



ISSUE VIII:
GUINEVERE
rebirth

CONTENTS

POETRY - IN ORDER OF FIRST APPEARANCE

Eleanore Dykes [pg 1, 51, 52]

Sophia Murray [pg 2, 10-14]

Robin Harvey [pg 3, 39]

Howard Young [pg 6, 62]

Enrico Barigazzi [pg 16, 32]

Eva Korošec [pg 8, 58]

Carella Keil [pg 9, 35, 42]

Cassie Senn [pg 15]

R S Kendle [pg 17]

Nika [pg 18]

Gemma Haank [pg 19]

River Snowdrop [pg 20]

Nicholas Olah [pg 22, 27, 31]

Jennifer Cox [pg 23, 26, 47]

Rachael Powles [pg 25]

Barbara Harris Leonhard [pg 28, 49]

ADE [pg 29]

Yoda Olinyk [pg 30, 44, 48]

Jonathan O'Farrell [pg 33]

Claire Reberger [pg 37]

Emma Conally-Barklem [pg 38]

Amy Devine [pg 40, 65]

Karen E Fraser [pg 46, 50]

CONTENTS

Allana Stuart [pg 53]

Aparna Venkatesan [pg 55]

Luna Monet Sierra [pg 56]

Emily Tee [pg 59]

Nick Reeves [pg 60]

Euzette Fermilan [pg 61]

Ingrid Wilson [pg 63]

Duna Haller [pg 64]

PHOTOGRAPHY & ARTWORK - IN ORDER OF
APPEARANCE

Eric Avalon Huhta [pg 5]

Jonathan O'Farrell [pg 16]

Nina Nazir [pg 21, 41, 66]

Carella Keil [pg 43]

Nick Reeves [pg 45]

Jahra Tasfia Reza [pg 57]

Ingrid Wilson [pg 63]

NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

The observant among you will immediately query the mention of editors, rather than one single editor. While Free Verse Revolution was relaunched as a literary & arts magazine in 2021, under the leadership of Kristiana Reed, as we move into 2023, it felt right to bring a second editor, a co-editor if you will, on board. And, although unintended, it made sense to share this news with the release of Issue VIII which explores identity and rebirth.

This is not to say anything drastic will be happening or changing with Free Verse Revolution. It just means there will now be a second pair of hands when it comes to reading submissions and curating our anthologies and issues.

I'm sure the big question really is, who is it? It's someone who has been with Kristiana since she took on Free Verse Revolution as a blog in 2018. Someone who has listened to her plans to transform the blog into a magazine and proofread every issue we've published since our first in March 2021. It's Kristiana's partner, Nicholas James who will be working very much behind the scenes and with a pseudonym for his own privacy.

Already his input has been invaluable and his creative ability and critique run through this issue. We are very excited for Truthtellers (our next anthology) and for 2023 and what it holds as we continue to share and publish the work of regular favourites and new voices four times a year.

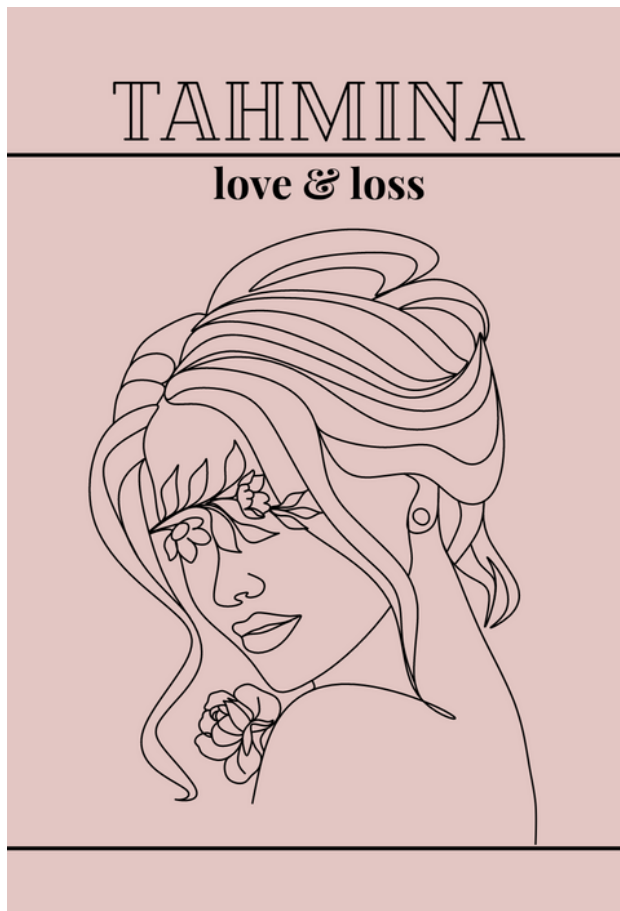
We wish you a very happy new year! Enjoy Guinevere and the hope she restores in who we are and how we are defined.

