

The broken



# ***ANYWHERE but HERE***

13 Hitchcock films that were never made

The allure of teleportation

Sipping from a scalding cappuccino

Who stops for an AWOL G.I. Joe?

# The broken

Summer 2025 Issue 36



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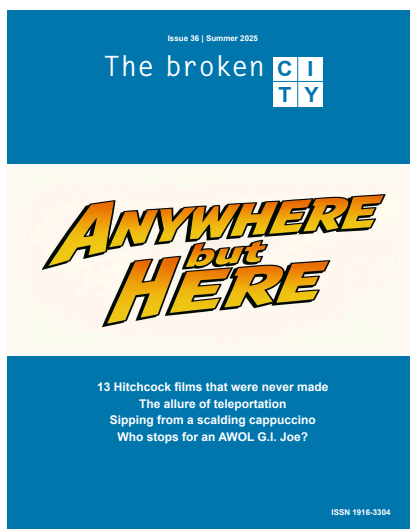
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## In this issue:



Welcome to *The Broken City*'s travel issue.

We're headed to Italy, Greece, Dublin, San Juan, Eresos and Death Valley.

Forget flights—why not opt for teleportation? Or maybe hitchhike? Be careful whose car you jump into.

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*The Broken City* is currently accepting submissions for its winter 2025 edition: **But here's what really happened.**

That's right, readers, the magazine is running a **Mystery** issue. Drop some clues and tell us your tales of suspense, your cliffhangers, page-turners and shocking conclusions!

Send your poetry, fiction, essays, illustrations and photography to [thebrokencitymag@yahoo.com](mailto:thebrokencitymag@yahoo.com).

Deadline is: November 30, 2025. Submitters will be contacted after that date, with news of acceptance or rejection.

# The Allure of Teleportation

## *Harrison Fisher*

I hate going places. Not only are most destinations weak,  
but this whole business of traveling—  
detestable!

Teleportation could get me back in the game,  
however. And I would be positively avid about travel if,  
each time I shot the tubes between A and B,  
a few ounces of flab—

from the places  
I could stand to lose them most—  
were peeled off somewhere in transit.  
Teleportation and weight reduction—psychopathic!

I could see the Acropolis and my pants would fit.  
I could stop thinking about my puny problems and  
start living like a man, a trim guy surveying  
the wild peaks and dining spots  
of Paris, France.

Now, walk with me  
into the *pièce de résistance*.

Imagine each act of teleportation  
shaves a few hours, maybe a whole day, off your age.  
You're traveling forward through space, but  
bodily back in time to grab off a bit  
of rejuvenation. And all of it,  
I swear, affordable!

Now we're off to see Christmas lights along the Danube  
and sample some pastries our slightly younger and  
trimmer selves have made room for.  
Merry Christmas, everyone,  
whenever it comes  
your way,  
  
even in the hot Summer of Slimmer!

*Harrison Fisher has published twelve collections of poems since 1977, most recently Poematics of the Hyperbloody Real. After a 21st century hiatus from writing and publishing, Fisher has new work appearing in numerous magazines, including Amsterdam Review, The Corpus Callosum, The Kleksograph, MacQueen's Quinterly, Metachrosis, Misfitmagazine, Panoplyzine, Poem Alone, Rat's Ass Review, Rundelania, Slipstream, Trampoline, and Uppagus.*

