

Issue I:

hebe
(the fountain of youth)



Constance Bourg

Free Verse Revolution:
a literary magazine



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Editor's note

After over two years of scheduling and publishing the work of talented writers on the Free Verse Revolution blog, my love for sharing the work of others had become a labour. And so, with the support of the FVR community, I took a few months away to figure out what I wanted Free Verse Revolution to become.

For those of you who are new contributors/readers, Free Verse Revolution used to be the personal blog of friend and author, Nicholas Gagnier. In 2018, he asked me to come on board and turn Free Verse Revolution into a community and we were astounded by the response we received. Since then, Gagnier is now focused on publishing his own work as a wonderful YA, fantasy author. You can follow him on Instagram at [@gagniernicholasauthor](#).

This leaves me at the helm and I am so full of gratitude that in my first foray into the literary magazine world, Issue I received so many submissions from across the globe. Thank you for taking Hebe, youth and ageing into your hands and moulding written and artistic pieces which reveal the startling beauty of life, myth and what it means to live.

Throughout this issue you will be confronted with both mythological and viscerally human responses to mortality and I hope you enjoy. Settle in, take your time and meet Hebe in human form.

Kristiana

A Hymn to Hebe

John W. Leys

Youthful Hebe,
Daughter of Zeus,
Sister of Ares,
Offspring of Hera
And the wild lettuce.
Iuventas, Iuno daughter,
Cupbearer to the Sky Father,
Handmaiden to Aphrodite,
Preserver of youth,
Where do you get
The ambrosia and nectar
Of the gods?

Is it a sweet healing
Honey mead,
Brewed with water drawn
From a secret well,
Delivered to Olympus
On dove's wings?

Is it baked with the apples
From cousin Iðunn's collection,
Stored in an ash carved chest,
Beyond the north wind?
The very same fruit that
Keeps the All-Father
Fit and fighting,
Scheming and scrying
Until the day
Destiny is done with him?

Sweet bride of Herakles,
With whom he ascended Olympus,

You can keep hair from greying
And skin from sagging,
But can you truly stop
Time from passing
And night from falling?

Is your ambrosia
A cure for death,
Or just a dam
That will one day burst?

The Barmaid by Constance Bourg



The Barmaid

Constance Bourg

An eternal fixture behind the polished wood,
an anchor with a moon-like pull.
The punters hurry,
harried and scraggly,
through the door
to soften
into the glow of mahogany
that smells like clementine and those small pink flowers,
the ones often drawn
with five identical petals arranged
around a white radial heart.
Is it in the twist of her wrist?
Tapping the bittersweet ambrosia, the barren
starts to
peel away
and the flaking burgundy walls
and the dado rail
inching
back and back
into steeping shadow,
the glow behind the upturned faces meeting
and matching
recollections now playing with liquid crystal precision.

*The boy with nothing to lose and
everything to play for; the girl in the
café window, her smile when she
noticed the man with the
extraordinary large bouquet; the
handshake that secured your first
triumph on the job; the vulnerable
first steps of an amalgam, you and
her. You and him.*

Glory days.

Plum blossoms.

Sweet nectar. From her hands
to your cup.

Bodies under the lily pads

Molly Furey

“Knit the silk into my skin”

And so she does

Deftly.

Pink threads pulling corium to meet a rose’s
neck like a love note under the bed.

“Finished” she says

Her eyes linger like two pearl lockets and

When she pulls back the dewy lashes

... time waits for us

Time and an awfully long staircase.

We dropped my body by the pond

Watched it fall without a complaint

Into Monet’s dreams of lime and willow

A soaked baptism of violets and crying mothers

A secret -

A girl lay under the lily pads peeping

She dragged my body home later that day

Back to the whirlpool of auburn scales and

clementine skin, the goldfish swallowed my

voice.

Sometimes I wish I stayed to watch what the girl
did when I left.

Did she paint my dead body?

Did she cry?

But now we must go

And so I follow.

Into her gardens, we suckle youth for an awfully
long time.

Call On Our Daughters

Abbey Lynne Rays

Dip slowly into
the salty wash
of our rivers,
 lakes of our telling,
and oceans,
 receding and delayed
 in their cold crashings.

Reabsorb the grace
 contoured by survival,
 the pull
of endless farewells,
 insatiable
 in their lingering,

Start fresh,
young beloveds.
Let the arrogance
of promise
press against the
 body that remains,
drenched
 and vanishing,
each cold mercy
unto itself.

Let it be the final,
 unsayable act.
Not a surrendering,
but this time,
 a becoming.

Hair Straighteners

Zoe Gray

In 2005
the girls in my history class straightened
their hair religiously. Praying hands,
their split ends splayed white, like frosted
bicycle wheels or silver birch branch,
fault lines, iced cobwebs, compass drawn stars
in old white gum.

Hair burnt along with Prom-night bonfires,
rumours of tents and sex and pills
and too-handsy-boys, Lambrini girls
just want to have fun and kisses
+more in the Morrisons car park behind
the hedge where a one-eyed
camera blinked, birthing
CCTV footage
her Mum had to watch
one rainy Sunday.

Now, years on, the same girls
smile from beyond a screen,
the ironed white of split
end has gone.
They wear their hair in waves.
Straighteners gather dust,
lost to a charity shop

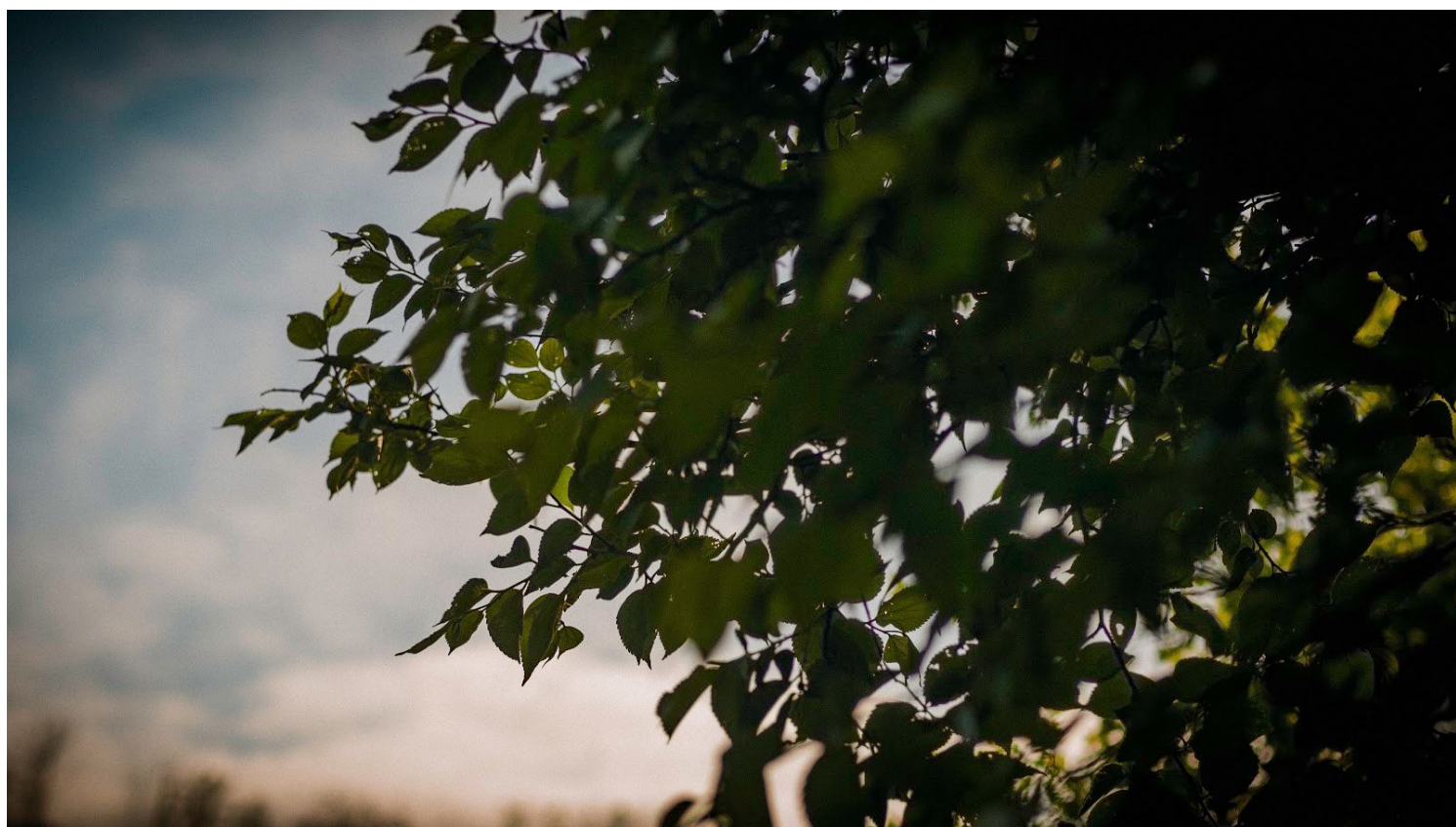
where, if you stand close, they whisper
'everything must burn to be beautiful,
to be flatter, to be smaller, to be less.'