Kristiana & Nicholas

FREE VERSE REVOLUTION

Free Verse Revolution is an international literary and arts magazine publishing quarterly issues in print and digital format. Each issue is themed and shares poetry, prose, photography and artwork by creators from around the globe. Free Verse Revolution also publishes an annual print anthology sharing a selection of pieces from the four issues of that year. We pride ourselves as a home for new and established creators since we began publishing poetry as an online WordPress platform in 2018.

Read previous issues online at
www.freeverserevolution.com



THE NAMING

ELEANORE DYKES

They call me wicked
second-born, plucked from Adam's rib
snake-whispered temptress
apple-bitten, forbidden fruit
a she-devil with soft breasts and tender sighs.

The greatest knight of his court
so close to home
how could you, how dare you?

Perhaps I should try to defend my honor
or beg for forgiveness
but all they will hear
is the hissing of my forked tongue
the sin of my sex
of heat and beating blood and sweat.

So I speak my truth
to the briars and ravens and wolves instead
to the wild ones that will listen:

I am queen, I am noble wife
shackled by a gilded crown
their holy grail, the chalice
in which they can pour all their desires.

I am lover and I am loved.

I am villainess, betrayer
breaker of hearts.

I am none of these things
and I am everything.

I am wholly my own, sovereign of myself
before any kingdom or man.

Let them crumble and fall
until I stand alone.

Let them never forget my name.

I am Guinevere.

RESTITUTION

SOPHIA MURRAY

I am handing back my names.
There are many. Made a pejorative.
Each a nettle harvested bare handed
A heart line callused, blistered
Forms a new name on my palm

I am handing back my sex
I am villain, seductress
Wife scorned, sister burned
Barren mother - take all of her
I am the sorcerer and sexless.

I am handing back my fear
Walking beside rivers, never daring
To consecrate this body
To baptise myself with my name
Lest I lose you

I am handing myself back to me
Breaking the reflection
I crawl into the iris and swim to shore.

A SISTERS' RITES

ROBIN HARVEY

it matters not, Ceridwen
if the red-crossed knight plucked the petals off the rose
or if the lady on the shield
plucked the champion's soul
when her king turned wrinkled scold

it matters not, for her heart was plucked
for love, for spite and sin,
by a noble man who split the bars ajar to seize the prize
and spilled first blood to win
then amid his mazy web of lies
he woke the cursed end
of Camelot

when the Great Champion shirked the blame
and left his wayward lady damned
to burn atop a fiery pyre
no one would forgive the whore
adorned in silk and fur, tinged
with the garnet tint of his blood-tainted desire

yet beneath the embers, bits and bones
freed from death's dark yoke
the wily white enchantress rose
gray opals framed her otherworldly face
a novice no more, now maid, mistress and master
reborn to reign soon to reclaim her fabled fate, her destiny thereafter

in fury she wove her dangling curls
their wiry glint like strands of gold
into copper adder braids entwined
to pierce the skin in a poison caress
for any clear-browed suitors so bold
as to enter her garden that burned with the sting of nettles,
and echoed with screams of routed mandrake

each night by the flicker of fairy circles
her cursed cauldron brewed
the elixir of poets and seers
to create the new kingdom's muse
a kingdom free of the Champion's ruse

then she damned the feckless, shining man
to sit on the timbrel cucking stool
where his sovereign cuckold's broken spirit
was damned to pull the cart
and under the weight of his second's unyielding pride
the wheels splintered and broke his heart
and he cried when four gray walls and four gray towers
tumbled to raven stone rot as the round table died

hunch close and listen, rivals of a lost brotherhood
who lay waste to hearts of the realm
drown in her eyes when she rises
drop your gauntlets, raise your tankards
and as petals burst from the yellow-leaved water lily
toast the goddess of the new dawn

APPERCEPTION1024

ERIC AVALON HUHTA



Painted with miscible oil

WHITE GHOST FRACTURED THROUGH A
KALEIDOSCOPE OF TIME
HOWARD YOUNG

Fictional like you,
Fractured through a kaleidoscope of time
Probably,
Ophelia was an autumn leaf in a wandering brook
Onlookers wailing her downstream, she was
Cast down into water by stormed words
Pouring from his Hamlet mouth
The reeds take the place of her
Auburn hair, lost flowers make her dress.

You, the mythical queen, Gwenhwyfar, a white ghost
Whose river is time, legend of a sword pulled from legends,
Cast as a metamorphic stone in constant erupting flux
Flickering beacon through candles of history.

You are a fabled twig in a mythical stream
Tattooed onto history but never constituting its bones,
We all know who you are
And we all know you never existed
Perhaps, but you see
Each new story is an eddy or shallow drift
That slows the pace, spins the truth
Penelope is still weaving, but your tapestry grows thin.

This was a story written by angry men,
Proud and brilliant but blood spattered visors
Leave them blind to truth,
You are unfairly marked by their stained hands
To walk a step behind,
A handmaiden in your own court.

Then they broke their own friendships,
Shattered like a cup of Christ
In nailed arguments of adulterous pain,
You, Set between them,
Never allowed to speak or dream
You were just an Ophelia
A leaf set to drift on their bloody stream.