## 13 Hitchcock Films That Were Never Made

### *Barbara O'Dair*

I don't know how many hours I've been crouching on this hard floor  
as a bottle of mediocre Kentucky whiskey is passed around  
and I slip into a long malt slide. I had a full life before landing here,  
got fucked on a ferry to Dun Laoghaire and hitchhiked across Ireland  
with a bulging suitcase and my best friend. We awoke in a field—  
when a bull swung into view, we bushwhacked down a hill to our B&B.  
Paris, Greece, up Rte. 1 along the Pacific coast. Most of my time was spent  
on men and remembering the exact location of my hotel.  
In Cambridge, England, exiting a pub where I drank warm beer and played bad darts,  
I was enveloped in a fog running down a lane in the rain, pulling off my clothes,  
soaking wet naked and laughing, my art school chums running behind.  
No one cared, everyone loved me because I was 19.  
On a bicycle in Maine, I found a rumpled Adonis on a back road.  
He thwarted my advances, introducing me to his ancient grandmother  
in a wheelchair, with braids past her knees and a half dozen chihuahuas in her dress.  
I only regret leaving him my favorite scarf—impulsive, I had to mark my spot.  
I was there, not that it meant anything to him, in his overalls and silly straw hat.  
Mostly, I was brazen and untouchable.  
Now I'm frozen on a hard floor above a club, curled into my C.P.O.,  
chain-smoking and watching busy people turn to blur. Does anyone think  
I am content to sit like this, propped up like a doll with dead eyes, 114 pounds in boots?  
On a couch across the room, my old flame brays about 13 Hitchcock films that were never made.  
His gal holds a guitar, bending over the neck, laying her fingers on the frets as if a tune would  
suddenly burst forth, her orange hair falling across one eye, astonishing, really.  
I had him and left him years ago, he was a snob, a drunk and a phony punk.  
Going home, I dropped a bottle of pills through a grate in front of a Eurotrash café.  
I should say I never wanted him anyway.

## Circle of Life

### *Barbara O'Dair*

On our final trip out of Brooklyn, inside a bare bones Jeep to New Jersey, my mother's finches cluster in a cage on my lap.

It's a hundred degrees. I'm eight-and-a-half-weeks pregnant and slick as a rat. The car bounces, but I'm padded.

My mother is a pair of purple mukluks, they go down the chute into the fire as we take apart her modest apartment.

At the funeral, our young nephew says weird shit. Nevertheless, we tell his parents, let the boy marry grandma,

by which we mean, indulge the child, he's not hurting anyone, he'll learn soon enough he and grandma won't be getting married.

---

*Barbara O'Dair graduated from The MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College. She was chosen by the late Tom Lux as the winner of the Mudfish 9 poetry contest and was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2022. Her poetry has appeared in journals including Semiotexte, Wisconsin Review, Alaska Quarterly, and Nerve, and in several anthologies. She has also had a long career in journalism, at publications including The New York Times, Time, Rolling Stone, the Village Voice, and many other publications. She currently writes a weekly essay on Substack called "You've Got My Attention" about life with ADHD. She lives in the New York City area with her family.*

## **The Process**

### ***James Croal Jackson***

I arrive in Knox after a four-hour drive.  
Without a *hello*, Kenny stands by the pool,

talks about his published books,  
the writing process and I tell him

I have learned to identify an energy  
swirling inside me when it needs

to be released. I remove my shirt  
to sink into chlorine-green and

he follows.

## **Amalfi**

### ***James Croal Jackson***

This beautiful place now  
smudged inside the lens.

Look at what my red eyes  
have done. The rock face

layers on my molting geode  
core, the ocean at my feet,

the rows and rows of white  
houses along curving street

and those inside who would  
all be disappointed in me.

---

*James Croal Jackson is a Filipino-American poet working in film production. His latest chapbook is A God You Believed In (Pinhole Poetry, 2023). Recent poems are in ITERANT, Stirring, and The Indianapolis Review. He edits The Mantle Poetry from Nashville, Tennessee. (jamescroaljackson.com)*

# Longing to Go to Eressos

## Donna J. Gelagotis Lee

Scent of twig, grass, and  
olive. The cicadas' instrumental

chatter. The faint smell  
of the Aegean, its sound rolling

up the beach to a few olive trees,  
and then over the rooftops and around the corner

of the fisherman's house, his yellow  
nets tied to this door. Did I

imagine the smell of fish? Wild  
cats scurry down the dirt road.