It is a hot, electric hiss that sang true,
in 2005, young ears hungry

for a beauty breakthrough.
But we are older now,
can dismiss those hot plates
and say with confidence:

Perfection isn't straight.

Brandon Clarke Photography



Canopy
Jaya Avendel

My great-grandmother knows the difference between a
Parlor-maid, housemaid, and chambermaid.

I do not.

My grandfather
Can tap a wine glass and make it sing.

I cannot.

My mother walked in kaleidoscopic lights
When music came from guitar strings.

I did not.

At eighteen
I say I am old
Youth is always behind me
Age is what I see ahead.

I'm 19 and I'm on Fire

(after Lorde)

Gina Bowen

Our hearts, engulfed in burning,
melted skating rinks we called our own.
Your hands warmed my ice with November sun
and I forgot that my Converse were always dirtied
because I was always living beneath branches,
somewhere on the run.

And we were spinning.
How we spun.

Weeknight Chinese noodles
satisfied until they ran cold.
Yellow cab slumber
and greyhound ticketed travels
lived somewhere within this inhalation
and died within winter's lioness scorn.
When we loved then
and only then
when we were summer.
When we were young.

If I remember anything at all,
I remember your eyes.
And how we were spinning
and how we spun
sometimes then
and never again
when we were spinning
how we were spinning
when our names lived on each other's tongues
when it was then
when we spun

when we were spinning
when we were young.

Harvest

Lisa Perkins

How many ways can I show you how this hometown raised
and left me
Your playground mulch once burst
with golden hay bales
Rolled so high, feet apart
Scratchy front row seats
Now brick by row by memory of
a meadow
A boy you liked might pick you up,
place your waist on top
You'd pretend it didn't scrape and collapse by licks inside
Fizzing cider in one hand,
trembling in the other
Tongues as tied as wilting sheafs in summer
Like bees we lightly brushed
against the nectar
And there
Under that council block horizon...
You should know there was a stream
Dribbled from the labour of the mountains
It picked up all surrenders,
detriment's debris
Fountains of our littered youth
baptised us from the ankles
Shared with shards of bottles, stubbled gorse and wading
rats
And us not sure why this all seemed
to nourish
as its bruised perfume settled on our necks
Right here, in this open green
was a nettled mass of wild
rousing skin as we traced the lines
and drank each other's poetry

We sank the nights, squeezed the days, or tried to
We found ourselves
against the walls of losing
You might not know this now
but you will one day
Around here there was once a place
of harvest

Things No One Tells You About Growing Up

Shay Siegel

You won't actually want to
once you're on your way.
You'll wish you could turn around
like leaving a snowstorm for home.
You'll tear into so many pieces
you won't remember
what the full picture looked like.
It will be your new normal
to endure
rather than live freely.
The way you used to climb trees
with no fear of scrapes
and fractured bones.
No one tells you that growing up
isn't so much growing
as it is
being smashed down
back into the dirt
longing to be that kid
who wasn't afraid to fall.

aileron (little wing)
Candice Louisa Daquin

The bloom
sloughed off
before knowing or appreciation
of those lost years
fallen in-between the cracks
of vestigial years ransomed
was known

During the long ache
of growing and its fitful lingering
no awareness of youth's iridescence
pinching colored powder in Holi
defied the upward count of naught
whether daughter of Zeus or child of clay
did neither tempt fate to alter

Such is the reduction
of days stored in memory
craning necks for a glimpse backward
blurring who we were, from this
unsettled creature who inhabits
a body well-worn and creased
before wings are even half dried

A Night of Marble and of Gingerbread

Gabriela Marie Milton

on the top of the mountain
the pines silhouette against the whisper of the rocks
the night is cut from marble, and from gingerbread
the wind stops on a branch touched by a naked star
I take the measure of that which forever youth gives
red poppies that never wither
seeds that never impregnate the ground
a love that still plays with toys,
and lights candles in a Christmas tree in the middle of
summer
the moon is mortal and concerned with trivial matters
and so am I
Hebe,
how many know that you are the bud of incest and
patricide?
how many know your child's eyes witnessed so many
crimes?
filled with pain, you stop growing up, isn't it so?
oh, don't cry
here is my impermanent heart
wear it for one day
in the morning you will see the old oak dying in the rain
at noon butterflies will sit on your hair
in the night a Lethean forgetfulness will lecture on the
beauty of transitory love
kisses will feel like honey on the tongue
the breath of love will rest on your skin
you will grow up
what?
you do not want your forever youth back?
dream
it's spring

Ira Ares Photography



In search of wonder

Candice Louisa Daquin

nobody reads in between the lines, or maybe everyone
does
the day she removes her wig and stands
bare skulled for all to see the shroud of mud
not still, neither she, neither we
the ancestors who, fallow earth, when heaven is closed
from their potential remains, beauty emerges
a song setting vibration in your pores, a string instrument
without music
pushing back to the day before you realized you were
weeping uncontrollably
as you cycled along overgrown tow path
in search of blackberries, to stain the urge
not content or part of this stifled world of pretend
seen in the glassy eyes of the stuffed, pressed
hotly behind restraining glass, their silent screaming visage
please instead, let me become part of your make believe
I would live as Mr. Fox did, beneath earth
brew my cups of magic there, as the irregularity of
goodness attests
there is nothing worth waiting up all night for
not now you are broken, not now they are all
left, their footprints ash inside my mouth, a
late form of christening in Winter's lament.
Cast about in ways, mosaic cannot even repair
chinks in my armor so raw, unpolished, without spit
sufficient to wipe the dread
no oil, nor prayer can save, no benediction
nor virgin kneeling in fecund earth with all the days
of her life ahead like fresh laundered sheets ready for their
slaying
those with eyes to the sky, they see not gods, I fear

but the winged parallel of our loss of mercy.

As we attempt survival, urging ourselves to dress, button by
recalcitrant rock

what will bleed when it is devoured? What will remain
whole in spite?

New born and unencumbered by reach of horror?

How to sustain faith? The light that gets through

collecting like lovers in ever shining quiet

thinking of the fervor of youth, its glossy coat

shaking off trouble like a lean legged hooker will stand
straight backed even in snow.

Our tempest for life, an appetite, whetting, scuttling
blatantly

down deserted roads, the roam of longing,

I tie my hair back, pinch my cheeks redder, watch the

violet play of day and night run

her unwashed glass through my eyes, leaving a smudge of
blood, a tinge of what's to come,

the descent of love, as it bursts full and redolent

throbbing in our ears, like shells pressed tight

blocking out the stifle, hearing her thinning,

each year, a chink of life, apportioned into past

a transaction of dying in silhouette, we all keep to our

tea-stained hour

the rustling moment they were there and photographed

haltingly and aching behind inherited furniture

their eyes like mine, covered over with old coin

sent to another realm, behind, stand behind

time and her exquisite fangs, drinking the lost salt of this
land

her daughters, her sons, they grow weary of watching

turning slow like dials in dusk, their shape sharp against the
ochre

bleed of diminishing sun elongating until

their form is altered ever more.