THE BOOK

ENRICO BARIGAZZI

We're reading the book
of our perdition
a round table is supposed to be
our gravestone
and the tragic verses which sealed
Camelot's throne
have been our epitaph
lost in the wind
formed by missed words
the same sweet ones
we've pronounced in the secret dark rooms
of a castle staring at our waning promises
flying away during the Kingdom Fall

the last view of the ancient vanishing chivalry
as tears roll down her petrified face.

LE MORTE DE GUINEVERE

EVA KOROŠEC

And now she dies the way she lived,
the Queen of all the desperate Hearts.
Refusing love in her dying breath,
she plays her ever noble part.

While she lived, she was a true lover,
and therefore she had a good end –
she doesn't cry out when all life fades
away, she welcomes Death like a friend.

Her downfall lays her softly into
the ground, next to her devotion.
He cries, she slumbers with a smile –
she now owns her heart, her emotion.

She has never known this peace,
this calm that washes over her –
no longer poisoned by cheap plot twists,
not a slave to her coverture.

*Here lies the once and future Queen.
May her death be more peaceful
than her life has ever been.*

EVE'S SISTER

CARELLA KEIL

"I don't really care why the caged bird sings: it doesn't fly."
And that night she cut the paper moon
from the sky, and buried a secret seed
in her heart.
"Eat from me, for I am truth."





INTERVIEW WITH

Sophia Murray

INTRODUCE YOURSELF; WHEN DID YOU BEGIN WRITING? WHEN AND WHY DID YOU DECIDE YOU WANTED TO SHARE YOUR WORK WITH OTHERS?

My name is Sophia Isabella and I am a hot mess with a pen and a dark imagination. I would love for that statement to be my writer bio for submissions but I try to be a little more professional. That's all true though. I've always been a writer. My imposter syndrome wouldn't normally allow me to make that statement but saying as I'm being interviewed as a writer, I think she'll allow it. I went through a particularly rebellious teenage phase of writing stand up comedy and performing it. Then I calmed down a little and started writing music. Now I appear to have mellowed and found myself writing poetry. I did write poetry as a teen but the girl I had a crush on was a better poet than me so I stopped that and started writing songs instead. I suppose because of various forays into the arts world, I've always shared my work to some extent but more recently it was from being trapped indoors during the pandemic. I started to see other people put their work on Instagram and Twitter (R.I.P) and thought I may as well join in to alleviate the incredible pressure of teaching online and home-schooling my children.

WHERE DO YOUR INSPIRATIONS COME FROM? ARE THEY MUSICAL, LITERARY, EKPHRASTIC OR ALL THREE?

I'm inspired by everything. That's probably incredibly pretentious but I'm going to roll with it. It depends how I'm feeling. One day I'll be in the car listening to Father John Misty and end up writing pages about falling in love in a chateau lobby or I'll be reading about Ana Mendieta and write pages about the female silhouette on fire in the snow as an act of feminist rebellion. I'm constantly in awe of writers who have a style and a theme they always work with and find new ways to represent and interrogate their subject matter. I'm quite chaotic and I suppose I get bored easily. I like to have new things to push my poet buttons.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR WRITING PROCESS?

Again, chaotic. I have random things in my notes app on my phone and several notebooks filled with scribbles. It took me a while to get to this point but I write every day. Even if it's just a couple of lines. Usually there's something salvageable from the scribbles that finds its way into another piece or acts as a prompt for another poem. I sit and type everything up once a month and then I edit. I like to come back to things and then decide if I love or hate them. If I love it then I'll do a little tweak here and there, if not then it goes in a folder to be dealt with at a later date or is consigned to the poetry rubbish heap.

WITH REGARDS TO THIS ISSUE, WHAT DOES THE THEME OF REBIRTH MEAN TO YOU? IS IT SOMETHING YOU BELIEVE WE ALL EXPERIENCE/UNDERGO IN OUR LIFETIME?

Did you know that the atoms we are made of now are not the atoms we were made of when we were born? Isn't that incredible. We are regenerating all of the time. Aside from me geeking out about the wonders of the universe, yes I believe we can experience rebirth spiritually/mentally if we wish to do so. Sometimes we have no option but to be reborn. I've been married, divorced, suffered various types of trauma and here I am writing poetry, raising children and happily married to a very nice artist man who makes me laugh every day. Even now I can see that the woman he fell in love with is not the woman I am now. I'm stronger, confident and two dress sizes bigger for a start. It takes work and a fair amount of self-awareness and reflection but it's possible to change. Sometimes we don't have a choice.

YOU RECENTLY RELEASED A CHAPBOOK WITH CAST IRON POETRY, TITLED 'THE ALCHEMIST'S DAUGHTER', HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS COLLECTION TO ANYONE YET TO READ IT?

It's a collection of poems by a woman coming through the other side of a traumatic upbringing. I started therapy when I started writing the pieces in the chapbook and edited them as I went through the therapy process. A lot of it is me coming to terms with my relationship (or lack thereof) with my mother and being OK with myself as a human being. It's dark and a bit sad but as the poems move on they get a bit more cheerful and hopeful!

WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE PUBLISHING PROCESS?