The farmer with produce strapped  
astride his donkey approaches.

I am the only unsteady thing  
this morning. The village women have

already begun their chores, walking  
to the egg seller, the baker, the fisherman

at the dock, hanging clothes, sweeping  
the floors. But I

long to drive to Eressos,  
where the sea is

azure-pure and no one knows  
me. Perhaps the shopkeepers will guess

by my Greek that I've been to this island  
before, but most likely they'll not

think I'm a Greek wife, as  
I'll soon be sipping coffee

on a white chair near the beach with  
the waves rolling in,

as the tourists do all day.  
I'll bare myself

to the elements.  
I'll be as naked

as a naked bather.  
And if the gravel road turns

to dirt or the mountain gets  
too steep, I'll try again

another day, when the mountain yields  
to me, the spring provides

a sip of clear water, the  
men point the direction,

and the women nod  
good morning or

just glance as they continue  
on their way.

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*Donna J. Gelagotis Lee is the author of two award-winning collections, Intersection on Neptune (The Poetry Press of Press Americana, 2019), winner of the Prize Americana for Poetry 2018, and On the Altar of Greece (Gival Press, 2006), winner of the 2005 Gival Press Poetry Award and recipient of a 2007 Eric Hoffer Book Award: Notable for Art Category. Her poetry has appeared in numerous journals internationally, including The Dalhousie Review, Feminist Studies, The Massachusetts Review and Vallum: contemporary poetry. Her website is [www.donnajgelagotislee.com](http://www.donnajgelagotislee.com).*

# San Juan

## *Daniel P. Stokes*

Today the strand's invaded.  
Groups commandeer a space  
and set up camp.  
They're in their thousands.  
Tomorrow's the feast day of San Juan.  
With tents being pitched  
and boundaries staked  
and hails and hollers  
the noise is tactile. They've come—  
I don't know where they've come from—  
to spend the night and party on the beach.  
They've brought their stove, their food,  
their drinks and their excitement.

Four bucks in pride erect a shack  
with poles and palms macheted from the cliff.  
A woman on her knees nearby,  
her youngest perched beside her,  
boils a pot outside her tent  
and hums in Spanish.  
Work, routine and discretion  
have been long-leashed. It's *Fiesta*.  
A call—no, a command, a summons—  
to gather in communal expectation  
and let the moment for the moment  
eclipse all other aims.

I pack my books and leave them to it.  
Their revelry, like open prayer,  
is done in public  
to satisfy a private whim  
that isn't mine. The bells  
above the ruckus mark out midday  
and I have rites and rituals of my own.

---

*Daniel P. Stokes has published poetry widely in literary magazines in Ireland, Britain, the U.S.A, Canada and Asia, and has won several poetry prizes. He has written three stage plays which have been professionally produced in Dublin, London and at the Edinburgh Festival.*



## Northbound 395

***Victoria Dunn***

Fleeing to Death Valley, to starlight, dunes, and dust.  
High beams stab the void ahead.  
A roadside apparition: camo-clad youth, thumb jutting north.

Who stops for an AWOL G.I. Joe?  
Another misguided traveler on the lam.  
Climb in and spin me a story—don't care if it's true.  
Just steady this turbulent flight.

Oh, you've got demons? I've crossed a few.  
We're dust devils in search of home,  
senses flickering to life as black miles roar past.

What's next? Who knows or cares?  
Demons fading in the rear-view mirror,  
sidewinders materializing ahead.  
The only traces we'll leave are the old skins we shed.