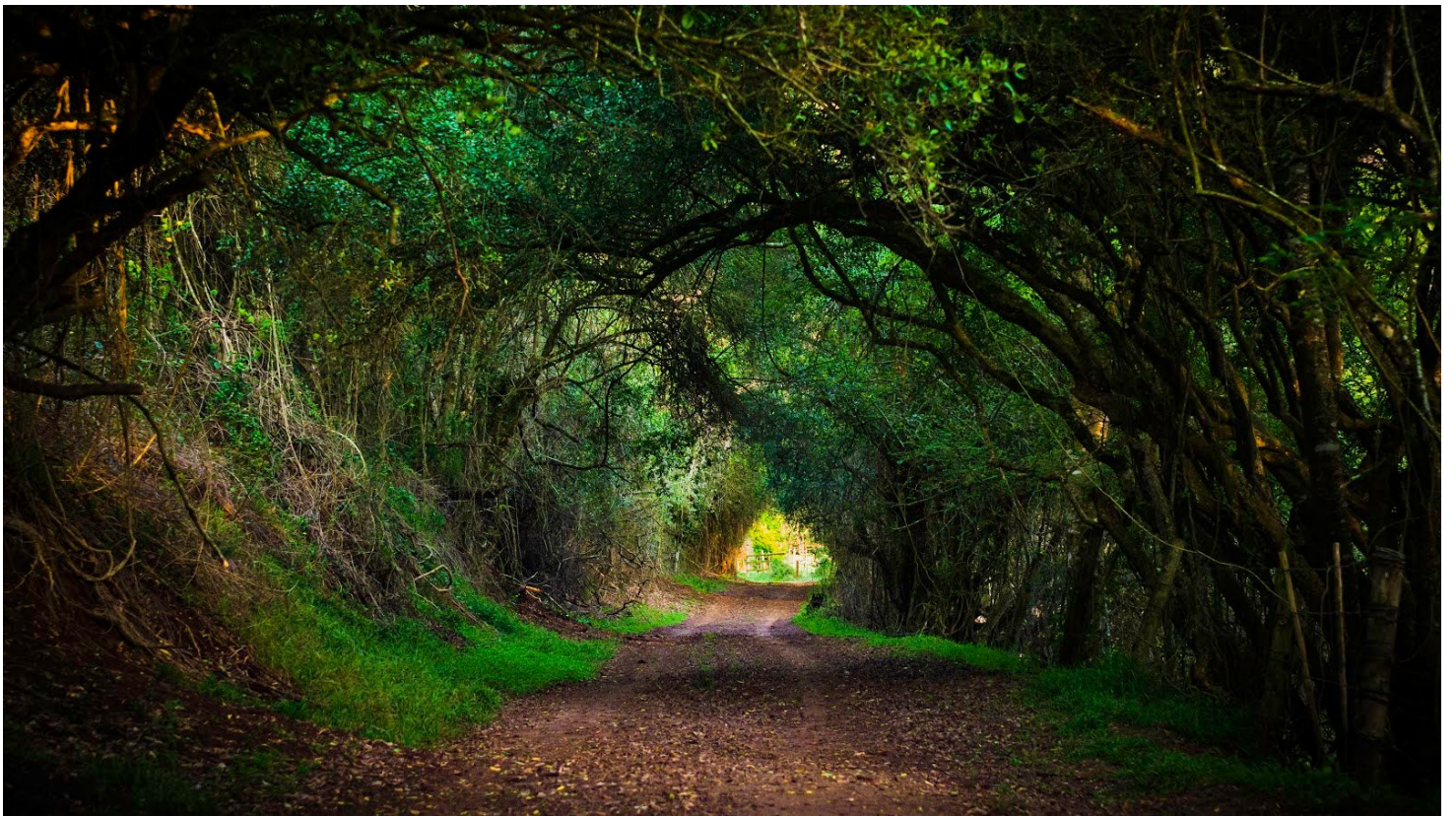
Unravelling

(after Louise Glück's 'Love Poem')

Karan Chambers

There is always something to be made of sadness.
We yearn towards the Spring – bending
bodies forward like flowers desperately seeking
sunlight. I watch this year die and feel nothing
except the grief that always walks beside me – tenderly
cradling my hand in hers.
I watch you grow, every day –
outpacing me with exuberant enthusiasm.
This headlong rushing, racing to be older,
burns me with its quickening.
This year shouldn't count towards
time's uncaring march.
Can I strike it from the record? – how can I survive
these endless numbered days and
my own tangled, fearful heart when
every day
you're leaving, by indiscernible degrees. Little by
little. No wonder I am the way I am,
afraid of change, of time's cruelty, but dying
for the passing minutes to tick
by – quickly, quickly please – so I can outgrow
my own helplessness. I must learn to bear
this season of
waiting, to hold on through my own
unravelling.

Brandon Clarke Photography



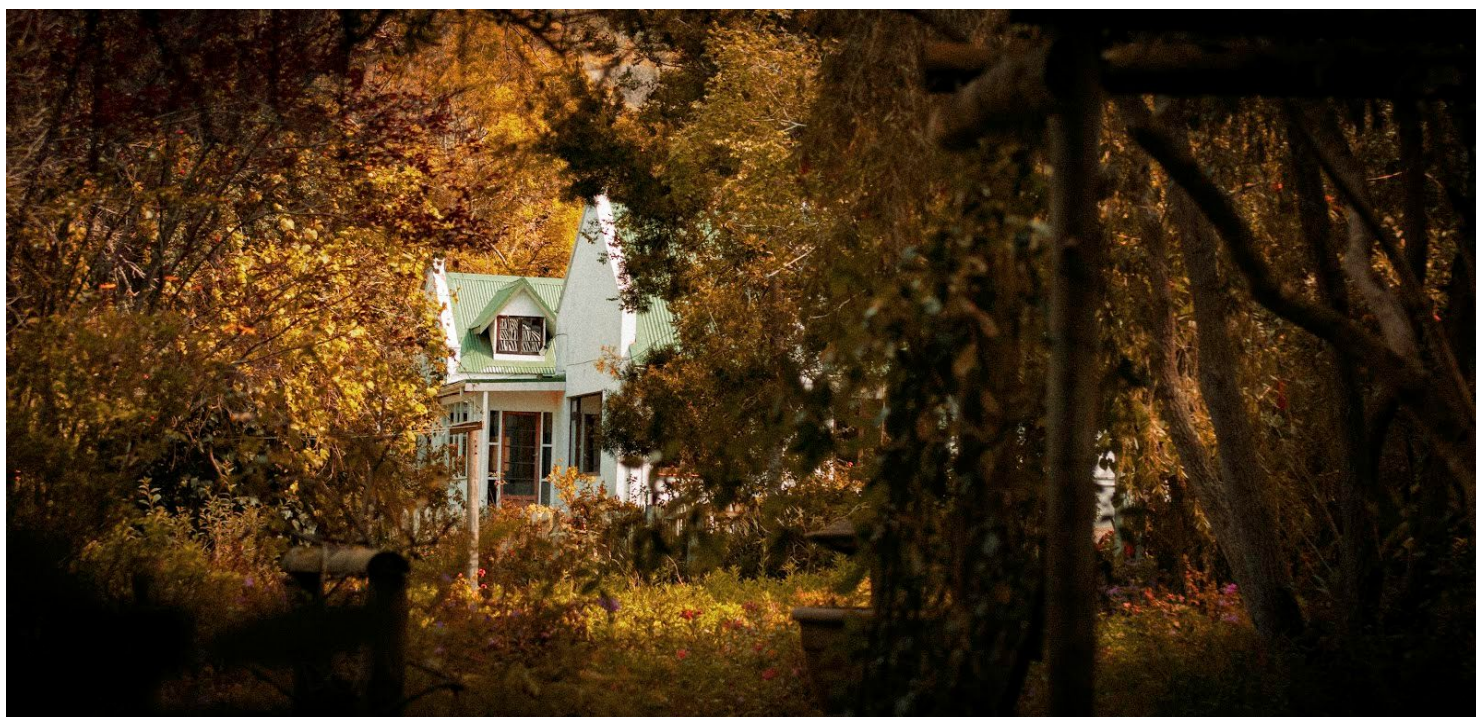
Dear Elea

S. K. Nicholas

Those delicate, slender fingers, ringless as they are ageless, are tracing shapes across the sky before taking refuge in the pockets of her simple city dress. On a patchwork blanket in the sun, the wind kisses her pale neck. It kisses her cheeks, too, leaving them as red as the apples on the trees. Upon her lips, she tastes the merest hint of cherry cola. Her lips are painted blue; adorned with cracks as wide as canyons. So deep. So unfathomable. Her fingers, which are pink and sticky from the honey she steals from the bees, creep once again from her godly pockets and as she collapses like a flower, they dig into the soil like the pecking beaks of birds whose wings lift the curls of her hair into the air as the circling animals give life to that which was once dust. With her back arched, she thrusts her tummy to the stars. Her feet are arched also. Her toes, curled like vines around gravestones belonging to those living by the harbour below, are painted the same colour as her eyes. When she slides her fingers in, she conjures the rain that brings with it a great many number of boats named after her ancestors. The rain falls in a teacup placed on the blanket. Her mother made the blanket, many years ago in her youth, when she made love to as many men as she could, with each of their lips breathing life to her not through a necessity to love, but a desire to live. She has crowns in her teeth and a crown above her head that floated all the way from Greece along with the water and the wind. It came from the belly of an ancient castle flooded since the time of Christ, the name of which mirrors her own. While she slept last night in the barn behind her house, the holy

waters spoke to her womb the same way her womb speaks to the blades of grass that dance about her hips in celebration of the one they so adore.

