

Ends & Beginnings

Transients Magazine

ISSUE III



Summer 2024

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Message from the Editors

This issue is publishing 1 day after Transients Magazine's 1st birthday — 14 June — and it is with the utmost delight that I present to you Issue III: Ends & Beginnings

The next 40-odd pages are chock-full of absolutely phenomenal work from this issue's 36 contributors. They all have their own take on what this theme means to them, their lives, and their art. I hope some of it speaks to you.

As for my ends and beginnings, I am in a time which I know I will look back on with deep fondness and joy later on. As I write this, I sit at the singular table in my new flat, my little black and white kitty on my lap, rain pattering on the skylight above. This flat is peaceful and sunny and just for me. A top-floor loft, all the windows point to the heavens and it occurred to me recently that I feel as though I live in the sky. An eyrie, for me and the cat.

This place is full of beginnings. This year has been full of beginnings — and some ends, and some restarts, as well.

I was thinking of my

Birkenstocks yesterday. They're a mess — the leather is cracked and worn, stitched together on one strap by a cobbler in a suburb of Berlin. They fit like a glove, and — having bought them for \$7 in a street market in Istanbul — have done me very well over the years. I feel so much joy just looking at them. Each chip and crack and soft spot worn smooth reminds me of a hundred beautiful days of adventure and travel and summer holidays, of lazy

“Much like Birkenstocks, relationships need to be lived in to be comfortable.”

mornings taking out the bins and make-shift shower shoes in grimy hostels. But they're only one example of the many things in my life which are more beautiful for having been lived in. Objects — the pan I've cooked with so much love in, the torn paperback,



the jacket which travelled a year with me. But people, too — much like Birkenstocks, relationships need to be lived in to be comfortable. And every day, I live in mine a bit more.

This flat is an end of so many things that had to end, and it's the start of a lot of things I want to begin. And for any of that to happen, I need to live in it. We need to live in the times of our life, end to beginning and back again. The only way out is through, and the only thing after through is out.

We hope you enjoy this issue.



Nadav and Melissa
Co-Editors
Transients Magazine

This magazine is dedicated to impermanence.

Deconstruction

M.P. Powers

I've gotten wild with my pickaxe, trashing
everything I spent all my life building.
It's been quite liberating,
and O so practical.
I can look in a mirror now
and see something.
I can look at a clock and see nothing
but a sad
compass of death.
The clock in me
is dead.
The hours I am living are no longer
living me.
The whole in the ecstasy
I am
is forgetfulness.
I am whole in the blood
of the grape,
and where my tragedies and weaknesses are fermented
a mysterious power
gathers.
I drain a cup
of oblivion,
slam my pickaxe into another wall.
It crumbles and out
falls
a ring.

Moonflowers

Maren Logan

I was washing his back

when thin layers
of flesh peeled off in curls like apple skin,
floated under the bed,

instead of crying, we laughed and wore
his shoulders like a bedsheet ghost

I bet, he said, I could walk through these walls.

I bet I could walk on water, I replied.

when our tongues could taste tomorrow's oxygen,
the type we'd never drank before, ripe, unbreathed,

when gravity wrestled arm and arm
with the swarm of blackholes outside our door,
crying like an infant for milk,

he turned up the broken heater

when washing his back on yellowed sheets, watching
the blackholes' bellies swell and shrink,

he said, *we're just like fish food, sinking*

to the bottom of the tank.

the end of the world was just a goldfish

(when the world ended,
I imagined lightning or thunder, but it was just
tundra and stale motel tap water and politicians
on the TV pleading for forgiveness)

when my cavities cracked, my moth mouth
birthed butterflies,

this radiation transmitted kisses

I was washing his back

when today collided with tomorrow,
there was no more fight, no more war

when the end came knocking on our door
it gave no warning,

Sorry, that's my room service, he said.

our abscessed drained, the pus glowed in the dark like
liquid stars they rained up, and so did we,

the last thing I remember thinking was
our bodies pulled apart looked like petals
blooming.

Fever Dream
Cait Wright



Bloom

Jack Wright

Will you tell me this
flowering young man

is a credit to the mother
who raised him

and the father
who could not?

She redefined
everything said

son flower
and be.



*Rachel
Schwebach*

Spring

Summer



Autumn



Winter

A Woman, Made and Unmade

Allie LaJoie

Dear God,

You might remember me as the acne-faced, unkempt-eyebrowed preteen with an unsound obsession for the stereotypical bad boy, but I have long since blossomed into something wonderfully womanly.

Now, do forgive my vulgarity, but you generously blessed me with round breasts and a rare sort of softness that brings even the most hardened warriors to my feet. When he snaked his calloused palms up my shirt, he said I was smoother than jazz on a rainy day. It was indeed a rainy day, and Edith Piaf played gently in the background. He tugged me against him, enticing me to give in to the hardness, the heat. You gifted me a second heart and placed it between my legs. She beat through the walls and brought the house down.

You anointed me with a loud personality and an even louder voice, one I do not need to use to get what I want, but if I so choose, he says that I am simply irresistible. He said he would throw himself into the ocean if I moaned sweetly into his ear and said he could use me as he saw fit. He promised he'd carve out a home from the fieriest pits of hell with his bare hands if I got to my knees, looked up at him through my lashes, and took him through the length of my throat.

You afforded me eyes that see through a man's soul effortlessly, forcing out the vilest, gravest, most depraved thoughts, leaving them slick around my finger, tighter than the hand around my neck.

In him, my womanhood was cemented. I remember looking at myself in his mirror, lips swollen, eyes bigger than I remember, hair messy, and breathing hard, gasping almost.

He handed me an apple; I asked him what it was. He told me not to worry, so I took a big bite, and there starts the decay.

In my womanhood, you endowed me well, but I demand to know why cunning wasn't part of your benevolence. I need to know why you skipped out on sagacity, because when it mattered, none of what you blessed me with served me well.

Three weeks in and it is already worse than rot; it is a cancerous parasite, eating me alive and filling me with filth. I find myself in your domain, on my knees for worship of a different kind. I look up through my lashes, eyes wet instead of my sex. Sunlight taunts me through the stained glass, cleverly settling on the curve of my neck, the heavy guilt of sin around it like a collar. I take you through the length of my throat in prayer, voice raspy from screaming your name in vain then and screaming your name in desperation now.

“God, what does 'if you eat this, you will die' mean to Eve, mean to me, when we do not know death?”. You didn't have an answer then; do you have one now?

Beneath our womanhood, Eve and I were just girls. Now we're no longer girls, nor women; we're burnt, unmade, disassembled. We are used, both by you and your first creation.

His rib is foreign in me; it's fighting for space in my small frame, and I never find myself standing straight. Please take it back and feed it to him. Allow me to melt into the Earth where I belong, where I can rest undone.

