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## A Dirge for Kathmandu

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### Acknowledgements

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# A Dirge for Kathmandu

Benjamin Linder

Soap squeaks in my ears  
when the room erupts.  
I watch Thamel bustle  
from fourth floor windows  
when the ground gives way.  
The earth swells and swirls  
like tremulous bile,  
shaking buildings to their rebar marrow.  
The mythic lake opens jagged jaws  
to swallow its urbanites whole.

Dust settles on our skin,  
and there's no sea to carry us off.  
So we run  
to solid ground  
and open space  
with fear in our hearts  
and tired bones in our shoes.

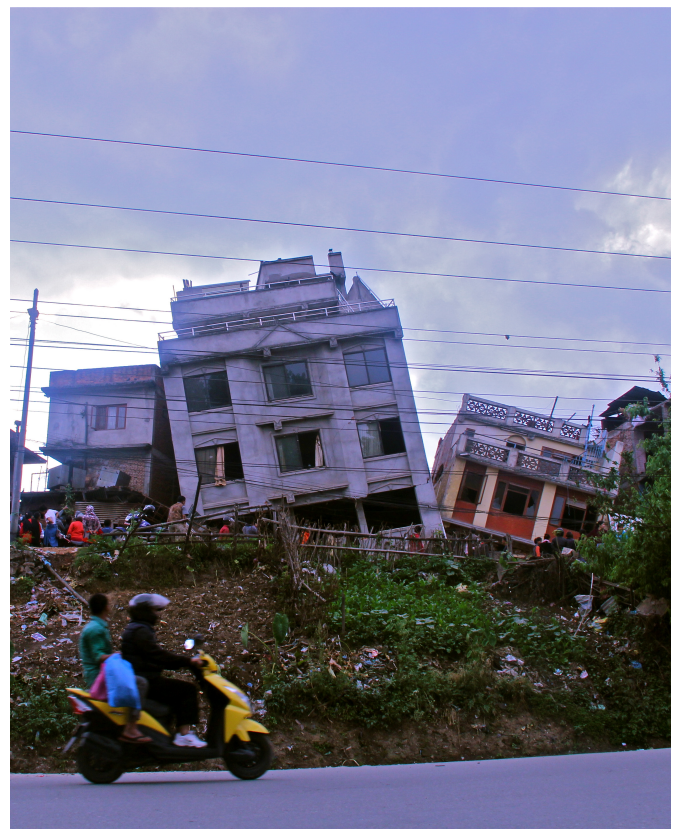


Figure 1. Buildings tilt precariously after the April 25 earthquake, rendering a jagged skyline along the roads of Kathmandu.

(Linder, 2015)

Buildings tilt like scarecrows  
and perish before sirens wail.  
We smoke on red bricks  
that used to be a wall  
and remember this grand city  
as it was just ago  
before so much crumbled  
like Jericho.

There's nothing to do but walk,  
away from the towers,  
away from the shakes,  
down Kantipath curbs,  
where mayhem masses mill about  
and motorbikes growl through  
like iron bulls  
on parade.

Farther.  
Past *Naya Sadak*,  
where choked hordes  
hemorrhage from the Old City.  
Down to Tripeshwor,  
where royalty rises in the shattered *chowk*.  
Onward still  
to tired Balkhu,  
where an auto shop might have stood  
had its neighbor not  
toppled down  
so that one pile of rubble  
became two.

Panic reigns in these darkened streets.  
Past salt-eyed mothers with  
babies at their breasts.



Figure 2. Walking and rubbernecking, a young man surveys a collapsed building in the earthquake's aftermath.

(Linder, 2015)

Past fallen temples  
that god forgot.  
Past a façade  
now tumbled to sidewalk debris  
so you can still see the innards  
like a dollhouse:  
the second story office  
with desk chair overturned  
and picture frames askew.

And finally,  
straining aching, aging muscles,  
up the hill to Kirtipur.  
Because we're the lucky ones,  
looking out upon this fallen city,  
tight-throated and quiver-lipped,  
to sing elegies for another lost layer  
of Kathmandu.

**Benjamin Linder** is a PhD student in the Department of Anthropology & Geography at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His academic research explores the relationship between transnational mobilities, cultural transformation, and the (re)production of urban space in Kathmandu, Nepal.

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