---

*Victoria Dunn is a retired technical editor living in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her poem "Arrival" received an honorable mention in the Four Tulips New Beginnings contest, and her short story "The Benko Legacy" will appear in the Fault Zone: Faultless? anthology in December.*

# Last Call

## Charles Leggett

*The Cobblestone, Dublin, Ireland*

This is the place that is the poem  
This is the place you don't care that your colours don't rhyme  
the length of the lines awry and free  
angsts in squirming stitchings  
successive visions foisted upon  
an augmentation of one  
mathematical vibrant string of sound  
This is another of the places of the lovers and vividly  
they appear to the lonely green eyes  
waves of dark and complicated hair  
their own eyes a landmark dark brown  
their careless ocular intimacy  
arms and hands draped in each others' smooth as  
palace marble in a fairytale  
phalanx of empty pint glasses leaning  
as in warm trusting fright  
into the shoulder of Himself  
the almost pathological calm of one alone  
arm draped over the booth back  
painting of a Session that hangs above him  
patchwork of brushstrokes  
reds blues yellows incongruously bright  
pitch browns and blacks for the locks of the players  
This is the place of the poem of foolish last-minute too-late exuberance  
for when you see you hadn't the wits or the courage to find it  
the soiled perfection the guts and soul of it the violent mystery  
seamless not puckered but scarlet and ready to speak  
for when comes burrowing the sensation  
overwhelming explicit like a new pair of spectacles long overdue  
of much more than time having passed  
of skipping flat pebbles over bright brittle skins of a deeper and murkier sea  
But it has to be the place of the poem of you don't care  
the glances almost discrete masking amusement with scorn  
or is it the other way around the care of them discarded  
long black spade from a hand of cherry red hearts  
This is the place on that part of the road when the "click" when the snap when the piss  
of the piss is poured and pours and pools into desire for the right language  
of this road of this place its givens taken its ebbings flown  
of the resources of a person's night

*Charles Leggett is a professional actor based in Seattle, WA and a 2022 Lunt-Fontanne Fellow. His poetry has been published in the US, the UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, India and Nigeria; his chapbook Hard Listening appears in the latest Ravenna Press "Triple" series edition, No. 25. Charles's co-adaptation of Maxim Gorky's The Lower Depths premiered in 2024 at Intiman Theatre with The Seagull Project, and his poetry film short To Fondle Nothing has screened as an Official Selection at film festivals in the US, the UK (Scotland and England), Portugal, Serbia, Italy, and Austria. "Last Call" was previously published in Frigg: A Magazine of Fiction and Poetry and Eunoia Review.*

# Sand

## *Alexis Levitin*

Middle-aged, with nothing much to look forward to, Jake suddenly fell in love. Maddalena had long, ashen hair, slender limbs, green eyes. She still moved like the ballerina she had been in her youth. They met in Greenwich Village, danced all night, then went to bed in his tiny romantic garret on Bleeker Street. When she left, he escorted her to Kennedy and promised to come and visit her in Italy. Two months later he was on a flight to Rome.

His plane was late, but she was standing there in Fiumicino, firmly planted on her strong but slender legs, as if prepared to wait forever. Seeing her at the airport, stalwart in her patience, he felt dizzy with desire, with gratitude. His body felt swollen with the floodwaters of love. They embraced, walked arm in arm towards the line of cabs, then drove through busy traffic to Trastevere. There he trudged behind her up five flights of stairs to her airy penthouse above the city. Late at night, looking out at the cupolas looming in the dark, bats winging through the air, streetlights glimmering in the sluggish Tiber below, he was overwhelmed. And so, one morning, sipping from a scalding cappuccino, he asked her to help him find a job teaching English there in Rome. "I don't want to go back to America," he said. "I want to stay here with you. I love you. I want to live with you. Always." Maddalena kept munching her toast but did not look at him. After a silence broken only by the chirping of a neighbor's caged bird, hanging from a nearby window, the rhythmic crunching of her toast and the thin sipping of his cappuccino, still piping hot, came her oblique reply: "Giacomo, you told me you have never been to Sicily. I have so many student papers to grade, I have my taxes to put in order, I have to help my son who is struggling at school. Maybe this is a good time for you to go and visit Sicily. Go there, enjoy yourself, then come back in three weeks." And so, dutifully he went.