I learned that what's in my head and what I read when I see my words isn't necessarily what the reader gets! I've never had to make any major changes but it is so interesting to get feedback on what fresh eyes see of my work and the tweaks I need to make to clarify my message or intention. It's terrifying to put all of your words out there but it's an incredible feeling to know that there's a book with my name on it.

AS A FOLLOWER OF YOUR WORK IT IS CLEAR TO SEE HOW YOU OFTEN EXPERIMENT WITH STYLE AND FORM. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE UNSURE OF THEIR PLACE WITHIN THE POETRY COMMUNITY?

Everyone has their place and their story to tell. I rarely write about motherhood but I read and admire lots of writers who can weave their experiences into words. I never have the words to describe motherhood so I find solace in the words of others.

Without those people writing about their experiences, I wouldn't find the comfort I do in seeing shared experiences and emotions from a range of writers who I am constantly in awe of. I also think there's so much room to play with poetry. You can basically throw all of the rules of English out of the window and experiment to your heart's content. That's incredibly freeing for people who struggled with creative writing at school and worry about their grammar and punctuation and all of those boring things that can come quite naturally to some people. I often find the people who worry the most about the quality of their writing have taken more time and thought to make it, so it's often a better piece of writing - you can feel the work that has gone into it.

IF YOU WISH TO SHARE, WHAT IS YOUR WRITING DREAM? YOUR 'I MADE IT' MOMENT? HAS IT ALREADY HAPPENED?

My writing dream has already happened. It happened the first time one of my poems was published in print by Hecate magazine (sadly now gone). There'll never be another poetry moment to top the feeling of seeing my name next to my poem in a printed anthology. I have to say though, Nic and Cast Iron Poetry did make the uber dream come true by allowing me to join the Cast Iron Poetry group. It's an astonishing group of writers and I couldn't believe I was invited to be part of it.

WHAT ARE YOUR WRITING/PUBLISHING GOALS FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE?

I have a chapbook coming out with Querencia Press in 2023 called 'Reasons Why We're Angry' which is from my experience of being in therapy and for a long time refusing to admit I was an angry person. I quickly realised, with the help of my wonderful therapist, that I am incredibly (and rightfully) angry. I was taught that anger wasn't becoming for a woman and really, should a mother, English teacher, woman ever show anger? If we do, we're commonly told that we must either be menstruating or we're in some kind of hysterical rage. It's a hard emotion for us to convey without being told we're over-reacting. Often when a man is angry it's taken as a sign of virility, strength and masculinity. I thought I might write something to change that! My husband is illustrating some of the pieces as well so it's been fun to talk about my work with him in a serious, let's get down to business kind of way. He doesn't really 'get' poetry (the British school system does a wonderful job of ruining poetry for people - I'm allowed to say this, I'm an English teacher) so I've really enjoyed seeing him pull my words apart and create visual pieces to accompany them.

I'm also currently working on some poems influenced by my Catholic upbringing. I am a lapsed Catholic and I've reached a point in my life where I can examine the ways in which Catholicism influenced my beliefs towards being a woman, a mother, how I view sex, men and life. It's been an interesting few months of remembering parts of my childhood and joining the dots to later adult experiences and how I acted/reacted. It's wonderfully cathartic (and also hilarious to remember that I was told about 'the birds and the bees' without any context to that metaphor so waited for the sexual health nurse to get to the part with the birds in). It's a good feeling to not take writing too seriously and find the joy and relief in finally getting things down on paper.

WHEN WE MEET
SOPHIA MURRAY

After Joy by Sasha Dugdale

The clocks tick on a blank face; a pregnant belly shudders. Blackout.

I am good but not all good. There can't be any of that without me. Without darkness.
Like we find ourselves now.

I took his wrist watch and crushed it under my heels.
Cracked his skull with the soft skin inside my elbow.
And I loved him.

Eggshells crack over gold flame.

Split the trunk of the oak tree and keep our memories in there.
So love could grow again without me having to know.
While I danced.

She dances on the spent shells of pistachio nuts. Tongue lolling.

I'm wallpapered in tiger skin. I'm rotten underneath. Damp rot sets in when you live in
starlight.

She roars.

I devoured them. Like fine French cheese and wine. I have no remorse though they
would like me to.

I only please myself.

She laughs.

I might drop down dead tomorrow and then what good would it have done to listen to
everyone else except the voices in my head. No one else can hear them.

A door opens. Peppered lights spill onto her papered hands.

([WHO] I [WAS]) (WHO [I] AM) (WHO I WAS)
([WHO] I [AM]) (WHO [I] WAS) (WHO I AM)
CASSIE SENN

My childhood self was moulded by the movement of your jaw, how your tongue rolled over vowels. Lips parting and gaping, spitting syllables out. I think maybe they all forgot I listened more than I spoke. That my skin was something fragile, deeply porous and so their words seeped in. You said I was sensitive. I don't know if that was actually the truth, or if I just became it.