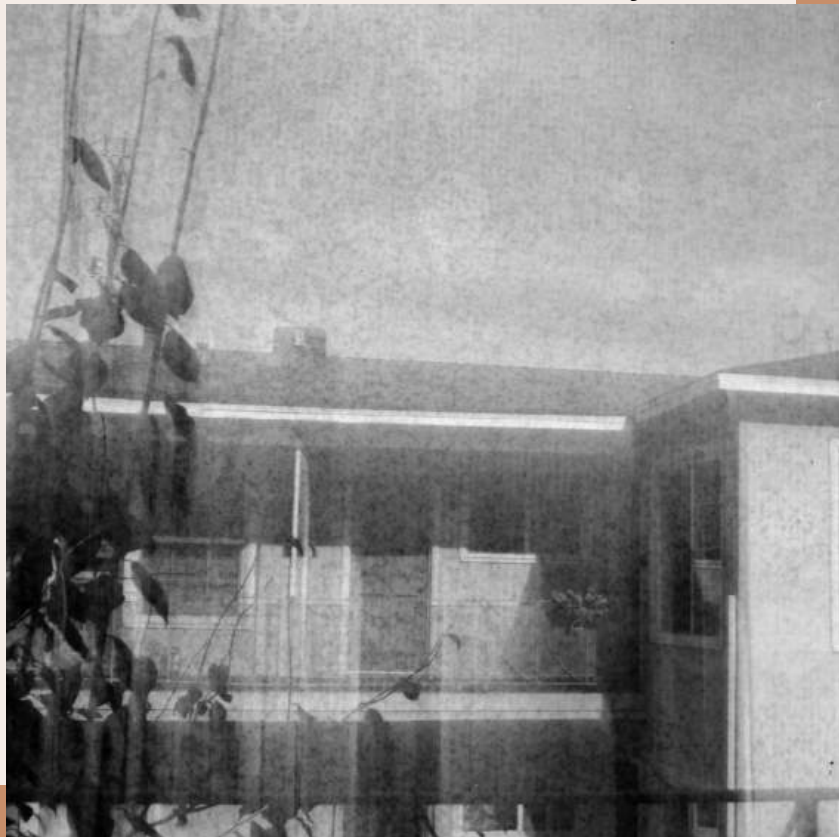
My grandfather was frightened by shadows
and he believed in ghosts all his life; I imagined
the worst of them had come, beside those
recently conjured by his failing mind,
and he used to describe life as walking
on weeds where there used to be a road;
how dead animals are no longer
called roadkill, removed, but the rotting fold
of nature & in the moments he was beautiful
like the dandelion's yellow buds,
they would pluck the last glimpse
into his colorful soul.

continues on next page...

Changing Lanes *Brandon Shane*

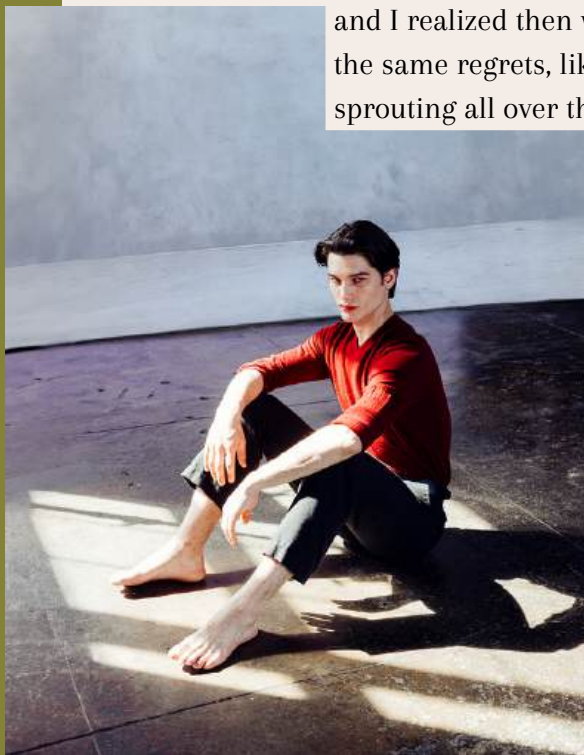
Lift Off

Jerry J White III



I wanted him to think about wildflowers
in the early light, and red wine on rose wood,
watching wheat harvested in late spring;
but these images aren't useful for a dying man,
as leaping dogs turn wise and sedentary,
they become another item on the patio,
alongside the rocking chair;
poet's mold life into a nice clay ball,
but yesterday his house caught fire,
and the cat has become reclusive.

I crawled underneath a van without tires,
pictured it moved, garage closed, engine on,
while I dreamed something spectacular,
and I realized then why they all share
the same regrets, like pyramids
sprouting all over the world.



Vladimir Grey
Svetlana Dubkova

Ode to the Exception

Payton Kroymann

It hurts to remember us in
my neighbor's pool—where the cottonwood
trees blanketed our pickled shoulders &
stuck to the wrinkled bee that
drowned. I learned a lot about
you that day. You splashed around
with glee: It's dead! It's dead! A
life that we didn't understand
had ended. And all you did was cheer.
I never celebrated death.
I don't know how you could. And
it was just a gentle bee.

M P Pratheesh

Untitled 1, 2, 3, 5



That One's Yours to Catch

Ronan Hart

The beach is endless. Waves fall away, rally, batter the shore again and again, relentless, frothing, furious. The clamour of their crashing and the biting gusts of wind are a constant wash of static to my ears.

Behind, from where this must have begun (although I can't quite remember where this began), a solitary mercury light recedes ever further, a distant star fading at the centre of a desolate solar system, seen from a fleeing craft choosing to test the mercy of the void.

A rising dune and the gradual curve of the shoreline at last puts an end to the mercury lamp's glow. The frugal luminescence of that dying sun is gone, but darkness doesn't rule, yet, for above, the sidereal vault stretches. A backlit ink-blue blanket, the stars gaps in the weave, a countless host ruled by one. The moon, massive and silent, a glimmering pearl, regal face twisted into an expression between shock and pain and fury, bathes the beach in an opaline half-light. A powdering of snow lies atop the sand, and together they sparkle and shimmer under the lunar gaze.

Footprints lead the way, impressions of a sole close enough to my own that I can follow them without leaving fresh tracks of my own. There's no other sign of who was here before me besides the path they've left.

To one side; the dunes, crawling ever skyward,
The rounded back of some slumbering colossus
Marram grass along the spine, swaying in the squalls.
To the other side; the churning sea,
Waves crashing, receding, crashing again, incessant.
All around, a wind-blasted shore laid with a pearly dusting.
A carapacial carpet set with elementally smoothed stones.
Ahead and behind; darkness, emptiness. For the moment.

Minutes or hours pass. Time is elastic, stretching arrhythmically, as though attempting to mimic the pulse of the waves. Endless wind carries flurries of snow and grit and the wine-dark sea's ceaseless moaning along the interminable shoreline, seeming to be the edge of a vast and primal protocontinent, a Pangaeaic ouroboros. The dunes climb into a hulking umbra.

Still, time passes. It's unclear how long, exactly; to the celestial ceiling, it makes no difference. I stop, my feet neatly slotting into two prints already there, as if whoever came before me also stopped at this very place, had this very thought. The star's brittle, freezing light was ancient before this place was but a haphazard disc of dust and gas orbiting an infant sun. The silver ghost light was here when the beach eked into existence and will shine on it still as it falls into molten oblivion.

And so, time continues to pass.

One foot falls before the other, again, and again.

Until.

Voices.

Music.



Abandoned in the Dunes
- Farewell Spit - New Zealand

D.C. Nobes

I blink, once, twice, not sure when I stopped trying to keep track of how far I've come or where I'm going.

On the water, a ferry, white railings festooned with lights, floats, casting a joyful reflection, iridescent on the water's surface like watery fireflies. I hear a bark of laughter, a cheer, a pop of something bubbly. Then something flits skyward, a breath is held, and a firework explodes, huge, magnificent, kaleidoscopic and for an instant, outshining the stars. The ferry drifts, and is so close, as though one might only reach out, dip one toe into the surf, and touch that distant festival.

And I catch myself, right hand halfway raised, one foot lifted toward the sea. The waters, freezing, frothing, wait gleefully. I mustn't take another step. I'd be lost. Even here, in this halfway place, I know that much for sure.

I shut my eyes, hold them closed tight for a while, and try to master my still-ragged breathing, clench and unclench my fists, until at last, I can turn away and begin following the footprints again. I'm glad of them, this unseen guide giving me direction on this beach.

As I walk, the carnival boat keeps pace with me, faster or slower, moving parallel, always just on the horizon, as though we're connected by an invisible cosmic rope or line.

A light.

There's a light ahead.