Brandon Clarke Photography



A Goddess' Lament

Eleanor Shaw

It was all pomegranates and ivory until Heracles
rocked up.

Apparently the ambrosia had been too free
flowing, because,

On restoring that charming husband-to-be of mine
to life

(After a couple of terrible mix-ups, who leaves a
poisoned shirt lying around anyway?)

Zeus decided I was to be booted off cup-bearing
and married off forth-with.

That 'God of Gods' had his way with poor
Ganymede and,

Having kidnapped him (of course) installed him in
my place!

I don't particularly enjoy being a third wife, no
feasts of nectar and lettuce for me.

Just two screaming babies,

A never ending stream of brides to bless,

And, of course, they still want me to ensure

Their eternal youth, my darling family of deities,

And that of every wayward human crush who
keeps aging on them.

And of course I got all the blame for that Tithonus
mix up.

How was I meant to know Eos wanted not just
immortality, but eternal youth as well?

Shame he became a cicada but really, with
everything else going on,

How was I meant to keep track?

One day when the kids are grown I'll be back,
Dressed in gold and sceptre in hand,
And a personal cult to rival them all.
I just need to put this washing away first.

Ira Ares Photography



The Years Are Short

Katy Luxem

A dress with tiny bunnies on it,
I would've bought this
for my tangle-haired daughter,
curls framing her face like soft ears.
But she's too big now,
still a spring in her step
a juice box in her lunch,
but tall and more teen than girl,
closer to dating than teething.
How did she do it?
I pulled her to me as a baby
to smell her milk and honey skin.
Then I watched as she poured
herself into our joyful days.
Now I hold the dress up to her,
the years turning to poetry
on hangers. I hear her laugh
and it almost fits. Still,
through her we are young again.

The boy on the floor, the man at the desk

Tom Francis

They would look a pair
The boy on the floor, the man at the desk.
Paper scraps, coloured felt tips,
Battered books and wine-kissed lips.

Ideas scattered
Amongst the rubber shavings.
Both blown off the page
Into the light.
The familiar sigh.
Not tonight.

Greek heroes collide with puppets
From TV shows. One leg rises,
The other falls.
Lost in his frantic scribbles, he hums,
Destined for sleep before the ending comes.

In twenty years, the legs will knot
Around the chair,
Beneath the desk,
Surrounded by shavings. A little drunk.
Yet, the colour in the pen and the humming last.
He's grateful for the youth that's coming.
For the youth that's passed.

**The sons of Juliet and the daughters of
Hebe**
Molly Furey

Don't go through the woods
For it is there you will find me
What a curse, to grow old
What a curse, to die

I still remember, those fuschia eyes dribbling
sorrow like a newborn's first words
My fig stained mouth hated the taste
The taste of age and oil.

Please don't weep, ladies in your lily pad houses
When we were dying we sunk
bodies in the pond
For the women we might have been and the girls
who we forever stayed.
Don't go through the woods

Please do not feed the stars with your empty
hearts
I have watched the goldfish drink my woe
It turned his clementine scales to nothing but a
wishbone in choking water.
And now he looks nothing like he did when
Monet painted the willows
He resembles nothing of the fisherman who
cried.

I can smell the orange stained hands like
cracking paint on a mountainside wall
My history is in cloth, bound under the mango
tree
In a city of soil and gas lamp faces.

Do not go through the woods
I have already left
Exited this universe who tastes of wet cries and
violet thread
Who smells like silvered pears and the eyes of
red men

We are the flowers of the Gods dropped
The girls and boys who hide behind lemon trees
The sons of Juliet
and the daughters of Hebe
The ones who Death will never kiss.

She found us in the woods.

Interview with Molly Furey

KRISTIANA: In your pieces in this issue, your writing portrays youth with a certain nostalgia and tragedy; you capture what feels like a desperate feeling for youth to last forever. What is your perspective on youth? What drew you to write about youth in this way?

MOLLY: I think my poems on youth appear nostalgic because they are entirely that - nostalgic. I regard youth in a very melancholic way, it is something I wish I didn't have to let go of. Not just necessarily being a child but also my adolescent years. I believe those are my most intoxicating memories just because of the things I remember and the mindset I was in back then. So maybe that is why it comes across in my writing that I don't want those years to end because I still feel trapped at that age.

KRISTIANA: What are your own feelings toward ageing and 'growing up'?

MOLLY: I don't mind the idea of ageing but the thought of growing up is something I hate. I know that must sound like something everyone says, but for me, it scares me. Not the thought of dying or getting ill but the thought of losing the safety of childhood. Throughout growing up, I have always been preoccupied with the thought of not wanting to leave the person I was a few years ago. I'm only eighteen but even now I feel sad when I think of being sixteen because that was a time when I was in my head a lot, but it also felt really comforting. The periods when I have felt

loneliness are the times I long for, I'm not really sure why but they feel almost euphoric.

KRISTIANA: I know you are currently studying at university, has your blossoming love for poetry altered where you see yourself in the future? What do you wish for your writing journey in the future?

MOLLY: I did think about studying poetry at university but I decided not to take that step. I don't really know what I'm doing at the moment besides writing whenever I feel inspired. I also don't really plan for the future but I suppose gaining a bigger audience for my poetry would be cool.

KRISTIANA: Often in your work, you make references and literary allusions which feel timeless, who and what influences your work the most and why do you think this is?

MOLLY: I think the main thing I try to get into my poetry is imagery and making references to people, places and decades is how I slip this in. I love aesthetics and visuals so if I write a poem it has most likely come from an image in my head or a random chain of events in my mind. If I was an artist then all of these images would probably be paintings but I'm not very good at painting so I guess I'll have to just write them down for now.

As for what inspires me, there are a range of things. Musical artists like Joan Baez, Lana Del Rey, Mitski, Roy Orbison, and Del Shannon have always inspired me

through their work because they all make/made music that takes you to a different place. I also love the composer Abel Korzeniowski; I could write poems to his works for a long, long time.

I also love the idea of tragic characters and their stories, anything that is sorrowful I think is quite beautiful in a way, I guess because it is easy to be sad. I find myself writing about these types of stories or characters a lot. Aside from that, I think my work is inspired by memories and just the visuals I see when I feel whatever it is that I am feeling.

KRISTIANA: Aside from youth, what are some of your favourite themes to write about and why?

MOLLY: I think a lot of my poems actually stem from a nostalgia or melancholy for the past which in a way is youth. But, if I am not writing about youth, I usually write about death, being trapped mentally, loneliness or about family relationships. Sometimes I find myself drawn to writing about made up worlds and it isn't really a theme but I love personifying things to make it seem like I have a personal relationship with them, such as Death, Loneliness or Love, because these themes are what we all experience throughout life so I think in a way they are our companions and it makes everything more comforting and less frightening.

KRISTIANA: If you had the chance, would you drink from the fountain of youth?

MOLLY: I actually would not drink from the fountain of youth if I had the chance. Despite my fear of growing up, I think if I were to drink and stay eternally young I would be doing it for the wrong reasons and eventually regret it. I heard a quote from some movie not long ago and I think that it is a beautiful way to look at life; it was about how the Gods would “envy us because we’re mortal... Everything is more beautiful because we are doomed”, so I guess that’s going to be my new outlook.

KRISTIANA: Lastly, as this issue celebrates youth and the goddess of youth, what are three things you would tell your younger self?

MOLLY: Firstly, I would probably tell myself to enjoy being a child and not to wish it away. When I was younger, I always wanted to grow up and I regret not appreciating that. I think almost everyone is happier when they are children and it’s almost like we just accept that growing up means losing those feelings of safety and joy, which I find upsetting.

Secondly, I think I would tell myself to hold on to the confidence I had. I think I would have found growing up a lot easier if I had held on to that boldness, because back then I didn’t let things stop me. I didn’t really have any trouble expressing my opinion and I promised myself I wouldn’t care what others thought when I was older, which feels rather odd because that is all I have ever cared about since being a teenager.