And now I have been framed as both killer and victim, lover and fighter, woman of both birth and ruin. I am none of these things and yet all of them at once. No one has listened to the words which line my own mouth. Nor understands the difficulties in pulling them away from the outside noise and allowing them to grow from my ribcage right up to my surface. It is easier to let things die than to try and find water.

Oh, the things I lost just to please them. I was so malleable all those harsh fingers pressed into my outer shell and even now you can still see the dents. The dips of my skin and being where I pulled away the parts of me that didn't fit. If I was blank and pristine, I couldn't be anything other than fitting for the purpose they wanted to push me in. Dutiful lover, woman who worshipped, nothing more significant than a follower. Eventually, the novelty of it wears off and the ties are cut as if I still have some of my old self to land on softly.

As if I still know who I am without the support of these outside structural beams. As if I knew who I was before they propped me up and told me to smile.

TRAVAILS IN TRAVEL
JONATHAN O'FARRELL



BPD

R S KENDLE

For Dr van Oostveen

You had already decided
Hadn't you?

Before I walked in
You had decided.

Not to listen to me
Hear my story, my pain

A life already so sullied
By the decisions of others.

Already decided
On a series of questions
I could never answer correctly.

Already decided
On the letters
That would abrade.

I wrestled with your diagnosis for months.

Tried to reconcile myself
With the person you said I was.

Tried to find myself

In the medical journals
In the words of others

Felt myself blister
Against a list of symptoms that chafed

Against the friction between
The person I am
And the person you saw.

It has taken so long
To scrub away the stain
Of your words

Off my skin,
My medical notes,
My self-worth.

Taken so long
To meet myself again
To reclaim myself.

In spite of you.

LITTLE DEATH

NIKA

shape myself
with sharp knives
carving
a figure
that I wish
to have
bits of skin
falling
to the ground
parts
of the artist
that didn't make it
into the final piece
piling up
underneath
my feet
until
all body
is gone
an empty
canvas
a quiet
concert hall
knee down
in regret
to collect
the notes
the words
up again
mix them
with paint
or clay
into a
thick paste
to put back on
a sculpture
a plastic
a trail
to recover
what once was
a trail
to be untouched
again
it worked
as I am now
nearly the same again
but with one single tear
and a memory

EMPTY PANIC

GEMMA HAANK

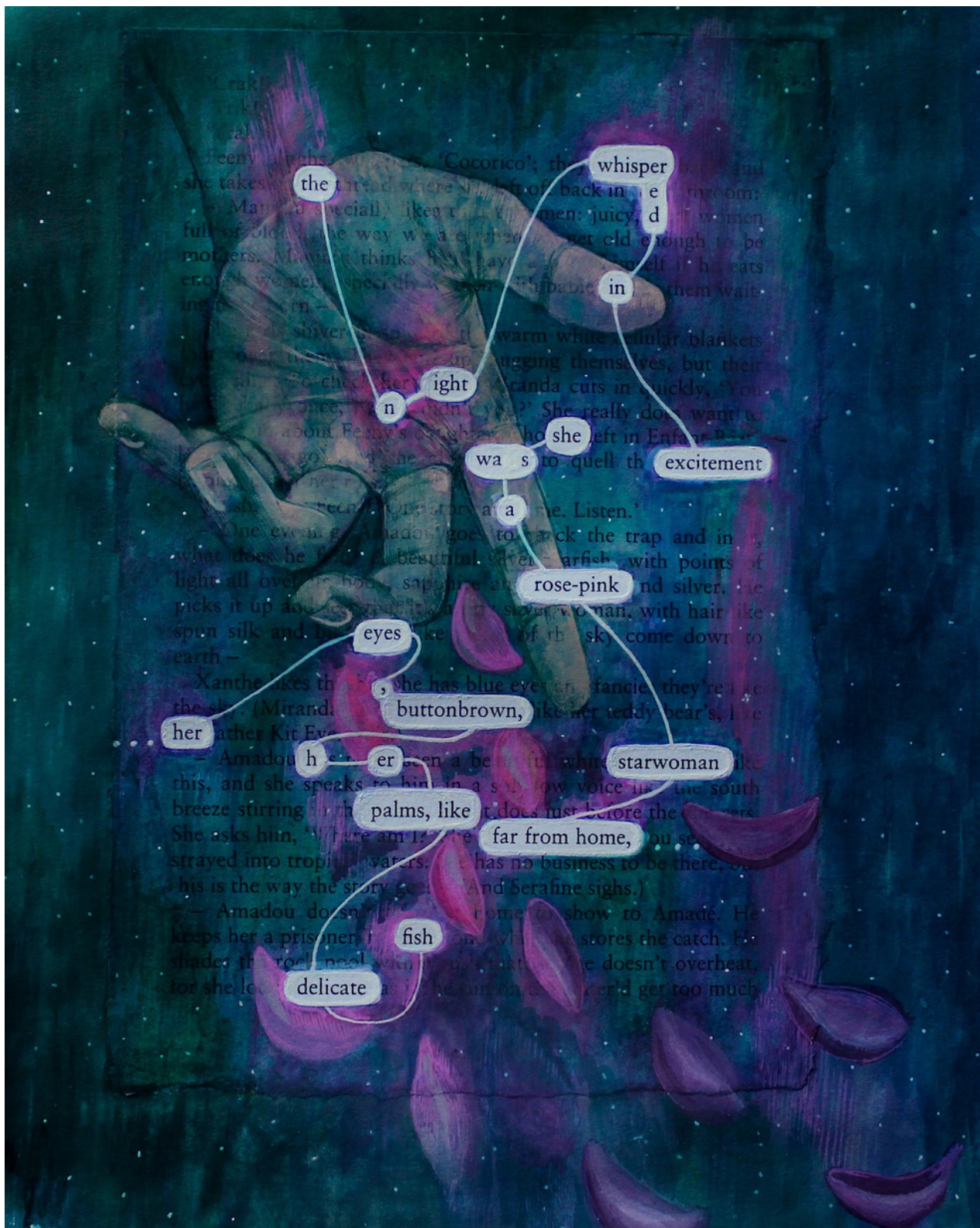
If you think about it
You probably cut corners
Try to take shortcuts just to catch a breath
You notice you can't sleep and wonder what that means
There's no peace anymore and everything seems crowded
But the room is empty
You realise your jaw is clenched but mistake it for a smile
And wonder if that's hope creeping through
You pray for the day the door closes on this room
and it never opens again.

