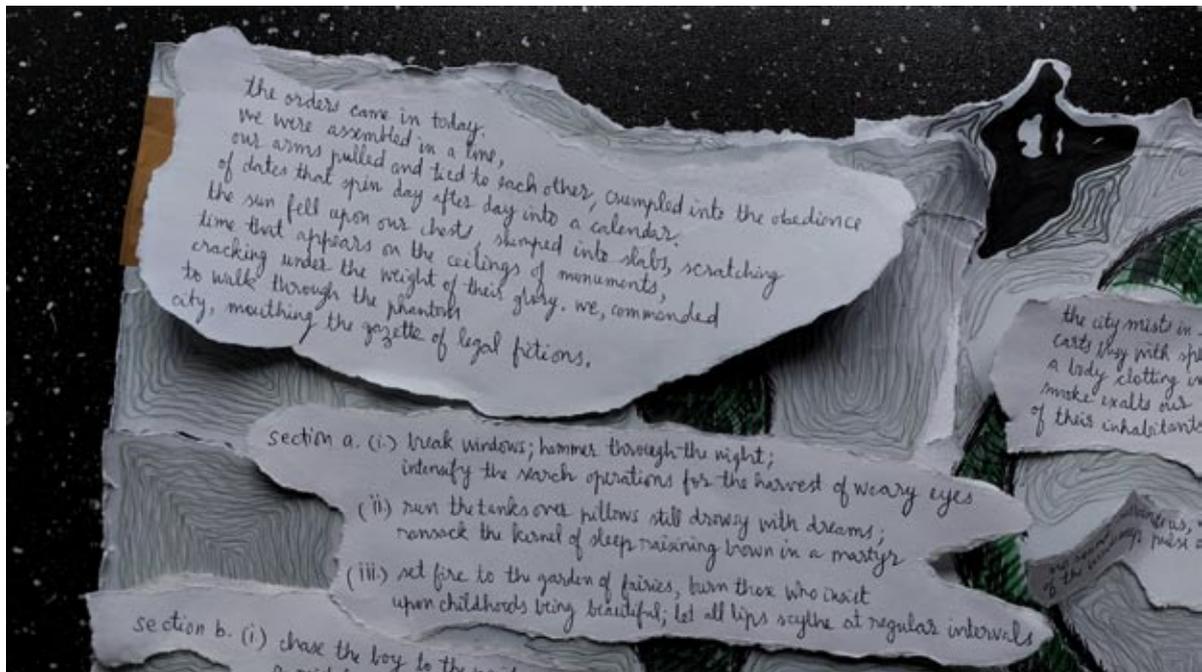
transmutation. We see this in the iterative silhouette portraits that evoke the chaos of memory in the work of Dorothy Englander. We see the ghosts that live in reflections, shadows, and shrouds as they glimmer in the artworks of Phil Sawdon, the photographs of Sukanya Ghosh, the dreamlike illustrations of Sambaran Das Agnibho Gangopadhyay, and the familiar objects David Szanto has made uncannily strange.

The ghost is a misunderstanding. I have a four-year-old who is obsessed with all that is spooky. In his pre-school cartoons I have noticed there are many ghosts. From so very early in life the stories we tell ourselves must account for the fear we experience in the face of what we don't and can't (yet) understand. The difference is that these ghosts, these bumps in the night, always turn out to have been a misunderstanding. An indeterminate sensory experience that we can't locate the source of: a baleful moan or an eerie glowing in the distance turns out to be the wind in the trees, to be bioluminescence. It was earthly, intelligible phenomena and you are safe from everything but your own imagination and its tendency to presume inexplicable magic.



commanded to walk

shivangi mariam raj



as us, we walk in the lecher
and electrifying one bodies.

from a soldier's careless pocket, photographs come out,
lost chain, saved for another day, falling down
in their square surprise, the soldier's lives
another day by stealing from another lives
the soldier willows life, happy to live another day, happy
to return another to another's family as a photograph.