Lastly, I would tell myself not to hold onto things like they are going to last forever. I would remind myself that no matter how hard we want things to remain, they cannot stay the same. I find myself holding on to both happiness and sadness because it feels like a comfort when things are changing, and if I grew up with the mentality of not holding on to things so closely, I think I would be more accepting of change now.

Well

Skyler Saunders

every time I drag the
plastic curtains across the bar,
metal scraping metal, the dark
under my eyes softens.
pull off this dry, put me back
together while I let this fall
through the gaps in my
teeth. restore me to my
girlhood, give me back what I
gave away in handfuls on the street.
I'll drink it, I'll drink
anything. I'll soak and
simmer and let the water run
until my fingertips take the
grooves from my head.
until I can't wait to
get out - I have so much to do.
I have so long to live.

The Cure

Constance Bourg

I have travelled to Bimini, an island
east of Miami. Exit the airport and turn left.

I have come to look for mending waters
in the swamp among mangrove roots,

home to fluorescent lizards and dappled boas.
Interlacing and adventitious,

I am the root that sticks out,
and I wish to get untangled from what ails me.

In this eldritch place I will sink
through the surface lying like a scumbled
green eye,

and I will rise again aglow
like a white chow smiling at a daytime
crescent moon.

The gripe in my gut, my small lurching life,
no longer crouched and twisted, but cleansed.

The Ocean's Gifts

Mark Tulin

While holding a bouquet
of freshly cut sunflowers,
Yemaya draws a circle in the sand
with her toes, a symbol
of youth and the openness
to receive the ocean's gifts

She slowly slips off her robe
by the edge of the water,
reciting a sacred hymn
with eyes closed and open palms
while sharing the flowers
with the spirits of the wind

Yemaya worships the primal source
while entering the sea at high tide,
swimming with pools of dolphins,
she is baptized in the holy water
where her impurities are washed clean,
and her purpose is renewed.

sated
Holly Ruskin

when you speak
of water bearers
you imagine
sloshing buckets
mythic fountains
drained to fill
cups but it is
us who are born
of water borne
by the bellies of
women we were
carried within and
so we begin life
as creatures of
our own seas
surrounded by the
freshly sprung fluids
more youthful by
design than any
told in stories
our bodies still
holding memories
of drinking in
our mother's womb
yearning only to
feel that safely
sated once again

Alpheus and Arethusa

Pieter L. Harreman

One day I will
become nature:
a river
giving up
all identity
rising from
an undercurrent
beneath the sea
to mingle
in frothing foam
with your
gushing stream,
after which
we will plunge back
into the fog-laden sea.

Prayer Bodies

Sanket Mhatre

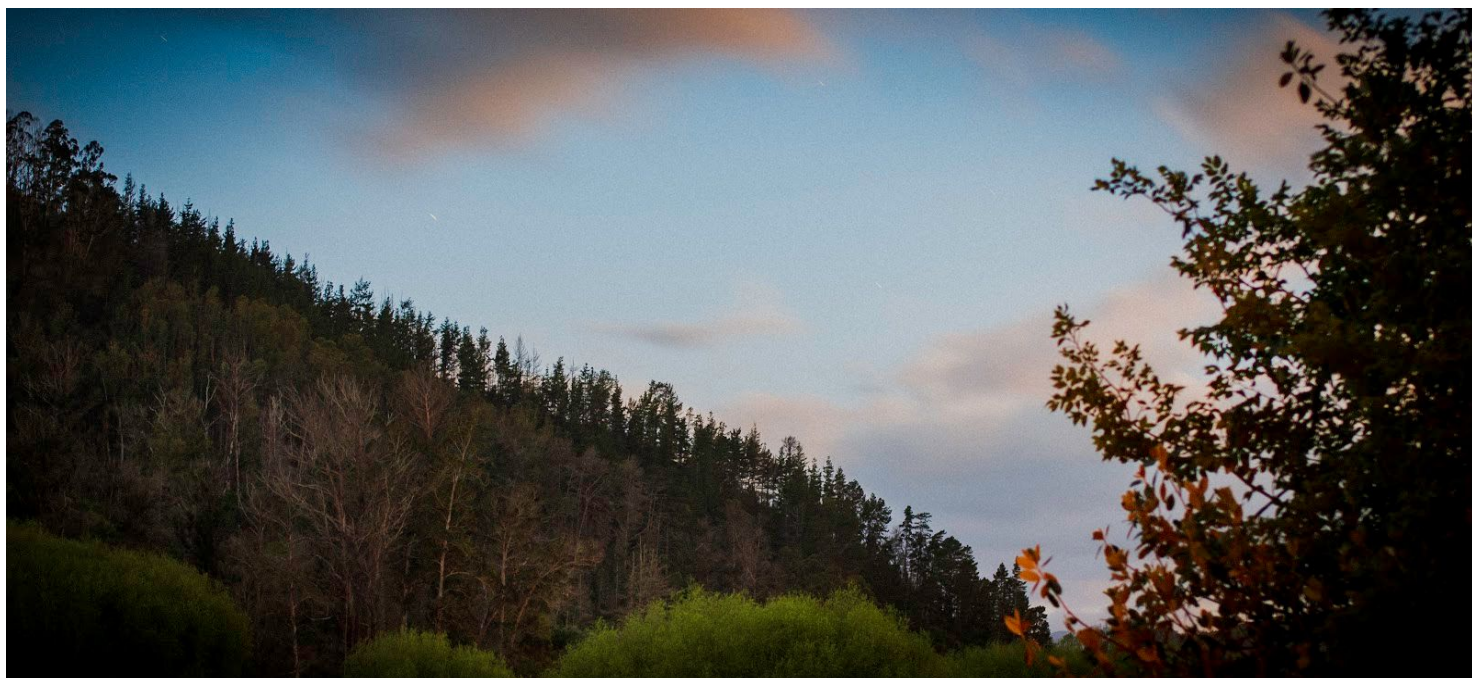
And in this deep stillness
When nothing moves
Not even a part of your soul
Or these leaves of static agony
A memory appears like a goddess in white
after a year of penance
Pushes me to the first roll of papyrus,
that shivers like your back when I touch it
Ink lingers like fingers
over your vast expanse
responding to your eyes first
Then the smile which lights up
at the far end of the sky;
Like an unknown star in the distance
The space between us multiplies
and divides at the same time
Reducing it to one room
Expanding it by two skies
Squeezing it into a single morning
After splitting it into four nights
Turning foreplay into four-play
And orgasm into our-gasm
We mend our fractured years
in our embrace
And bandage our past through constant kisses
We nurse our tattered souls; sew them again
While our torsos rub against each other
Finally, we lie still
Two bodies joined in ultimate supplication
Like a prayer to this world
Only to be rewritten in memory.

Car Crash

Karan Chambers

Imagine driving naked,
too fast down a motorway,
slick thighs sticking to the leather,
heart beating wildly beneath
cast-iron ribs. Reckless, heedless of
the collision to come. Immortality clutched
in both hands. I let him fuck me
in a bathroom stall, in the back of a moving
car, in a house with all the windows wide
open. He put his hands all over
me – everywhere – and I liked it.
I bent and I twisted, got down
on my knees, turned myself
inside out, just to please him. But God
is indifferent to mortals: he is unmoved
by our contortions – and I was too stupid
to brace for the impact.

Brandon Clarke Photography



The Riddle of Death

Jay Mora-Shihadeh

Burst forth the ships! Time has come, forever traced, the legend, the place where life lives to never-cease. She strokes the night and whistles through daylight, the legend of prowess and praise, her locks flowing like honey, sweet and free. The deserts welcome the quenching rain, the love from fountains above, pouring like wine into chalice mouths in an endless time. The forests and mountains share their love forever-more, dipping backwards and forwards through the valleys and hills. An infinity knot mapped, the mathematician's plot, a scheme, a schematic, a mariner's eye *taut* toward the East, toward the West. The sun never stops shining where begging hearts stop.

No maps, no fortune, no ships on watery graves, no locket etched in fancy sayings, will satisfy the need for eternal life living. This goddess slips through the streams and rivers from clear fountains to the never-ending mouths of babes, of youth, she ages never-never in the land of Zeus. A perfect answer to the riddle of death, she delivers a gold chariot that rages and rages! A fireball, a white star shooting, streaking a blaze. A trail traces time through clouds, through space. Unseen by eyes, by time but minds great, the heavens fade away, away, afar across the ages gate. A quest, an answer to the riddle of sages, handed down for centuries... The truth, the myth, the legend of Hebe... The mariner's trips across seas and pages to land upon foreign shores, a promise born, springing forth from lore to lore, a search for truth, a sip of heaven to bless a soul with endless youth.