Jake loved islands, so he was happy to have

a chance to visit a few of the small Aeolian islands before circling Sicily itself. The names alone were a delight: Lipari, Vulcano, Salina, Alicudi, Filicudi, Panarea and Stromboli. Approaching the latter after nightfall, he was fascinated by the glowing lava, incandescent, tumbling down the steep slope and into the sea, where it hissed as it hardened in the dark water. He spent two nights in Ginostra, a tiny village on the far side of the island. He ate juicy, misshapen pears from his own pear tree. He drank lemonade made from his own lemons, squeezed into cold water drawn from his own cistern. The morning he was to leave, everyone was talking about a dreadful accident on the mountain. A French photographer had climbed the peak the previous afternoon and had never returned. That morning, a tourist had come upon his body on the edge of the crater. His hands, his face, his chest were black. The rest of him was untouched. The camera was nowhere to be found. Such accidents were rare, but they did happen. Stromboli, unlike Vesuvius, was fully alive.

There were no buses on Salina, so he hitched a ride on a motor scooter with a traveling priest, who took him to the most remote hamlet on the island. He clasped his arms around the priest's belly, while black vestments billowed around them. After the lonely Mass, instead of returning to the main town with the jovial priest, he decided to spend the night in the nearly deserted village of hollow-eyed empty stone huts, abandoned by massive immigration to the U.S. and Australia decades earlier. There was a family of four, happy to give him a room with a cot for the night. As he sat with these amiable folk, the grandmother casually asked him if he liked chicken. Without thinking, he said yes. Instantly her gnarled hand flashed out from under her black shawl and grabbed a hen pecking in the earth around her feet. Before he could utter a word, she had twisted its neck, and the hen, not knowing it was dead, lay convulsing in her

lap. Jake was appalled, but nothing could be done except eat and praise the chicken, which they all devoured hungrily. As they chatted after dinner, he asked the old woman's grandson, whom it was easier to understand, what she thought of the recent moon landing. After all, she had been born before there were automobiles, and even today there was no electricity in their lonesome village. His host smiled from a wrinkled, weather-beaten face and explained that his grandmother denied the very possibility of such an event. As she put it: "God lives on the moon. He would never let the Americans land." They all smiled, especially the nearly toothless crone, and, having finished the local wine, they gazed at the black sky and said good night. Everyone, especially Jake, sank into a sound and healthy sleep.

Back on the main island of Sicily, Jake decided to hitchhike for old-time's sake. Twenty years earlier he had hitched all over Europe and he liked committing himself to chance. Eurail was fine, but it was too easy, too certain. You decided where you wanted to go and you went. As a hitchhiker, however, you could never be sure. It was a bit like sailing. It could be exciting, it could be dull, but you were always at the mercy of the elements. If there was no wind, not even a breeze, you went nowhere. So, too, the hitchhiker. If no one stopped for you, you just sat and waited. Jake liked to be reminded that we are not fully in control, that life happens to us.

For the next ten days, he circled Sicily, from Milazzo to Cefalù, from Palermo, to Trapani, where he took a boat for a one-day visit to disappointingly domesticated Marettimo in the Egadi Islands. Then on along the coast, passing through Selinunte with its archeological remains and Agrigento, with its lofty ridge bearing the ruins of numerous temples dedicated to the Greek gods of 500 B.C. After resting in the meager shade of an acacia tree, sipping slowly on an icy Coca-Cola, Jake felt it was time to end his vacation and return to Madalena, grading her student papers back in Traste-

vere. He grabbed his bag, threw the green Coke bottle in the trash, and headed for the highway.

After twenty minutes a small Fiat pulled over. Jake threw his knapsack in the back seat and settled into the passenger seat with a sigh. The driver smiled with dazzling white teeth. He was slender, young and terribly handsome, with a deep summer tan. A small crescent-shaped scar high on his cheekbone gave him a raffish and provocative air. He seemed to have come straight from a Pasolini film set, though his bare chest and silky bathing suit suggested he had just left the local beach in Porto Empedocle. He spoke no English and Jake's Italian, even after almost three weeks of travel, was still rudimentary. So they drove along in amiable silence as afternoon drifted slowly toward evening.