I pause, as a wretch lost in a desert might regard the appearance of an oasis as a trick of the eye. And yet, as I begin again to walk, jog, run, through the drifting snow and shoving wind towards it, all the while matching the footprints stride for stride, the orange glow of a lantern doesn't fade or flicker.

The lantern hangs from a metal pole, swaying in gusts of wind. A night fisherman stands within the shifting, lambent circle. His untended pole sits on a tripod, the line from its tip catching the

silver starlight before vanishing towards the waterline.

At his feet, driven upright into the sand, a glass bottle with a red straw protruding, half filled with what looks like cola. There's a stained satchel, open, spilling paintbrushes, tubes of paint, a lacquered palette onto the sand, and next to that, another tripod, an easel bearing a pristine blank canvas.

The night fisherman doesn't speak. He doesn't seem bothered by the snow or the wind or the waves or me. Instead, a puff of smoke bursts from his mouth as he removes an almost-dead cigarette.

"Hello?" I say, my voice a cracked, dry whisper, not intending the greeting as a question, and yet needing assurance that the man in front of me exists.

He throws the cigarette away, reaches into the pocket of his baggy trousers, draws another from a pack, lights it with a lighter from his jacket pocket, and takes a drag.

"Hello, yourself," he replies. Each time he inhales, the glowing tip of the cigarette illuminates a deeply lined, angular face, a shock of white hair perched atop his canyon brow, perfectly unkempt, seemingly impervious to the wind. "What brings you here?" he asks. His voice is high and nasally, confident. Not unfriendly.

"I'm not sure. I think I'm following something. Or, chasing something."

He smiles then, big and broad and full, as if my answer was the right one. His teeth are crooked, and a little stained, but the smile reaches all the way up to his deep brown eyes glinting in the lantern's glow. "You know," he says through smoke, "I'm searching for something myself. An idea."

"An idea," I repeat, as though trying the word out for the first time, swirling it around my mouth as a sommelier might test a wine.

"Yes," he says. "We don't know anything without an idea. There's nothing without them. Ideas tell us what to do, where to go, how to feel." He exhales another huge plume of smoke which is instantly

snatched away by a ferocious gust of wind. Snow flurries densely between us, but he doesn't appear to notice.

"They're out there, millions of them. We just don't know them until we meet them. And then, we fall in love. We have to be patient." He scrunches his face up, as though in pain, as he goes on. "Desire is the bait on the hook, but we have to wait and wait and wait, and if we're lucky, even if you don't see it fully or hear it clearly, we *feel* it."

He reaches his left hand up before him, grabbing at something and yet, nothing, then opens his palm, and his fingers dance and twirl as if some sliver of celestial fluid flows between them.

The roiling sea seems to double its efforts, as one, two, three waves break and crash in succession, almost falling over themselves in their fury.

"We feel it," he repeats softly, "and then we know it." The waves and the wind and the snow quiet, together, almost at once. He takes a long drag, the glow lighting up a crooked, faraway smile. "And then we want to know it fully, we want to let that feeling enter your bloodstream. We want to *create*. And it's so beautiful. A living daydream. An unreal place made real. Or a real thing made unreal. A melody blossoming into a song. A word becoming a sentence, a paragraph, a verse, a script, a poem, a story."

No sound. For the first time since I've been here, there's no sound. Or at least, the closest approximation of silence. The sea has calmed to a gentle, lapping swash. The wind and snow have died.

"I'm following the ferry," I say. "Or maybe it's following me." I look out at the floating carnival which has stopped moving now that I've stayed to talk with this stranger. Echoes of laughter and joy bounce across the water. A piano plays a jaunty waltz, and it reverberates off the still water.

He follows my gaze, squinting, and I realise he can't see the ferry. He puts his cigarette in his mouth, which is angled into a

rueful smile. He can't see it, but he knows it's there. He contemplates the becalmed sea for a time, then turns around, still smiling as he blows out the smoke.

"I believe that one's yours to catch," he says, still wearing an envious, knowing grin as he grabs the bottle and drinks cola through the straw.

His line twitches once, twice, glinting in the light of moon and stars. We both watch it silently. Finally, he sighs, lights another cigarette. "I think I'll do a little painting while I wait. Good night." And with that, I know our conversation is over. I leave him, and as I exit the circle of light, the footprints begin again.



Dreamraiser

Marie V. Recalde

I wonder if I should have asked him if he saw anyone else. After some time, I glance behind me, and lantern light has shrunk away to a tiny thing, a lone lampyrid swaying gently between dune and ocean.

The carnival ferry is moving again, too, still following me. Maybe it *is* me following the boat. I stop, gazing up at the stars again, but they offer nothing, no pattern or rhyme or reason.

And time stretches on again.

The wind picks up again, keening, low and mournful, now fierce and screaming.

Snowflakes hang in the air, not drifting or floating or falling.

The waves crash with the slow drone of distant thunder.

The footprints lead on. And on.

Until, a light.

There's a light ahead. Another light.

A bright, white glow, with a shimmering, sapphire blue corona. Within the circle cast from the light, there's another easel, another canvas. But there's no stranger this time, no satchel, no cigarettes, no cola bottle. And the easel is not blank.

In rich, thick paint, still glistening as if it's only just been laid down, and wrought in heavy, purposeful, almost aggressive, almost violent strokes, is a scene of a darkened beach lying beneath a vault of stars, a wave-battered shoreline, a long figure walking, footprints carved into the sand before and after them. At the canvas' edge, the barest hint of orange light reflected on the water.

I spin around, but there's no one here. Behind the easel, out from the mercury light's glow, footprints continue on and on through the snow-dusted sand, into darkness.

she wants no burial, but
her body taken
to the north
to be consumed
by wolves.

her remains to rest
on the moss
of rocks touched
by sun
in the spring.
the wolves
to bow and kiss earth
before scavenging.

her friend inquires
into the legality
of depositing
human remains
onto state lands
where said remains
are to be consumed
by wildlife and/or
otherwise disposed of.

prohibited
under all laws,
and he is told,
god.

die how you love.

no burial

Sean G. Meggeson



Death in Her Garden

AR Quinlan

*Most of the flowers depicted in this painting are
poisonous and include:*

- *Foxglove*
- *Anemone*
- *Deadly Nightshade*
- *Oleander*
- *Daffodils*

see page 53 for a full list

14900 Majestic Oak Drive

Olivia Calderón

I begin with a scarlet door
in a brick house with a
sloping driveway.

In my mind's eye I can
see the house – its
fall, and red clay stains
my knees.

Handed blunt bronze
scissors too big for
my hands, I cut myself
out.

But I can still see where
I used to be, jagged scraps
of memory clinging to the
holly tree, resting in the
puppy chewed stairwell,
draped over wildflowers.

These days I'm thrashed
around by cold Northern
winds, waiting to snag
on picket fences,
manifesting a moment's
peace, delivered by
the cardinal I raised.

Until then, find me where
candle wax goes when it burns.

Doubt

Margaux Williamson

I remember each time you asked me *How do I look*, like you didn't shimmer from all angles, eternally prismatic, and your penetrating gaze when you called me on my shit, which, since I'm making admissions, kind of turned me on, like that time when you rapped along with Kendrick at MSG before we hit the bar where we drank ourselves drunk and stole two coasters that I kept for a long time, which reminds me, do you remember when the bartender asked if we were *together*, and you didn't answer, just laughed it off like it was a joke and not a binary question — which was odd now

that I think of it, because I remember you as decisive except for one other time, on the night I turned 29 and drank a bottle of whiskey while you downed martinis, and I said I loved you, not like



as a sister or a friend, that it was okay, *really*, that you didn't feel the same, and you sounded so small when you asked what would happen if you *did* feel the same and I slurred *But you don't* and again you asked *What if I did* before I blacked out, and the next morning we ate over-easy eggs with barely browned toast while you texted your boyfriend and I feigned indifference about you texting your boyfriend

and we both acted like nothing happened the previous night, but maybe something did because, years later, bottle in hand, I remember that anxious *What if*, and I shoot toward the blackout again.