Lost Within Uluru's Dream-time Chasm

Ivor Steven

The expedition's camel train is leaving town
Even though the rain-spirits are thundering down
Undaunted they are travelling to the ancient rock
Where time was born before the sun-clock
At the sacred monolith created by nature's gods
Eons before Earth's crawling arthropods

Now only ghostly moans echo
from Uluru's dream-time chasms
Warning intruders about the Fountain of Youth's
guardian assassins
The exhausted archaeologists
were last seen probing deeper
Frantically seeking the lost treasure
of mythology's oldest sleeper

Alchemy

Lynn White

Still they try to find it,
the secret of eternal youth,
the women with their heavy made-up masks,
the men with their toupees,
the nip and tuckers,
the stretchers and smoothers.
Like the alchemists of old searching
for the secret of turning base metal to gold,
they're searching,
searching,
searching,
endlessly searching
magic and science
as they get older
and older
still.
And still
the fountain of youth eludes them.
And all the alchemists are dead.

In The Water, Still

Howard Young

In the grieving shadow
of old tombs framed
by the shards of an
ancient temple that lay
like broken bones,
A Bronze age king,
picked clean by carrion
birds swooping as harpies,
Shrieking for the kill.
Untouched, a terrible fountain stood
arched up and open to the sky
now just pool of water,
a cruel and staring eye.

A terrible thirst propelled me on as
I drank down the visions of my youth,
Crying out I saw I had become
the vision I had dreamed to be
but then in portent came the aged winds
and ripples formed
like wrinkles on my face within
the face of Narcissus twisted
aged cruelly by this viscous skin.

The winds fell back as if in grief
and in the pool now calm,
my youthful vision returned
but now revealed the harm
A sense of death was growing
a drop of water in my eye,
growing bigger by the minute
I knew now I would die,
this broken pool was poisoned

beneath the broken sky.

Poisoned by the acid rain, poisoned by the wars
poisoned by radiation from every atom bomb.

Poisoned by the lies we tell, poisoned by the waste
poisoned by the plastic, that lives in everyone.

Wayward Undone

Gina Bowen

There were days that didn't end.
Time stretched long,
the way the sun does across summer's back.
And with the breeze came sighs
that did not hang heavy.
They were of the kind that floated on gentle wind.
The ones that cupped laughter inside of hope-filled cheeks.
When all our buckets remained full,
and we didn't need to toss them
to put out the fires that plague our forests
nowadays.

Laziness never seemed more beautiful.
A cascading tragedy that lingers in memories
I try to taste with my tongue.
When the sun runs low
and the wind is just right.

But the days are short.
And these skies are dark.
And everything is burning.

Brandon Clarke Photography



Height Limit

Adrienne Burris

Every summer you dash to the sign with the line,
tip-toed lay your hand flat over your head shrieking
how *tall*, how *tall*, am I that *tall*? And one time, once,
your new gold-trimmed Jordans lift you high, orange
bracelet taped on your wrist, forty-eight inches and
you don't even complain that it's too tight.

I never wanted to be tall enough. Not really.
I just wanted to watch, would hunch down
my shoulders to avoid that assumption,
that I was tall enough to be a woman
and do brave things
I did not want to do.

The New Girl

Barbara Leonhard

I pray to be a perfect work,
a masterpiece of unchipped clay,
to heal all wounds & scars,
to run on strong legs once again,
as a young girl, who sang & danced
in fields of fescue stroking my legs
& meadows where I gathered wildflowers
to braid in my hair.

But the hinges on an old barn rust,
flowers wither to dust & hair singes in the sun.
Time crimps the skin of a worn face
& stuffs it inside a drawer with the hand-me-downs
of others' stories of their days gone,
my life, at best, un-lived in mindless matters
viewed in broken mirrors that fracture fate.

When my limbs fail, & they will,
& my heart cracks apart,
& my face pales as I bleed out time, please
bear the load of this venerable vessel
to a sacred space of stone & fire.

Burn my gowns, but tissues for my tears,
washing away the ashes of my years
to Hebe's deep ambrosia spring,
wherein I can sink
& drink rebirth.

Love Letters from the Prison

Deepti G.

The flesh of the night sits cold
 in the coaled heart ever-ablaze
the clinker settles at the bottom of my cup
I try to decipher but
 what shape is the deciduous dawn?
thoughts twitch like a hologram
shifting silhouettes
 in a million metaphors mazing;
a forgotten color of the blood runs in my ashen body
its stench thickened into a prisoner I feed
 are we drenched in the perfume of cockcrow yet, my love?
I ask you, soaked in the sweat
 of somniloquence but the night feels raw, so raw
I rub the stones instead
or the mountains that
 sit as nails and knuckles on these palms
fire my own sun
 cook my own golden light and
I
burn, burn a little more by the yonder hearth within
till the flesh of the night softens
 bleaches, teaches itself into wafts of *yestereen-*
in the coaled heart ever-ablaze;
 my love,
hang my fetters by the sacred grove of cypress trees
the day the dawn
 takes the shape of my face
and
when the temple bells at Phlius toll a mirth *concrete,*
 my funeral shall conclude at Hebe's forgiving feet

Perspective on Youth

Ingrid B.

Youth may have left me
but I've never felt
so comfortable
in my own skin.

When it first started to happen
I was horrified:
all the elasticity
and luscious glow
of pregnancy
lost in the course of a few sleepless nights,

drained out of countless emptied breasts, of course
the milk of human kindness
is the fountain of youth we pass to our children;
in their glow of vitality
we see it shine.

I'm neither young nor old: I feel like Janus
looking back upon my youth and forward to old age.

I'm wiser than before, and with wisdom comes peace of
mind.

I'm tireder than before, and with tiredness comes
acceptance of life's ebb and flow.

I look back on all I've done and if I died tomorrow, I would
not regret a thing
except leaving my loved ones.

I'd love to live longer, and though I've many things I'd still
like to achieve

above all else I seek
enlightenment:

Perhaps I'll find it after seven weeks
under a tree
or in the last blink of love's dying golden day.

Fontana di Trevi
(What to Remember When You Go)
Abbey Lynne Rays

Do not let your heart stutter in its wanting. Let the ache of syllables collide with the fortress of reality, this human narrative of “unrealistic expectations.”

Damn those pale dull mouths who tell you

you can not have it all. You can.

Every cobbled alley, vine covered trellis. Cherries soaked in red wine, mascarpone whipped, fresh, soft as lips pressed, gently. You deserve this too.

Close your eyes to doubts, companions of naysayers, with fears too thick, to crack and stretch. They gather, a collection of failures and sins, capturing nothing. Novelties edited, dressed up, but alone in the cab back.

Instead, breathe in the ambrosia of longing, let it fill you with enough. Hope, right hand, left shoulder, the succession of stars that follow, a certain refuge, for every exaltation you have scraped and offered back.

Are We Any Older? Lynn White

Am I any older
my dear, tell me
I cannot tell
can you
tell me,
are you any older,
my dear tell me
if you can
tell,
can you tell?

Can you tell
if we have aged
from the inside out
or the outside in
or is it just on the outside
only on the outside.
I think
we should keep it outside.
Tell me
that we can keep it outside
my dear, tell me.

Protagonist

Sreelakshmi Aravind

But mortality is not supposed to be scary,

Not when your spine burns because your trauma sets it on fire every time you think your fingers are ready to embrace summer and bury the winter so deep that your skin forgets the touch of it.

But mortality is not supposed to be scary,

Not when your eyes behold young hearts beating to the rhythm of their youth but you have Alzheimer's and your heart has forgotten how to beat to the rhythm of your youth. You write stories where the characters are not fictional and you relive it every day because you are the protagonist. You might be the protagonist but you do not see the happiness at the end of the tunnel like you are supposed to. You are an old lady who knits unruly sweaters from the threads all the men leave at your doorstep, even though you throw them away some part of it remains.

So how do I define my youth?

My youth is a soft pink flower grown in a field of spider mites, sometimes lying on the ground all trampled and sometimes soaking in the sun.

But mortality is scary sometimes,

When my youth is a fully bloomed flower and the threads I weave heal the wounds as the time flows, when I feel my young heart beating and kissing the urge to live.

Gig Night - A Villanelle

John De Gruyther

Gig night the only time he felt alive
The highs left the morrow unperfected
Live now my friend, the past we can't revive.

Revere sepia tones, yesteryear's lie,
The spotlight, booze saddled, goals deflected,
Gig night the only time he felt alive.