here, she wears the
bread

his coat, the program with the morning bread
oxidised calligraphy of light, stained
where chromophores sit and absorb
the man complete, the subject comp

to walk through the phantom

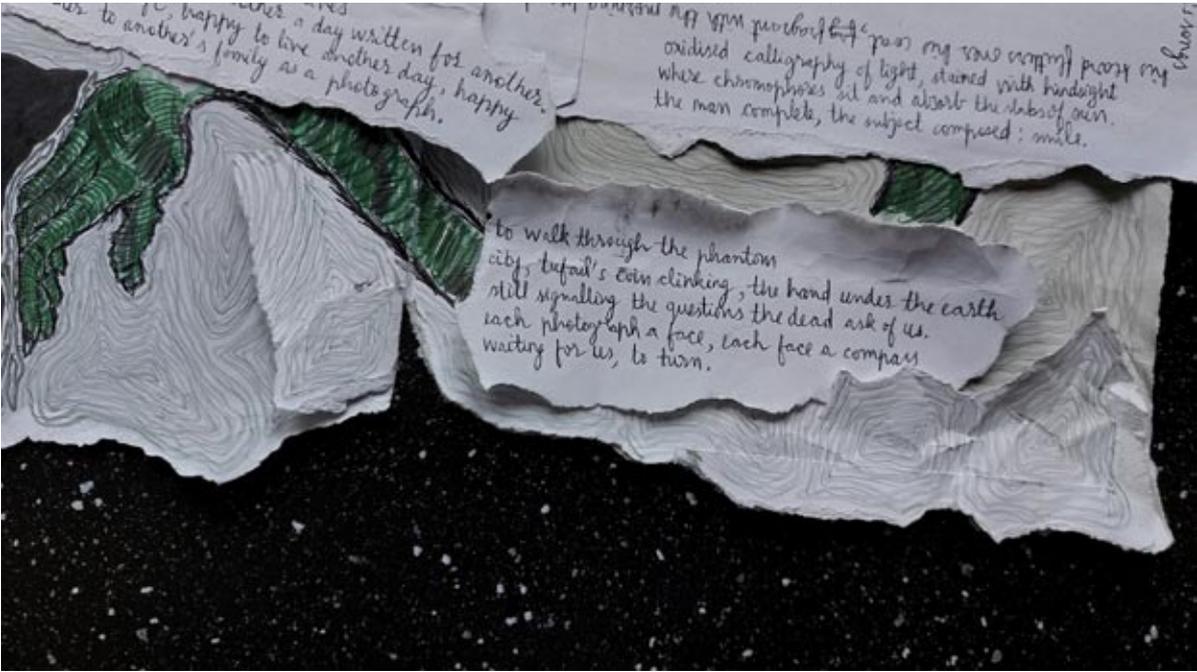
in a photo graph, is a man a man or a subject?
in a photograph,
smile, complete and composed, smile—
his henna still swirls into a rose on his groom palms
there, he is a child again, learning loss with his milk teeth —

his shoulders are being tucked into their father's wings

here, she wears the skirt of her bones banished into disappearance

his head flutters over his coat, the program with the morning bread
oxidised calligraphy of light, stained with hindsight
where chromophores sit and absorb the slabs of sun,
the man complete, the subject composed: smile.

out,
in for another
day, happy
aph.



... a day written for another.
... happy to live another day, happy
... to another's family as a photograph.

... oxidised calligraphy of light, stained with hindsight
... where chromophores sit and absorb the slabs of sun.
... the men complete, the subject composed: smile.

to walk through the phantom
city, before's coin clinking, the hand under the earth
still signalling the questions the dead ask of us.
each photograph a face, each face a compass
waiting for us, to turn.



Image by *Aditya Pande*

Untitled

Part of a series of analogue photographic works

Silver bromide (RC),

35cm x 28cm

2017

Salvator Mundi, a Renaissance painting of the saviour of the world, recently discovered and restored, spent most of its spectral life as pentimento of a painting written off as an apprentice's copy of his master, Leonardo da Vinci's lost original. Its final restoration after many botched attempts, and its subsequent presentation as a simulacra, its attribution to da Vinci, and valuation are all highly disputed. Its sale to Abu Dhabi's prince, the highest bidder in a Christie's auction, and its journey into the plush cabins of the Saudi Prince Mohammed Bin Salman's luxury yacht, as reported by the Wall Street Journal, and the safety of the painting and its current whereabouts are all unverifiable facts.

By making a silver bromide contact photogram straight from an iPad screen display of an image of the painting on a news website, New Delhi-based artist Aditya Pande recovers *Salvator Mundi* once again and becomes another claimant of the shadowy art work. Pande creates a simulation of the world of art and its goings-on, accruing to the already shady history of appearances and disappearances of an itinerant art work through ages.