Alice Dunst
Svetlana Dubkova

Eulogy

By the time I'd arrived to see you,
they were calling you a *cadaver*.
And I thought, *If I had to be reduced to a body,*
it better be a dead one, too because that way
it might cancel everything else out,
like my back and forth between hotels and the hospital.
I'm 23 now, which means the guilt I carry
should be mine and mine alone; no church nor family name.
No grey area encounters with questionable friends
—but I digressed. It wouldn't make sense to say
this cadaver was the only shoulder my father could cry on,
or this cadaver stifled my mother's rage
for longer than I've been alive.
I didn't know much about this cadaver, anyway,
mostly just that my family loved her and I should, too.
When I agreed to say a few words,
I knew I couldn't tell those stories out loud.
Who were you if not the end of the line
when I'd trace my own shadows
back to the place they were cast?
I wish I knew, apart from the silent smiles
and the broken figurines, the candles
on your nightstand, and the rosaries before bed.
I get up off my knees and ask for grace.

your first remembered harassment

jw summerisle

here, an abject lesson in
drawing blood from
adult bears –

red-beaked terns scream
and skim the air in
the shape of human

flesh. white skin all
nicked with wounds.

history is the intersection
of folklorical narratives
with the bodies of small

girls. and we are
born with black caps,
backwards capuchins

choked in mother's hair.
that i could out-climb
erebus, wrecked or
sunk with weeds. a

seabed rich with
hagfish and their
hungry, kiss-filled

mouths. i



always was
uncomfortable

the things
that men

will say –

the body is no
blessing. and black
eyes fix you

Sasha Winchester
Svetlana Dubkova

Milk

Srotoswini Sarma

motherless birds
will perish and

bears have no
wish to starve.

so

scream to the
wind and

be ready. you

wings cut
your terror

in half.



A Promise // A Request

Paul Allatson

Once upon a time I was
beguiled by a promise
embodied by full lips parting
without haste, by the lashes that
bloomed around his eyes, by the
meticulously plucked space
between his eyebrows, by the
way he held his hands at right
angles to his hips, as if defying
the anatomy of his wrists, by his

Once started, do not weaken.
Mulch my heart for compost.
My blood no longer needs a
heart for acceleration. Have
my hair. I have been told it
has a brief future anyway.
Have it. What use to me is
hair so dry and thin? Have my
skin. Peel it away. Cure it, then
drape its rash-spattered

wrists, by his walk, his laugh, his touch, his sturdy skin, his tongue. The promise radiated outwards from his body to encompass the sheets entangling our limbs and the cafe tables on which our fingers would rearrange crystals of sugar before meeting in moments of heady silence, the air around us crackling with the static of our making of ourselves, of our secession from a universe we no longer had time for. I held my breath for him, for the promise, sometimes for hours, until our reunion permitted air to reenter me, until our salivas mingled once again and my skin adhered to his with sweat, inseparable, creating a four armed and four legged organism attached to the same labyrinthine thread, a sign that the promise could roll around, day in and day out, inexhaustible, happy. I held my breath, sometimes over the hours when the yoke of an unavoidable separation had settled on me, dragging me down into the mud, into gutters, until I

pattern across one of your pretty feature windows. Once skinless, you will have done me the favour of facilitating the scratch of finger on bone. Fingers and bones. Burdening structures. Snap them off. My sleep will be gentler without the fear of breakage. Before you go any further, you should do something about my mouth. I recommend a series of knife cuts to do away with my grin, followed by the slow extraction of my teeth with a claw-hammer made from Sheffield steel. I would be equally content, on the other hand, were you simply to snip your scissors through my disregarded tongue. Kidneys? Stomach? Lungs? Intestines? Liver? You may have my offal. Go ahead. Gouge. Since air and food and water no longer sustain me, they are useless baggage. My remaining organs are yours. Sever them. Remove all those bloody bits of me and throw them to your cats. They will, I'm sure, appreciate me as delicacy.

found my cooled-blue self
among fallen leaves and
discarded bits of plastic, my drift
accompanied by yellowing sheets
of newspaper, not breathing but
certainly not perishing because
if I were to die, it could only be
for him, before him, and for the
promise. The loving promise.
The promise that began
gestating the moment we
decided to share our first meal, a
promise confirmed by the
warming touch of a sun that had
emerged, as if only for us, in the
coldest of our benign
hemisphere's months, a promise
that included the unanticipated
intrusion of a goose that
insinuated itself between us on
the rug I had spread upon the
dewy grass, a goose that began to
partake of our hardly sampled
picnic, hence the laughter that
enabled me, finally, to lean over
and move my lips across his
pale, inviting cheeks. The
promise. It was given sounds by
him, then words and long,
sinuous sentences, paragraphs
without punctuation,

Take my head. Pluck out my
tired, grit- encrusted eyes. Use
your bluntness to hack through
my neck. I will not flinch. I long
ago became inured to the pain
you bring. If you wish, plant
something in my skull, there in
the convoluted white mass where
roots can lovingly coil. My
memories should provide an
added bonus. You can fill a jar
with them and tip them out at
your dinner parties with those
still laughing and in the know,
the proof of my impossible
desperation. Have my head, but
do not jump startled if, when
headless and on four resilient
limbs, I scuttle for a while down
stairs and over carpets. Mere
aftershock. Shot nerves. You can
have my nerves when the
trembling stops. They should
come out in threads if you pull
with care, ideal replacements for
the twine we used to bind the
stakes to the plants I sowed in
your garden each spring. Please
accommodate my sighs. Like the
wind, they are strong enough to
displace the dankest of air,

stories, histories, aimed at me, dedicated to me, featuring me. To me, the prospect of a future, proffered with the sweetest of smiles upon the rust-proofed surface of his speech. The promise! It banished sighs and sleeplessness. It demanded the reinvention of colours. I stood before a man who claimed to answer prayers, who on bended knee begged me to respond until I reciprocated with my own odes and gestures, until I rejected conjecture by embracing his shape and substance, by moving my world into the spaces he conjured up for me. I accepted it all as his gift, a sonorous eloquence borne on a breath that destroyed the distance between his eager mouth and my burning ears.

but don't get alarmed if they enter your dreams and linger, burdening your nights with scenes of my happy flight from you. That will be a temporary insomnia. To help guide yourself back into sleep, you could fashion from my scrotal sack a purse in which to jangle the coins you saved on me. My prick will make an interesting memento, shrivelling and gathering dust behind the photos on your dresser. (By the way, a meticulous probing of my pubic region will uncover a host of fattening arthropods for your desserts.) My arms and legs you can halve or quarter at your leisure, to be stacked by your shed for future kindling. As for my back, make of it a stage from which better to orate your newfound disinterest.



UNRAVELLING

Helen Gwyn Jones

VOWS

*All romantics meet the same fate someday,
Cynical and drunk and boring someone in some dark café.*

In sickness and in sickened health,
To have and not to hold,
I'm told is much like drowning; that
The worst part is the cold.

What do you do all day, if you
Don't fuck, and you don't drink?
I write on anvils hammer-songs,
And reprobate the pink.

But think - to hold and not to have;
An abject yet to save?
Should I have loved you by quick-step,
Your brevity so brave.

If you had told me something when
You forged across my spine,
Then time would tell the self-spelled truth;
My ribs sit straight in line.

I had you folded over-out
On shoulders damp and spare
When summer, in her lonely step
Turned back to listless air.

Later, tracing old Euphrates
'Cross my collar bones,
You let me know that rivers run
Once past every stone.