PETTING/PROWLING

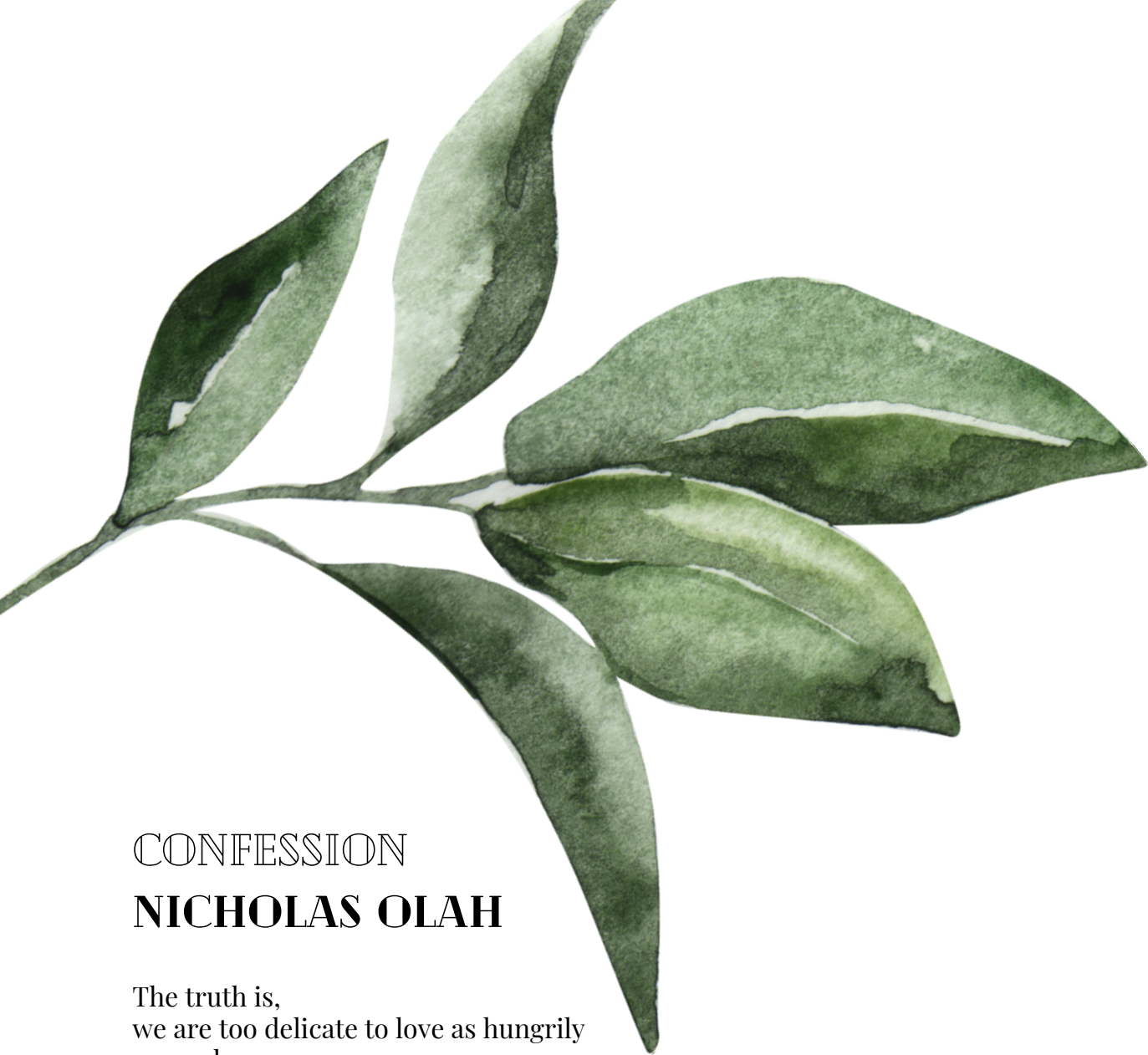
RIVER SNOWDROP

i had a dream a kitten crawled
through my cracked open window
and curled into the crook of my neck
and she sat for a long while and it
was safety. the weight of fur, the
small breaths that looked so big on her
little kitten body, just taking in air
taking in air and pushing outoutout.
we were countesses – both – in a bed
made king-size. rising only to watch
the morning creeping gently on the
tide. golden light hit the horizon and
the waves outside splashed (did i
mention that? a beach, too) and you
were a memory and the feline was
the truth. when she moved it was
inevitable but hard still to watch
her leave – darting to the roof and
down into the trees – and i can't lie
i did cry because it felt good
when the cold tear hit my face like
a sure thing, like a promise. when i
was summoned from this fantasy,
i took with me her softness, her quick
feet, and the ability to love something
like a hushed voice, like a whisper.
like a kitten in a dream.

NOMAD
NINA NAZIR



watercolour & gel pen on paper, 2022 / text source: Indigo by Marina Warner, p.221



CONFESSION

NICHOLAS OLAH

The truth is,
we are too delicate to love as hungrily
as we do.

We are poets — we love with our hands,
and they aren't big enough to carry
all that comes.

JENNIFER

JENNIFER COX

As a girl, I had a mug
of a praying child and my name
it said:
"Jennifer (Welsh from Guinevere): fair one, white wave"

I'd rub my hand over the smooth
porcelain, over and over across
the words, touching
the preciousness of it

It was wrong
for me, but I wanted
to know who was that
Jennifer on this porcelain mug

I wanted to meet her
ask her what it was like
to be a white wave
Full of hot chocolate and tea

After law school
I got someone's dream job, in the Old Boys Club
all the prestige and pay, all the crude
jokes, back slaps, the "thanks honey"

My closet full of stilettos
power suits, my costumed armour