Twisted trap like memory prepares to tie,
Rusted nostalgia, present neglected,
Live now my friend, the past we can't revive.

Jack and coke, spilt on coat, tears in your eye,
Drowned sorrows, friends with their own perspective,
Gig night the only time he felt alive.

Candy floss deceivers, caused you to sigh,
Wild haired drummer shot pot-stained invective,
Live now my friend, the past we can't revive.

Rose-tinted, soft seductive lullabies,
Gold plated memory always selective,
Gig night the only time he felt alive,
Live now my friend, the past we can't revive.

Catalogue of Moons

Kristiana Reed

Each night he catalogues the moon.
Beneath the dark he counts each one - cold, blue and full.

i. new: pale false, devoid of sadness, full and peachy.
Gladdened by the setting sun.

ii. young: green, wraps its arms around itself, blows kisses
to the stars.

Smiles with teeth.

iii. waxing crescent: love curled in, collapsible, foldable lust.
Melting in space and emptiness.

iv. waxing quarter: deadly iridescent blue, reaching white
arms across cosmic distances.

Promises to hold him on the days he cannot.

v. waxing gibbous: chews on something sweet, hear the
crunch of spacedust.

Snow-stuffed skin, billowing along the seams.

vi. full: this place is haunted; howls escape his lips, curl
themselves around his tongue.

Beats a drum, loud, loud, loud.

vii. waning gibbous: exhales, deflates, tastes the
star-speckled breath of the milky way.

Swallows and stomachs change.

viii. waning quarter: splits itself in half, lets go of secrets
and curses.

Rolls its eyes in desire and moans.

ix. waning crescent: tucks away, retreats into midnight,
feels the cold in its hands.

Reaches for forever and misses.

x. old: bent double and haggard; age glistening across a
disappearing brow.

Writes poetry in the sky. Reminds him, us and you,

outside of a poem, we are poetic, we are beautiful and
soon,
brand new.

Hidden Life

Laura Groves

Always
in the last of the dark months of winter
crops are sowed,
the new moon bathes the wet earth in silver,
snow falls again,
wellied footprints are trodden over their frozen cracked
roof.

But the days will soon push further and
further against the night
drawing longer with the calendar,
the stained coffee cup steams from the shed as you work
and then -
rows of colour!
aubergine, sweet juicy reds,
and purple sprouting with green
will show their heads.

Handfuls will be harvested,
scooped into baskets by your soil-covered hands,
some snapped raw, stems crunched into
under wide open sky,
tanginess tingling your tongue,
before the bounty will make its way home.

In your warm kitchen,
you will whip it up into chutneys and crumbles,
cheesy bakes and stews,
tasty morsels shared: testimony to long winter hours.

Always
in the last of the dark months of winter
there is colour stirring in the cold,

rich scents mingling with the damp of earth,
hidden life
waiting below ground.

Prayer

Gabriela Marie Milton

you, fountain of youth,
forgive me

I am the one made from mud and from the skin of Attica's
flutes

at night, my existence feels like an impertinence or
perhaps like an interlinear
a language half-imagined
half adulterated

by the bloom of the olive trees under the sticky wing of an
angel

I was born in the swamps where the tombs of the prophets
sunk

I am blood and bones when I smell the sea and the meat
from the grill

church bell toll and speak of death, and of the mystique of
oblique winds

you, goddess of youth,
source of life from where four rivers flow
your child-like body

stands some days on the top of the mountains

and others on the top of the fountains
your skin is dewed and flowered with love

my skin haunts the night of the deserts

your destiny is that of the innocents

mine is that of the sinners

forgive me, you, Hebe

that I do not ask for the gift of youth

give it to the children

give it to the sick

and throw what is left into the sea

the fish will be happy

Meet our Issue I contributors

Without the incredible writers, artists and photographers below, our first issue, of such high calibre, would not have been possible. Thank you to you all.

Sreelakshmi Aravind is a writer from Bengaluru, India, pursuing a Masters in Biotechnology at Amrita University. Her work celebrates mental health and feminism. Her Instagram handle is @ziawrites_

Ira Ares is a photography enthusiast who focuses on conveying feelings and stories through their portraits using lighting and minimal props. You can see more of their portraits and photography on Instagram at @ira.ares

Jaya Avendel is a word witch from the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. Her writing is an exploration of the lives she has lived and the life she lives. With work published at Free Verse Revolution, Visual Verse, and MookyChick, among others, and included in two anthologies from Indie Blu(e) Publishing, she writes and dreams at ninchronicles.com.

Ingrid B writes poetry, fiction and the occasional factual piece at <https://experimentsinfiction.com/>. She has had her work published in a variety of literary magazines including Free Verse Revolution, Spillwords Press, Secret Attic and Route 7 Review. Her poetry also appears in anthologies including 'Poetry in the time of Coronavirus' and 'BeautiFUL ways to say...' Ingrid also writes micro-poetry for Twitter, and has set herself the challenge

of writing one poem every single day in 2021. Find out more and take part @experimentsinfc.

Constance Bourg lives in the Flemish part of Belgium, where she volunteers at her local library. Her poems have appeared in *Rogue Agent*, *The Poetry Shed*, *Blanket Sea*, *The Pink Plastic House anthology* and the *Emma Press anthology of illness*. She also dabbles in collage and is currently working on a book-long erasure poetry and collage project transforming Tove Jansson's *The Summer Book*. She leads a part-time life because of an invisible disability called ME/CFS. You can find her at constancebourg.wordpress.com and on Instagram at @tender.rebellion.

Gina Bowen lives, breathes, and photographs the mountains of Eastern Tennessee. She spends her time writing poetry and short stories on her porch and getting lost in the woods to photograph the beautiful landscapes with her heeler pup, Jolene. Gina is currently a monthly writer for *Emotional Alchemy Magazine*. Her creative and journalistic pieces can be found on their website. More of Gina's poetry and photography can be found on Instagram under her handle @gina.bowen.creative.

Adrienne Burris is a writer/teacher in Greenville, SC. Her work is also forthcoming in *Washington Square Review*. She shares her poetry drafts on Instagram, @parkspoet.

Karan Chambers is an ex-English teacher turned tutor and mum to two lively boys. A graduate of the University of East Anglia, King's College, London and Roehampton

University, she is working on her first collection of poetry. Her work has been previously published in New Normal Zine, The Mum Poem Press Guide to Self-Care and the Press 'Echo in the Heart Cave'. Karan can usually be found hunting for poetic inspiration whilst chasing her feral children through the Surrey countryside, or on Instagram at @writer.interrupted.

Brandon Clarke is a recent film studies graduate from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, majoring in writing and directing. Winner of best third year film, director and writer of three shorts, Brandon has a strong passion for telling stories in interesting and magical ways. Apart from filmmaking, they also write and publish poetry online, dealing with themes such as nature, love, and mental health. When they are not writing, Brandon could be found outside taking photos or recording performance art.

You can find their work on Instagram and YouTube:

@brandon_clr (photography)

@b_poet_try (poetry)

[youtube.com/kinbouro](https://www.youtube.com/kinbouro) (writer, director, producer & co-founder)

Candice Louisa Daquin, of Egyptian/French Heritage, has earned degrees in science, then worked in publishing in Europe. Daquin currently lives in America where she has a psychotherapy practice and in her spare time is Senior Editor at Indie Blu(e) Publishing. She's a passionate skier and swimmer, and loves socializing with her creative friends.

John De Gruyther is a freelance writer, author and published poet. He is currently working on his first novel for children. You can find more about John's work at his website www.theworldoutsidethewindow.com.

Tom Francis is a secondary school English teacher living in Lincolnshire. A fledgling author, he has focused mainly upon his teaching during recent years, however his spark for serious writing has been recently reignited. He has dabbled in sports and fiction; fortunate enough to have been published for both, yet his passion has always laid in poetry. After a successful submission in Free Verse Revolution, Francis is preparing for a very active year in the literary world.

Molly Furey is eighteen and from a small town near Manchester in the UK. They first started their writing journey back in 2018, with their love for poetry blossoming in the past year. They have always found writing to be a comfort and recently they created their own poetry account on Instagram, @fureysfreeversee, where you can find and read all of their pieces.

Deepti G. is an IT Engineer who works as a technical consultant with an IT firm. She is an avid reader, plant lover and travel enthusiast too. Poetry for her is a means of a beginning, a journey within. You can find her poetry on Instagram at @thedelphian.