Then, in prostrate hope I spoke:
How long 'til this turns black?
*A moment lasts forever when
It's stretched out on a rack.*

And so, to have and not to hold
Will be the future's drag.
But not so old, I'll heave it now:
To hold and not to have.

Kit Renshaw

The Five Stages of Decomposition

Hannah Birss

Autolysis

You're lying in bed next to them in the dark, watching the moonlight play across their skin. They have wrapped themselves in blankets, cocooned without a concern for your warmth. You note this is a pattern, and watch them breathe. You hold your own breath - respiration stops, and you feel something in your chest flutter and die.

You realize that you don't love them anymore. A rosebush untended dies - your roses have wilted and dried, and all that remains are snarled husks. You've done your best to cover it up, and planted other flowers to distract from the remains, but at the root of things is a dried-up gordian knot of thorns. You stiffen, your backbone straightening without the benefit of conscious thought, and enter an unmovable state. The structural integrity of you, in relation to them, begins to disintegrate.

The next morning, you don't make them their coffee. They grumble at you about it, and you realize that you never received a real acknowledgement or proper thank you before - It is only in the absence of the services you provide that you receive notice. One by one, the cells that made up your relationship begin to die. Decay has begun, but you wonder if things started rotting long before your love withered on the vine.

Bloat

You bottle things up. Angry words and thoughts writhe beneath your skin, an infestation of rage that is close to bursting. You've been together for so long, does it really matter if one of the pair is deceased? Can you bring someone back from the dead, cobble together a laboratory of affection, build a more modern prometheus in unequal parts? Is it worth it to scavenge the pieces

of your 'partnership', to sew them back together? You ask yourself this again and again, so that the words become like a prayer in the midst of putrefaction. You find yourself avoiding them. They confront you, stab you with words like penknives, and all that you have contained hisses out a poisonous gas. They step back with the force of it. Laid bare, you show them the maggots that are consuming you from the inside.

Active Decay

You don't know why you bothered. Tears and other fluids leak out of you, oozing with each step. There was an attempt for a day or so, before the status-quo was reestablished. You realize you must bury yourself, and only you can plan the funeral. You grow smaller with each step that brings you closer to the graveyard.

Advanced Decay

You leach out into the environment. Mourners are notified and passerby alerted to the end of things. Blackened bits of bones break loose like splinters, poking through your remains to stab at others that have stumbled across you. Your tendons have dried, your heart a withered muscle that refuses to pump. Any skin you have left is no longer soft - exposure has left it like leather. You are nearly unrecognizable in this state.

Skeletonization

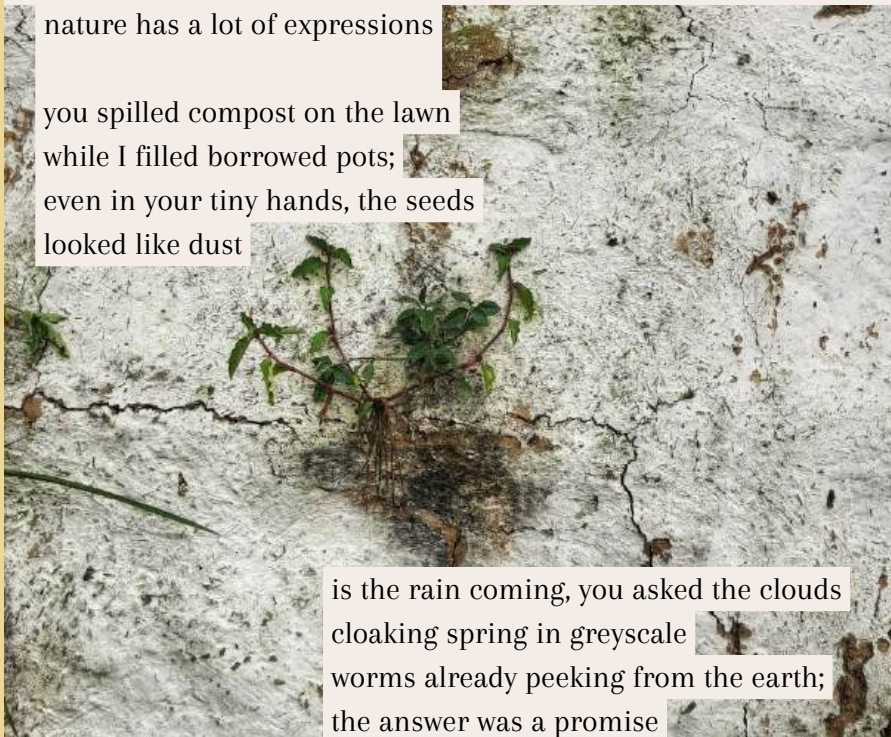
All that remains are weathered bones. You have no fight or bite left - your teeth and nails have fallen out. You pack your things, each box leaving you a little more bare. Everything has collapsed in, and the essence of what knit the two of you together is gone. You mourn, plant seeds over your grave, find solace in the cycle. You are returned to the universe, and your atoms will knit back together in a different form. Flowers will grow and bloom again, and sooner or later the thing that was your heart will start to beat once more.

The seeds came in a paper bag
with an illustrated bumblebee, smiling
so you told the picture
bees don't have faces
and I replied

Untitled 1 *Rutuja*

nature has a lot of expressions

you spilled compost on the lawn
while I filled borrowed pots;
even in your tiny hands, the seeds
looked like dust

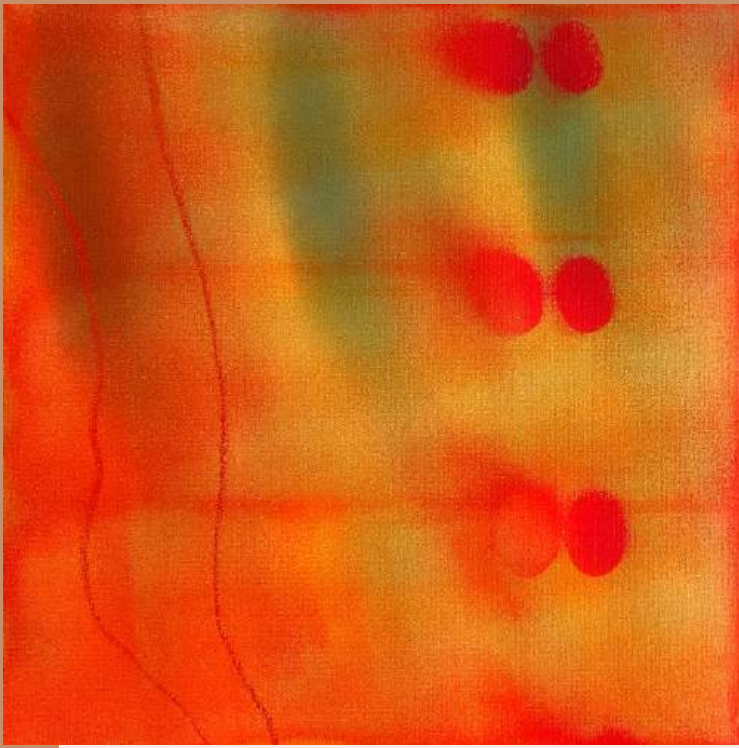


is the rain coming, you asked the clouds
cloaking spring in greyscale
worms already peeking from the earth;
the answer was a promise
carried in the weight of eager birdsong
and fledgling roots

Birth of a Florist

Romy Morreo

You waited
crouched in overgrown grass
asked every fresh morning
why won't they grow, until they listened
and germinated, new stars in the soil's sky
the beginning of our wildflower galaxy.