But suddenly the handsome driver whipped the car off the highway, and they found themselves on a sandy track, meandering amongst dunes. Jake, concerned, asked where they were going. The driver, flashing his patented smile, simply said "scorciatoia." Digging his pocket dictionary out of his day bag, Jake anxiously looked it up. "Aha," he said, with a broad smile, "*scorciatoia*, short-cut. Molto bene." And they drove on at a leisurely pace, then finally came to a halt among the grassy dunes. The driver, sporting his golden smile, leaned forward to fiddle with the radio. His forearm pressed against Jake's left thigh. He then sat back in his seat and snapped the top of his silken swimsuit two or three times. Jake tried to keep his eyes glued to the dunes, but he could not ignore his companion's member rising from the flimsy constraint of the ethereal turquoise tights. The young man with the charming crescent-shaped scar high on his cheek bone looked down at his own resplendent member and across at Jake, sitting there in paralyzed confusion. But at this juncture, words failed the enterprising Sicilian youth and, staring at his masculine pride, all he could say was "sabia." Jake didn't have to look it up. He knew what it meant and he had seen the grains of sand sprinkled delicately upon the surface of the young man's desire. At this

point he grabbed the driver's arm and, twisting it fiercely, managed to conjure forth a firm command: "Torniamo alla strada principale." The handsome Sicilian gave him a bitter look, started up the engine, managed a difficult U-turn on the narrow track, and, reaching the hard-top, deposited him back on the side of the highway. He then drove off without a word, gunning the feeble Fiat engine as best he could.

Two days later, Jake was back with Maddalena in her penthouse above Trastevere. He was as much in love with her as ever. Maddalena kissed him a welcome, of course, but she did not look him the eye. Later in the evening, after her young son Carlo was tucked into bed, they sat in the living room, watching the swallows darting through the night air. Jake picked up where he had left off three weeks before.

"I love you," he said. "I want to find a job and stay with you here in Rome. Forever."

After a silence, Maddalena responded.

"Listen, Giacomo, the affair in New York was super. You're a great dancer and a great guide. Everything was wonderful. Wonderful and light. But I've been married before and it was a disaster.

It is something I do not want to repeat. In fact, I do not want to live with a man ever again. It is that simple. While you are here visiting Rome you can stay with us and of course I will sleep with you. But please do not speak of the future. There is no future, and speaking of it will only push me further away. Stay a bit, see the sights, then why don't you go on to the Greek islands. You told me how much you love the Greek islands. You can catch a ferry in Bari or Brindisi. I am sure you will be happier in Greece."

There was nothing to say. He lingered another three or four days, but he felt like a somnambulist. There was no reason to be in Rome. There was no reason to be in her penthouse, in her bed. So, after those few days, he dutifully packed up, took the train to Brindisi and the ferry to Corfu. Yes, he saw how beautiful a Greek island could be, even the real name, Kérkyra, seemed to carry a spell. And yet, somehow, it all felt like a charade, a charade of happiness. And he rediscovered now, perhaps for the last time, how love can flood your entire being and then, suddenly, like an equinoctial tide, leave you beached alone on the wet sands of an empty, beautiful, meaningless universe.

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*Alexis Levitin has published 52 translations of work from the Portuguese and Spanish, including Clarice Lispector's Soulstorm and Eugenio de Andrade's Forbidden Words, both from New Directions. His short stories, begun in shadowed isolation during the pandemic, have resulted in a collection of chess memories and inventions, The Last Ruy Lopez: Tales from the Royal Game (Russell Enterprises) and publication in close to two dozen magazines in the USA, England, Norway, Sweden, Italy, Spain, and Turkey.*

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