to dress up
the letters after my name

Once
I spelled my name
wrong at my work
Jennfier instead of Jennifer

My fingers slipped
on the keyboard, I'd typed too fast
letters flipped
misspelled my own name

As I rushed to correct
it, I stopped
Jennfier fit

“Jennfier”

Jenn-fier
Jenn-fiere,
Jenn the strong
Strong Jenn, masculine, in the French

And imagined myself
A medieval warrior queen
Guinevere meets Joan
Charging headstrong

Thereafter, I spelled it wrong
Sometimes corrected it,
putting the 'i' before the 'f'
And gave Jenn-fier the reins of my day

Soon after, I quit that job
and like Guinevere and Joan, I
burned the bridges I wanted
and some I didn't

Trials, a few my own, followed
And I settled
satisfied enough
on my name.

THINGS I LIKE

RACHAEL POWLES

I like the smell of the leaves as they rot,
Almost as much as I like the smell of the petunias in bloom.
I like the blue negative space between the branches of the trees,

so bright it hurts your eyes to look up.
I like tiny trees that keep trying to grow
even though there's not enough light.

I like when the wind blows my skirt all around,
and that my yellow shoes are exactly the same color
as the line down the middle of the road.

I like that I can stand on that line for minutes at a time
and never hear a car coming,
and the way my heart still flutters at the thrill of it all.

I like that the railing on the front steps is tinged with rust,
and that there's still one daisy in the garden as big as my fist
that refuses to wilt.

I like that a fall day can feel like summer,
That when the world is supposed to be decaying
it still finds stubborn ways to live.

ACORNS

JENNIFER COX

This: the autumnal brother
Of the perfect spring day
I could only watch from my hospital room as
The newly born tulips outside reached for the sun
Collecting innumerable admirers, like
Lovers on a walk, a child's finger brushes
Declaring the start of a season
I was too fragile to touch