Hotel
Cait
Wright

The Sisyphos of Bruno-Bürgel-Weg

every morning

M.P. Powers

they would pass under my window: a tall old man
pushing his quarter ton
companion in a double-wide wheelchair
the wheelbase of the contraption
was too wide for it to fit on the sidewalk
they would travel on the street the cars swerving
around them honking people ogling
no one offering help it was understood
that this was the old man's boulder
back humped eyes bulging old legs
driving stopping every fifty feet or so to catch
his breath or mop his troubled face I didn't know

the relationship of the two men
I only knew that they came from the care
home down the street and would return
at sunset passing under
my window they were
the timepiece of the street the personality
and little ornament dangling from it
but then one day they didn't go
by and that day turned into several
months and I wondered if they'd been moved
to another care home if there was a death
if the old man had said to hell
with his boulder but no one I've asked
seems to know and now the only
memento left to remind any of us of them
is a green dumpster parked at the construction
site next to the care home
the dumpster is the property of a german
company called SISYPHOS and in big white letters
it has that word painted on the side of it.

Holding onto Water II

Nadia Jones





queen with a blue mask...
don't break the scarlet thread!

Irina Tall

That atrocious sapphire carpet, navy-like
Dad's suit, stretching itself to fit his
overindulgent tendencies.
Fruit salad—sung, not eaten—by a mellifluous
child wearing your guava pink pajamas
littered with custom-made bows out of a picture book.
Oh, how you dream of breaking your bones to
squeeze into that fabric again.

Bellies stretched out—
There's a different body inside of your mother.
Does it need a kiss to feel better?
Even so, jubilant and joyful, you chew
on your building blocks. Your rolls
of fat, buoyant in the sun surrendering
its way through the powdery blinds
Mom's gleeful laugh showers out of her,

**Building
Blocks**
*Payton
Kroymann*

beaming teeth, white as whole milk—Dad,
wrapped in home, shed of his tie. Both
of them grinning like penciled caricatures:
She looks like a busted can of biscuits!
And she scoops you up onto her hip,
smelling like berries and flour and
the train in which you missed on purpose.
There are some things you never learn,
and there are some things you do—
To still have those building blocks
in various shapes and sizes, soaked
with drool in your mouth.
Do you know if you will ever spit them out?

Ashley Tripp

Reservations at The Guest House



Homes I Cannot Return to

Melanie Hyo-In Han

I.

old baby photo top carpeted stairs pink overalls
toy frying pan parents tell me house small garden
my first steps my birthday wearing a *hanbok*
friendly neighbor english lady said i looked like a doll

II.

photos rural tanzania our home tightly packed red mud
thatched roof my first baby goat local maasai women
foreign child small eyes very straight dark hair maasai
woman purple *shuka* perched upon her hip my face
buried her chest

III.

house cemented backyard corner banana trees
tortoises *kobe* Swahili word 'tortoise' ate everything scared
chomp finger feeding them
ndizi watch from away

IV.

grandparents' old house small room always locked
grandpa items kept cold snuck inside
freezing and dark smell of dried *myullchi* old books mothballs
couldn't get out cried pounded screaming
eventually found me nightmares locked away

V.

lived adjacent ukombozi hospital 3 rooms unusual luxury
long hallway bena made *chipsi mayai* the smell hallway
linger there for days

Dawn is a woman

You see the crimson and the rust
but not the ashes and the dust.
Dawn comes in with padded feet
and gloved fingers, careful not to rouse
but to encourage to rise.

A gentle nudge, a sapphire kiss
a cool breath, wake, she breathes -
from in between the crevices of slumber
where dreams sediment, and all words lie.

Her titian hair, and amethyst dress
bronzed muscle, glinting eyes -
dawn is here to play.

Guide to hide and seek,
we chase dappled things
it's always dark somewhere
but dawn drives a hard bargain.
Her playspace
the point of no return
between 'yesterday is over'
and 'tomorrow is over the horizon'.

She pours that liquid gold
over the cracks of the earth
gluing them back together
so even visible scars,
look like they've been repaired with
precious care and precious metal.

She saw it all
yesterday's aches and pains
troubles and trials
the evening that shrouded it
the night that blanketed it up
midnight that tied it up
all wrapped up in glittering stars
all pretty shadows to hide the bruises...

But in the daylight things look better -
with promise, hope, healing.

95
Manushaqe

Because in truth
even dawn has to break
before she turns ablaze.

Nandita Dutta



The Second Battle of the Pines

Dezmond Davanti

Woke up suddenly from a dream but I wasn't asleep. Zoned on a moment when the crows ceased screaming. We were in the backyard setting up chairs for the barbecue. A tall lady in a saree appeared on the deck and asked what I was doing. I turned around but you weren't there, just a vague haze where Toms hollow tree used to be before it collapsed and destroyed the garage during Hurricane Sandy. Then I remembered everyone was dead, we sold the house years ago. I politely excused myself and walked south. Might have just enough time to get zeppoles at John Gottis block party. By the time I made it to Jamaica Avenue I needed new shoes and sought the bass of a boom box but there was a smoldering church where Eric's used to be. A peal of laughter echoed in the distance and I stayed hot on the trail simply because the sirens said so. Near the coliseum, a man in a dashiki walked up to me and smiled, offering transit to a shoestore. He complimented my Z. Cavariccis and unable



going elsewhere

Melissa Owens

to tell if he was joking or not, returned a sheepish grin. In the abyss of my pocket to hand over my passport, I remember the zeppoles when the screaming starts again in a riot of sirens followed by the warcy of a golden eagle. The crows have put out an all-call for reinforcements. It was sunny all morning but somehow turned out to be a fine day in the Susquehanna Valley. The screams increase to a brilliant cacophony, rattling the windows as crows swarm from all directions blocking the sun.

Coffee, clues, 'The End' *M. Barnett*

You asked me out for coffee. Not like a date (at least I don't think), just company. Two mochas, and a range of puzzle books. I'd pretend not to know the clues so you'd explain them to me, and you did. Excited about solving one, I shouted the answer out and it echoed round the shop. You laughed while I covered my face, in shame of my fervour. We talked a while, until nyé on closing time, hen made our way home.

Across: 9) Quickly developed, intense feelings of affection/ object of desire, 5 letters

I bought a pot for brewing coffee on the stove, some whole beans too, and a hand grinder to tie it all off. I set to work in brewing some as best as I could, I measured out ratios, weighed the contents, checked the extraction. The idea being I could give you something you'd enjoy, if it wasn't me, at least I would have a hand in it. It became a ritual, each night we'd converge, and lean with our backs against the countertop, waiting to hear it gurgle on the hob. Sometimes you'd have a go in the process, and I'd always try to take over, 'you're doing it wrong'. When the coffee was poured, we knew we could carry our cups away to separate rooms, but there we remained. Sometimes talking, sometimes in silence, sometimes just laughing as we took the first sip.

1:13 Ratio, 20g coffee, 260g of water, avg. brewing time 7 mins on medium heat.

I met an old friend for an afternoon latte and we hashed out past events, reciting the time lapse of our year, like an off-beat podcast for young students. Of all the names my past contained, yours was

the hardest to mention. Saying it feels like sneezing on public transport, or sickly coughing. An embarrassing kind of vulnerability, the end of a bad cold you can't quite get over. I tried to avoid it when I could.

Symptoms include:

- Heavy heart
- Intense feelings of regret
- Difficulty letting go
- Sheer, bloody embarrassment

In a new city, in a new apartment, on some balmy summer night. Under the light of an old extractor fan I brewed some coffee on the stove. When it hissed to sound its readiness, I poured it out, into the same cups we used before. Small in size, coloured emerald green, hexagonal art deco shapes with a gold rim, one intact and one chipped at the side. I always used to take the chipped one, and made out in my head that it was some sacrifice for my affection, like I would take less to give you something whole. This time, I sipped from the one unburdened by flaws, just this once I wanted to not be the broken one.

The other mug sat there,
full and untouched
until it went cold.
I was fully aware,
I could have brewed less,
just enough for one person,
but some things just taste better, shared.

