

# A PERFECT VACUUM

POETRY PROSE CONVERSATION ARCHIVES ABOUT

## Kimberly Alidio

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### from *Tucson and Taos Poems*

in food deserts. Agnes, not Georgia  
“Are people here nice?” If you call it  
a retreat, you can omit the oven  
mitt. “Ew, sticky olive oil”  
“Is that a ghoul?” “I feel her  
in my mouth” “Ew, Charles!”  
Epiphany, after  
emotional fever, a paved road  
makes us giddy. Midmorning  
A sharpening sun, the right road  
in the wrong direction, “so warm  
from her hands”

72F sunny, sunrise 7:23, sunset

5:51. Spring, not yet. I want as much  
light as a movie set living  
room. Let's agree to never  
be blond. Bass line from the  
neighbor frat. Spine spread  
on a soft cylinder of would I  
impossibly blue. Architecture buffers  
the contrail. Saturday rhymes in  
a celebrity feeling

Careless floors, bleached or  
absently waxed. Sesame baby teeth  
and bunny's breath. Let's  
entertain memories of clean. All week  
reading the Norton, how we've been  
pretty the whole time of the poem  
sobs the loss of living  
parents. "Syntax was her thing  
to hide her lesbianism"

An attractive  
child, I sounded out newsprint  
celeb mags lining a carry-on  
Literal pulp homeschool from stars'  
staged pop realism. Innocent  
or hygienic? Daring to fall  
through the drawbridge, or  
outrunning nine to get enough  
food? I was here, through  
these lines. "I echo  
naturally" Olives next to  
kombucha next to sourdough  
dark on an open kitchen counter

## Cities of rocks

hillsides, cities of bright neutral, bright  
 dark sky (Texas Canyon 12:56). On all sides  
 the eye, prickly ridged pastel  
 gravel           Moment  
 traces big grain (Chihuahuan)  
 Many motels to hello  
 grapefruit trees. "Riding in a car on  
 the American highways is like  
 writing poetry with your whole body"  
 The coast is an island (Tues 12/29  
 Silver Lake) Nowhere otherly  
 gorged paper bag peak. "We'll wait  
 until the quotidian passes"

Bicycles stream by. Weekenders snap  
 purple green cactus. A high sculpture  
 on wheels slows the streetcar  
 Waterbirds and cars sonically go  
 People dress to drink  
 their water. I cannot  
 take credit for any cruel theater  
 or secure tables fast enough  
 We vision each other  
 On left blade, a green jewel point  
 Eye of a panther resurrects  
 comfort, catacombs, gray-greens  
 open, overgrow           Haul ass, arc of Joan!

***from a traceable relation***

Footsteps amplified my silent attention and restored me by  
proxy to everyday life

After the film's halfway point, marked by song, Cleo walks  
down ten steps, crosses a courtyard, and exits narrative  
time onto Rue Huygens

I'm permitted to enter the scene as one of any number of  
bystanders whose faces begin enunciating an observation  
just as the camera sweeps away to keep time with the in-  
scene beats of Cleo's stride

On cue, we behave as if in a time of sacred ones, a nun's  
order of the grammars of queer conduct

The far from ideal architecture presents some moments for  
improvised choreography

I'm surprised to find a sentence evaporate in a light trace of  
its arc down a creaky stairway through a dimly lit foyer into  
a yard where there's a cast iron bathtub

When thrown aloft in Italian carnivals, Jordan almonds  
linked CONFETTI to CONFECT, something candied, salted,  
rendered in its own fat

Dedication to Beauty is a romantic occupation, the courage  
to know which conjunction is most beautiful here and there  
in a shadow language

The sentence isn't an etching in the way a poem line is an  
inscription that interrupts a surface

Mom was Miss Liberty, third place, in the Miss Malasiqui  
Pageant at age fourteen

Transactional, place-making, translingual, instinctive,  
provisional, carnivalesque

This risks whimsy

Varda isn't afraid

Mr. Button, later seen in an episode of *From Here to There*,  
takes a tray of plain matchboxes, chooses one to empty out  
wooden matches into a jar labeled with the current year

Varda shows us four jars: each labeled by year, and partially  
filled with half-burned matches

My father says his pain isn't due to the cancer, he's just old,  
don't worry

A sentence takes time to appear in its strange form, as form  
at all

“outrageously speculative and  
experimental”

“private and solitary”

“useless activity”

This recursion is the hand of my parents, my inheritance

I sat on one of the low wooden beams, and throat-singing  
spirituals vibrated my ass with low frequencies

In the main gallery, a monastic drone issuing from a  
beautiful gold teardrop suspended over a huge, shiny floral  
receptacle rose and fell in pitch

With high frequency vibrations, the shiny fetish fed back to  
us our footsteps

A sort of depressive figure—thin, ombre-haired— walked the  
periphery

**Kimberly Alidio** is the author of two chapbooks and four books of poetry, including *Teeter*, an autohistoriography of felt time that arises from subversive hearing practices and the emotional prosody of a mother tongue one does not understand but activates in another poetic language. A winner of the Nightboat Poetry Prize, *Teeter* will be published in 2023. She lives on Munsee-Mohican lands along the Mahicannituck River, otherwise known as New York's Upper Hudson Valley.

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