Zoe Gray grew up in the Somerset countryside where she and her brother made up whole imaginary worlds full of witches, troll-families and duck-queens. She has always

loved stories and poetry, spending much of her childhood either reading or writing them. Later she studied English at Lancaster University, going on to share her love of words as a teacher in a London secondary school. Having recently moved back to Somerset, she is missing her wonderful students but happy to be back in the countryside with her family and dog. Zoe is currently writing her first novel for children.

Instagram: [inkandpaper_zml](#)

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Laura Groves lives and works with her fiancé in southwest London. She is currently working on her first novel and also writes poetry daily. Her writing is inspired by nature, human connections and the strength of survivors. She has poetry published in *Sunday Mornings At The River* Anthology (Autumn 2020 edition) and you can find her poetry and novel updates on her Instagram page, [@laurabeingawriter](#).

Pieter L. Harreman is a retired taxi driver from Rotterdam, The Netherlands, with a penchant for books. They started writing English poetry for their beloved, about twenty years ago. More of their poetry can be read here: <https://prethinkblog.wordpress.com/>.

Barbara Harris Leonhard, a retired instructor of English as a Second Language at the University of Missouri, is now a writer, poet, and blogger ([extraordinarysunshineweaver.blog](#)). Her work appears in

Free Verse Revolution, Vita Brevis, *Well Versed 2020*, Spillwords, Silver Birch Press, Amethyst Review, and Phoebe, MD: Medicine and Poetry. Her poetry podcast is located at meelasmom.podbean.com.

John W. Leys has been writing poetry for over 30 years. His major influences include Allen Ginsberg, Erica Jong, Bob Dylan, and Lord Byron. His first book, *The Darkness of His Dreams*, was published in 2019. In 2020 he published his second book, *Whispers of a One-Eyed Raven: Mythological Poetry*, which contains poetry inspired by Norse, Celtic, and Classical mythology. He lives in Albany, Oregon with his chihuahua, Cosmo.

www.JohnWLeys.com

<https://linktr.ee/johnwleys/>

Katy Luxem lives in Salt Lake City with her husband and kids. When not working as an e-commerce content editor and copywriter, she plays roller derby under the name KT-Wrecks. Find her on Instagram at @katyluxem.

Gabriela Marie Milton is an internationally published author. Her literary work appeared in various magazines and anthologies. Under the pen name Gabriela M she was awarded 2019 Author of the Year at Spillwords Press (NYC). Her piece *If I say I love you* was nominated for 2020 Spillwords Press Publication of the Year (Poetic). She is the author of *Passions: Love Poems and Other Writings* published by Vita Brevis Press in April 2020. You can find her book on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) and on [BARNES&NOBLE](https://www.barnesandnoble.com). Presently she is working on a new collection of poetry to be published this

year. She blogs at <https://shortprose.blog/> and you can find her on Instagram @gabriela_marie_milton.

Sanket Mhatre is a well-known bilingual poet writing in English & Marathi. He has curated Crossover Poems – a multilingual poetry recitation sessions that unifies poets from different languages on a single platform. Apart from this, Sanket Mhatre has been invited to read at Kala Ghoda Arts Festival, Poets Translating Poets, Goa Arts & Literature Festival, Jaipur Literature Festival, Vagdevi Litfest and Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan. Besides curation & recitation, Sanket Mhatre has also created Kavita Café – a Youtube Channel that combines cinematic vision with visual poetry. He’s also a columnist who contributes regularly to leading news daily in India.

Jay Mora-Shihadeh is an Artist, Writer and Poet who currently resides in Sarasota FL, with his wife and dog. He has a background in Fine Arts and for what’s it’s worth, obtained a certificate in Art Therapy. Later in life he began to write poetry. He experienced a unique feeling that some entity took over his body and mind, and words (verse) kept hounding him. One day he decided to obey the internal prompts he was getting and let it flow. Today, he works at his craft every day and can be found on [Wordpress](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

S. K. Nicholas is a student of Fine Art, but over the past several years has become a disciple of literature. The author of A Journal for Damned Lovers Volumes 1-3, he published his first work of fiction in 2019 titled X and I: A Novel. The follow up, A Girl Named Meeko, will be

published later this year. His books are available to purchase on Amazon, and his work in progress can be read on his website at myredabyss.com.

Lisa Perkins is a full time mam of three from Dublin, who writes her way around motherhood in these times of covid. A previous business owner and blogger, poetry remains her first writing love and choice of escapism. Some of her work has featured in Pivot & Pause Anthology, Mum Poet Club Guide to self-care, New Normal and The Dear 2020 Project. She can be found spilling words on Instagram at @lisaperks.

Abbey Lynne Rays is a poet and educator living in the California Bay Area. She has won several regional poetry awards and is a member of the California Writers Club, Tri Valley Branch. Abbey is currently working on her first poetry book. You can connect with her on her instagram @[a.l.rays](https://www.instagram.com/a.l.rays) where she routinely posts favorite lines, excerpts, and drafts of her original work.

Kristiana Reed is a writer and an English teacher living in the UK. She is the creator of [My Screaming Twenties](#) and sole Editor of [Free Verse Revolution](#). Reed has released two poetry collections: *Between the Trees* and *Flowers on the Wall*. Both collections are available on Amazon. You can follow her on Instagram at @kristianamst.

Holly Ruskin has been a writer all her life but started exploring the poetic form after the birth of her daughter in 2019. She graduated with a BA in English Literature & Film going on to complete an MA in Film, specialising in

feminism and the representation of women. As a lecturer and freelance writer, she has edited screenplays, written short stories and academic essays. But it is writing poems about motherhood that has brought her the most creative joy. She co-founded 'blood moon poetry', an inclusive and welcoming place for female poets to submit their work for publication. A selection of her work is published in an anthology of stories about postnatal depression titled 'Not the Only One' and her poems have been published in various zines, anthologies and journals. She also writes for *Harness Magazine* and is a *Motherscope* contributor. Holly lives in Bristol, UK. She can be found on Instagram at @mother.in.motion.

Skyler Saunders is a poet and digital artist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. You can find Skyler's poems on their Instagram @smilingatmysandwich, where they are embarking on a challenge to write a poem every day for an entire year.

Eleanor Shaw is a historian of medicine living in Northern England. Picking up poetry again after many years helped her through the early years of parenting and the pandemic. You can find her work at @pushing.and.pining on Instagram.

Shay Siegel is a young adult author and poet from Long Island, New York. She graduated from Tulane University with a B.A. in English, where she was also a member of the women's tennis team. She went on to earn an MFA in Writing from Sarah Lawrence College. Her debut YA novel Fractured was released in October 2020, and her collection

of poetry Bleeding Flowers was released in 2019. Shay currently splits her time between Charleston, South Carolina and Long Island with her boyfriend, Pat, and their giant-headed rescue pit bull, Bernie. Her website is www.shaysiegel.com.

Ivor Steven was formerly an Industrial Chemist, then a Plumber, and now retired, and he lives in Geelong, Australia He has had numerous poems published, in on-line magazines, and anthology publications. Recently he was appointed to the “Go Dog Go Café” magazine’s website team of Baristas. He is also an active member of the Geelong Writers Inc. and many of his poems are published in their annual Anthologies.

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Ivor's book ["Tullawalla"](#).

Mark Tulin is a former family therapist who lives in Ventura, California. He is a Pushcart Prize nominee and has authored *Magical Yogis*, *Awkward Grace*, *The Asthmatic Kid and Other Stories*, and *Junkyard Souls* (all available at [Mark Tulin's Amazon](#)) Mark’s fiction, poetry, and humor have appeared in over a hundred publications, anthologies, and podcasts. He can be found at <https://www.crowonthewire.com>.

Lynn White lives in north Wales. Her work is influenced by issues of social justice and events, places and people she

has known or imagined. She is especially interested in exploring the boundaries of dream, fantasy and reality. She was shortlisted in the Theatre Cloud 'War Poetry for Today' competition and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and a Rhysling Award. Find Lynn at: <https://lynnwhitepoetry.blogspot.com> and <https://www.facebook.com/Lynn-White-Poetry-1603675983213077/>

Howard Young is a published poet and artist from Brighton, UK, who often creates outdoors, weather permitting. He is interested in modern nature poetry, the sea and mythology. He lives in a terraced house with his wife, children, and too many typewriters. His latest work can be found in Train River Publishing's Winter 2020, and Spring 2021 print anthologies, thestation.in and on Instagram at [@brighton_typewriter_poet](https://www.instagram.com/brighton_typewriter_poet).