Artists' Statements

D.C. Nobes — Abandoned in the Dunes-Farewell Spit-New Zealand

The old chair abandoned in the dunes of Farewell Spit, South Island, New Zealand, has been discarded aimlessly, obviously deemed at the end of its usefulness.

Amita Saroya — Fragments

Artwaali's artistic journey is a captivating exploration of creativity and introspection through the medium of single-line illustrations. Each of these creations is a testament to a unique vision and innovative approach to art. By using a single continuous line to create intricate and detailed compositions, challenging to think outside the box and push the boundaries of traditional art forms. The art is not just visually striking but also deeply meaningful, often touching on themes of identity, emotions, and the human experience. The art is an attempt to embrace ambiguity and invite viewers to interpret in their own way. This open-endedness allows the art to resonate with a wide audience, sparking introspection and contemplation. Through art, it is encouraged to embrace creativity and think beyond the conventional, making the art unique and impactful.

Nadia Jones — Holding onto Water II

is an exploration of impermanence vs permanence in relation to grief and memory. As I watch myself and the people around me age I'm forced to reckon with my own temporality, thinking about what I'll leave behind. Heirlooms have always been intriguing to me, something that's left behind in order to pass along memory. Heirlooms can give you a sort of permanence in a way. I think about the stories I've been told by my parents, who heard it from theirs, who heard it from theirs and the collection of photos dating way back before I was born. To create memories and tell stories is how I'll mourn my impermanence all while creating permanence for the people around me by retelling theirs.

Jerry J White III — Lift Off

I have resided in this home for 7 years, marking it the longest I have lived in a single place. I captured this image, from my front door, on an expired film stock from the 70's. Shooting the film at a slower speed allowed me to explore the drift of my hand, capturing slow movement as I used light, like paint on the emulsion. This image is part of a book I am currently putting together entitled "Home".

Ashley Tripp — Reservations at The Guest House

A literal translation of the human soul/being as a guest house, sheltering all sorts of various and contradictory emotions/experiences under one roof. Not only is it necessary, but can be embraced.

Irina Tall — queen with a blue mask... don't break the scarlet thread!

Sometimes doubts overcome you, and they can be stronger and stronger, as if it were too hard a stone. The girl is a young princess who is trying to break the scarlet thread of the dungeon, where there is darkness and bright talking flowers... there is no wind or fruit, and only the peace of sleep, from which it is almost impossible to escape. My work in this world is focused on my 2021 series "Ghosts", where there is no line between reality and the world of sleep.

Svetlana Dubkova — Sasha Winchester; Vladimir Grey; Alice Dunst

I'm excited to share some of the first pieces from my new photographic portfolio series, Sasha Winchester. This new series is my first and will explore dreamlike, surreal imagery, and vivid color interplay through a distinctly feminine lens.

Srotoswini Sarma (fastflowingriver) — Milk

Once when I was visiting Benaras, an elderly boatman took me out on his boat and told me a story, the particulars of which have faded in my memory. But I remember one thing. He had stated in a booming voice, "माँ के दूध का क़र्ज़ कोई नहीं चुका सकता। इससे शुद्ध कुछ भी नहीं होता।" (Trans. No one can repay the debt of mother's milk. Nothing is purer than this.) Today, I dedicate this painting to him. It's a depiction of an androgynous jumble of milk and nerves, finding a moment for their child.

Rutuja — Untitled 1

As the aged walls weather into time's embrace, a testament to their journey emerges - a resilient plant, tenaciously weaving its roots into the remnants of what once stood. Here, in this juxtaposition of decay and growth, we witness the essence of life's eternal cycle. For in every ending lies the seed of a new beginning, a testament to nature's unwavering resilience and the beauty of transformation.

AR Quinlan — Death in Her Garden'

reimagines death as a nurturing gardener. The painting seeks to challenge the traditional perception of death as an end. Instead, it portrays death as a caretaker, cultivating and sustaining life even through elements that symbolize mortality (poisonous flowers). The serene and tender approach of the skeleton gardening is meant to show a comforting continuance of life in all things, rather than a finality. Death nurtures life, reflecting a balance.

Full List of Flowers portrayed in 'Death in Her Garden'

Oleander: All parts poisonous and can be fatal (pink; top left flower)

Foxglove: The leaves are the poisonous part and can be fatal (purple; left flower under humerus and next to ribs)

Lily of the Valley: flowers and leaves are poisonous, can be fatal (white; bottom left)

Daffodil: The bulb is the poisonous part and can be fatal (yellow; top right)

Anemone: Any part is poisonous and can cause mouth and stomach pain, vomiting, and diarrhea; can be fatal, but you're unlikely to keep eating it- it tastes very bad (white; left below daffodil)

Marigolds: Technically poisonous, but unlikely to cause more harm than irritation; not fatal (though it could be bad for pets) (orange; left below lavender & anemone)

Deadly Nightshade: All parts are poisonous and can be fatal (green leaves with small black fruits; bottom left)

Lavender: not poisonous to humans, although it can harm pets. However, lavender has a close association to death across history and is often used symbolically. (purple; right above marigolds and below anemone)



heavens above

Melissa Owens

This Issue's Contributors

Amita Saroya

An architect by profession based in India, I find my escape in Artwaali. An artistic journey is a captivating exploration of creativity & introspection through single-line illustrations. Each creation is a testament to a unique vision & innovative approach to art. The art touches on themes of identity, emotions, & the human experience in an attempt to embrace ambiguity & invite viewers to interpret in their own way. Find me on Instagram @artwaali

Paul Allatson

is a cultural critic, writer & academic editor based in Sydney, Australia, on the unceded lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. His poetry & short stories have been published in anthologies and literary outlets in the USA, UK & Australia. He can be followed on Twitter/X @PAllatson

Sean G. Meggeson

lives in Toronto, Canada, where he works as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist. He has written & lectured on such topics as Lacan & James Joyce, neurodiversity, & interspecies intersubjectivity. Sean has poems in *A Thin Slice of Anxiety*, *Blaze Vox*, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, & others. Blog: www.lippykookpoetrymachine.blogspot.com

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Melanie Hyo-In Han

Born in Korea and raised in East Africa, Melanie recently moved from the U.S. to the U.K. She is the author of *My Dear Yeast* (Milk & Cake Press, 2023) and *Sandpaper Tongue*, *Parchment Lips* (Finishing Line Press, 2021). Learn more at melaniehan.com. She can be found on Instagram at @melhan

Kit Renshaw

is a first year History student at the University of Oxford. He currently writes & edits for the syndicated student magazine *The ISIS* (italicised), enjoys Pina Coladas & occasionally likes getting caught in the rain. Find him on Instagram @kit.r.h

Rachel Schwebach

She can be found on Instagram @racheless4ever & on Twitter @indysmutpeddler

M P Pratheesh

is the author of several collections of poetry & essays in Malayalam. His poetry & art can be found in *Modern Poetry in Translation*, *Almost Island*, *The Portside Review*, *Indianapolis Review*, *Guftgu* and *Indian Literature*, and others. He won the Kedarnath Singh Memorial Poetry Prize in 2023. Recent publications include *Transfiguring Places* (Paper View, Portugal and *The Burial* (Osmosis Press, UK). He lives & works in Kerala, India. He can be found on X @mppratheshpoet and on Instagram @mppratheshpoetry

D.C. Nobes

is a physicist, a poet, & a photographer who spent most of his first 39 years in or near Toronto, Canada, then 23 years based in Christchurch, New Zealand, 4 years in China, & has retired to Bali. His poems & art photographs have been widely published. He can be found on Twitter @sebon521 and on Instagram @sebon52

Ronan Hart

lives in Belfast with his wife & son. His work has been featured on *Literallystories*, in *The Apiary*, *Hare's Paw*, *Orangepeel*, & is forthcoming on *The Fictional Cafe* & *Free Verse Revolution*.

He can be found on Instagram @rowgy_bear

Jack Wright

is a poet from Essex, UK. He lives & works in London. His poems have previously appeared in *Swim Press*, *Snippets Magazine* & the *Bedford Square Review*, & are forthcoming in *Crowstep Journal* and *MONO*.

Nadia Jones

b. 2002. Nadia is a queer artist from the unceded territories of the Syilx/Okanagan people currently studying at Emily Carr University. Jones uses a variety of mediums including photography, sculpture & poetry to express abstract concepts like grief, autonomy & identity. Their art can be found @pixelbunni_art on Instagram

Allie LaJoie

"Allie LaJoie, a mysterious figure seemingly everywhere and nowhere, finds solace in napping and wrestles with a chronic case of the joy of missing out. Discover her work in *Fig Tree Magazine*, Issue 3, Volume 1."

Jerry J White III

is a film artist & educator located in Los Angeles, CA. Jerry has directed 3 feature films & taught hundreds of photographers how to print, develop, & showcase their photography. Jerry believes in demystifying & democratizing the visual artform, empowering artists to see beyond their technology. Jerry teaches Film & Media at The School Of Los Angeles & is a co-owner of The Celluloid Collective. @bronsoncreative

Marie V. Recalde

is an artist, writer, translator & California native living abroad for the last decade. Her work has been featured in art galleries in the U.S. & Ukraine, as well as in publications worldwide. You can find her adventuring on Instagram at @imaginarymarie

Olivia Calderón

is a Cuban American poet based in Edinburgh. Her work has appeared in *Gutter*, *Interpret*, *The Inkwell*, & various local anthologies. She just graduated with her MSc in Creative Writing from the University of Edinburgh in 2023, & was shortlisted that year for the Grierson Verse Prize. She can be found on Instagram @oliviaduff

Margaux Williamson

(she/her/they) is a Queer reader, writer, & legal associate who works in advertising. She lives in the Midwest with her wife. Her work has appeared in *Complete Sentence*, *PULP Lit Mag*, & is forthcoming in *miniMAG*.

Irina Tall Novikova

is an artist & illustrator. She graduated from the State Academy of Slavic Cultures with a degree in art, & also has a bachelor's degree in design. Her first personal exhibition "My soul is like a wild hawk" (2002) was held in the Museum of Maxim Bagdanovich. She can be found on Instagram @irina.tall111

Hannah Birss

is a writer & aspiring magpie based out of Ontario, Canada. You can follow her on instagram @hannahbirsswrites for news on upcoming and current publications.

M. Barnett

M. Barnett is an amateur writer based in Scotland. Her writing varies between experimental prose and poetry, often pertaining to themes such as everyday life, relationships and her connection to the Scottish coast. Her work can be found via Medium Digest @mbarnettwrites, or through her personal blog 'Strandline'.

Payton Kroymann

Payton Kroymann is a 22-year-old poet & writer based in Iowa City, Iowa. Payton graduated from The University of Iowa with a BA in English & Creative Writing in May of 2024. Nowadays, she is working for a local nonprofit organization & spends her free time writing and traveling.

Manushaqe Ibrahim

a young artist from Kosovo, is a graduate of the Arts & Digital Media department. She is known for her diverse artistic approach that encompasses childhood memories, collective memory, political issues, & everyday life spontaneities. Manushaqe finds inspiration in the conversations & interactions of mundane days, exploring how people can be part of one's life fleetingly. @manushaqeibrahimi

Ashley Tripp

is a Kentucky artist working primarily in digital art & graphic design. She enjoys making pieces that are unique, relatable & bring people together. You can check out more of her work @ashleytrippart on Instagram/TikTok or at her website: <https://msha.ke/ashleytripp>

AR Quinlan

works with non-profits supporting survivors of abuse in the court system. She enjoys using art as a mindful & community-building activity. Beyond art, they enjoy gardening, reading, & watching ducks. Their instagram is @strawberry_frog_art

Cate Roque

is a writer & safe spaces advocate from the Philippines. Her poetry has appeared in or is forthcoming in *Fig Tree Magazine*, *Coffin Bell Journal*, & *Heights*, among others. In 2022, she received the Loyola Schools Awards for the Arts for her poetry collection *Tulala*. Follow her on Instagram @croque.jpg

Brandon Shane

is a poet & horticulturalist born in Yokosuka Japan. You can see his work in the Berlin Literary Review, Acropolis Journal, Grim & Gilded, RIC Journal, Heimat Review, The Mersey Review, among others. He later graduated from Cal State Long Beach. Find him on Twitter @Ruishanewrites

Maren Logan

(she/her) is an emerging writer & multimedia artist from Indiana. Her art is featured in Penn Review, Grain of Salt Magazine, & forthcoming in Michigan Quarterly Review & Soft Star Magazine. More on her self-published zine, "Baby Teeth," & future projects at @thievescollective or @mare.nnn on Instagram.

Cait Wright

graduated from The University of South Carolina with a Bachelor's degree in Studio Art. She was called back to art seriously in 2023, when she launched a small art & jewelry business called The Blissful Hippie. She has been working primarily on fine abstract art with a minimalistic style. Her work has been shown in South Carolina, Texas, & London. Cait can be found on Instagram as the_blissful_hippie

Srotoswini Sarma

(fastflowingriver) is a mixed media artist, poet & fiction-writer identifying as a feminist from Assam in northeast India. Her artwork is deeply personal & roams themes like motherhood, embodiment & discovery through life, while using fibres, cotton, smoke & found items. She can be found on Instagram @srotoswini_

Rutuja

is an architect, researcher, & photographer with a passion for capturing the resilience of rural life. Her work highlights the intersection of architecture & nature, showcasing the beauty & strength of village communities in India. She can be found on Instagram @rutujaa_ghadage

Helen Gwyn Jones

(she/her) started recording & saving the past in real & photo form at 8 when she bought a Brownie camera from her sister. When not photographing drains or going into raptures over rust she can be found in a Welsh grammar book. Instagram / Twitter @helengwynjones

Nandita Dutta

is a freelance communications professional by day, & coffee-addicted writer by the rest of the day. Her work has appeared in reflections.live, HotPot magazine, Bitter Melon Review, & has upcoming pieces in Outland Magazine, & Bridges not Borders - an anthology of South Asian writers. Look her up on @thepseudohousewifewrites (Instagram) & @TPHwrites (X).

Romy Morreo

completed her MA Creative Writing at the University of Chichester. She enjoys exploring poetic form, & experimenting with dark, speculative fiction, with a particular interest in fairy tales & queer themes. Instagram: @romymorreo // Twitter/X: @romymorreo

M.P. Powers

is a Floridian living in Berlin, Germany. He is the author of The Initiate (Anxiety Press, Fall, 2023). Recent poetry publications include Columbia Review, Black Stone/White Stone, Stone Circle Review, miniMag, & others. His artwork can be found on Instagram @mppowers1132

Dezmond Davanti

Unsettled by Pennsylvania's country quiet, Dezmond Davanti works through residual New York noise by penning poetry & horror tales. With short stories & poems appearing in Jazz House Publications, Steering 22, FromOneLine & Fevers of the Mind anthologies, he is currently working on a poetry chapbook. X: @DmDavanti Bluesky @dezmonddavanti.bsky.social

jw summerisle

is an autistic poet from the english east midlands. once commended by & once a winner of the foyles young poets of the year award, they have chapbooks with black sunflowers poetry press (kinfolk, 2022) & back room poetry (the book of bad mothers, 2024). They can be found on Instagram and Tiktok @jwsummerisle

Contributors without bios but whom
we're still very grateful for;

Svetlana Dubkova

This magazine is dedicated to impermanence



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