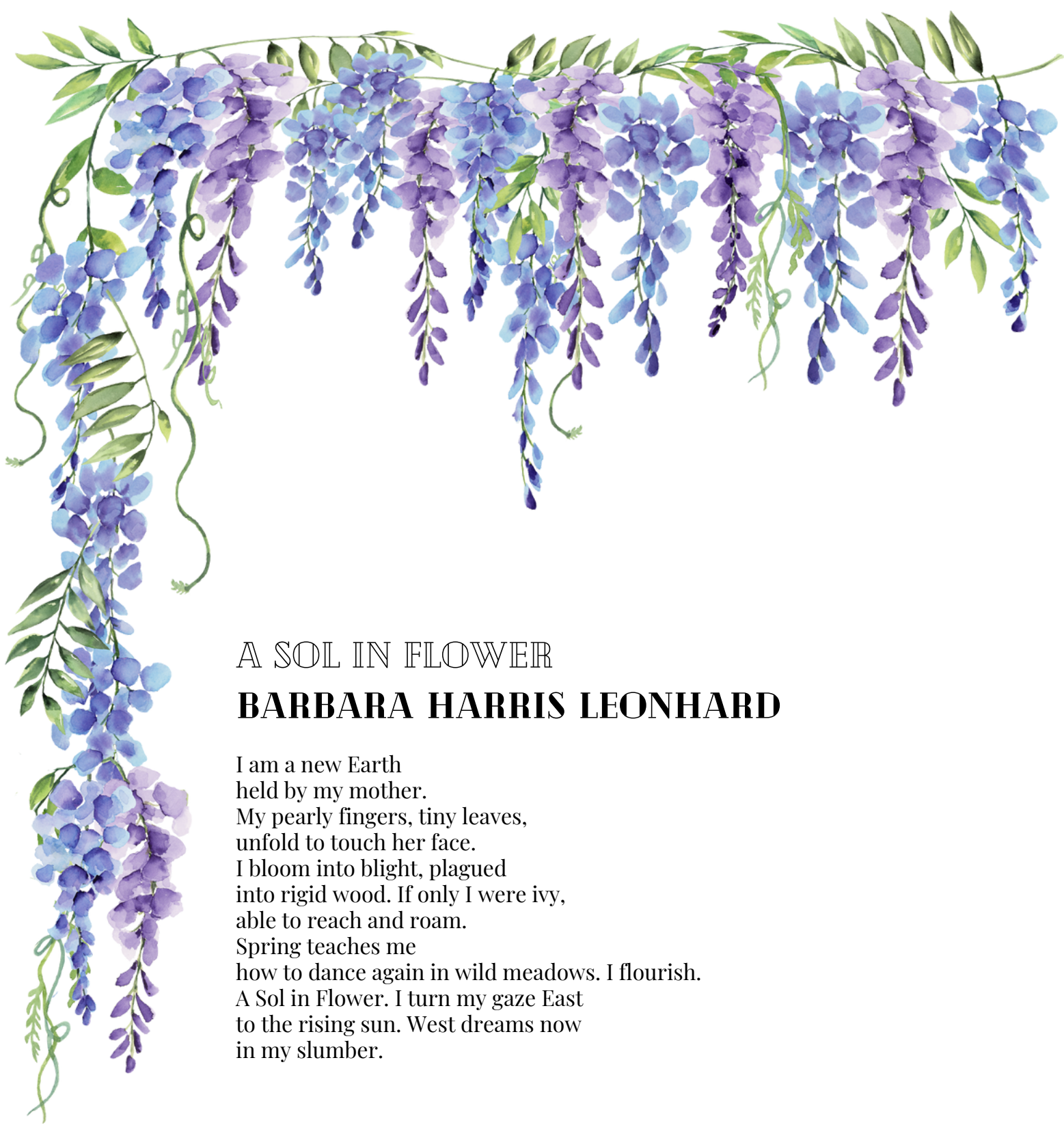
Here: our feet crunch ochre leaves
My son cradles acorns in his shirt
(I show him how)
He carries them to our yard and tucks them into our garden
Toddler hands carefully fumbling in the earth
Whispering gentle prayers that they wake up in another season

Now: I bear witness to his simple offering and weep
for the almost-wasn't that he lays to rest at my feet

SIGNS

NICHOLAS OLAH

I look for signs
hidden
in the hum
of the morning
under piles
of leaves wet
from overnight rain.
I lay face down
in the afterglow
of the dawn;
my ear pinned
to the ground
for hard-edged words
that could mean
something or
nothing.
I find that
winter is coming
but
then again
it always is.



A SOL IN FLOWER

BARBARA HARRIS LEONHARD

I am a new Earth
held by my mother.
My pearly fingers, tiny leaves,
unfold to touch her face.
I bloom into blight, plagued
into rigid wood. If only I were ivy,
able to reach and roam.
Spring teaches me
how to dance again in wild meadows. I flourish.
A Sol in Flower. I turn my gaze East
to the rising sun. West dreams now
in my slumber.

THEY ASK ME

ADE

*The calm,
Cool face of the river
Asked me for a kiss.
-- Langston Hughes, "Suicide's Note"*

The trees say please
be part of the forest
your breath can be the breeze
that whistles within us

The poles chant their magnetism
frost encircles the question
is the northern light-prism
benevolent or begrudging?

The oceans, and their reams,
swirling mouths of mother,
beckon me to the streams
to flow with the aching water

Mother asks me where will I go
and what tracks will I leave?
If my answer is nowhere and
none at all,
what will my identity be?

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF
YODA OLINYK

in a cabin in the woods
and there's a cast iron fireplace, black as the night
since you left the city
and a colossal crate of maple wood
and a drawer full of board games
and the room smells like leeks and butter and lust
and there's a kettle on the stove
and a promise of rain
and a man waiting for you
with an excruciating tenderness
that feels like it might break you apart
before it puts you back together...

Wait.
Hold on.
Stay.

If you find yourself
vanishing, repeat after me:

I am safe.

Stay.
And you'll see.

LOVE AS A STORM
NICHOLAS OLAH

There's a squall line moving
through.

The wild grass is untended
and sideways—

a perfect gift from
the universe:

a metaphor for how
we have bent to storms,

for how we still do.



THE ENCHANTMENT
ENRICO BARIGAZZI

Those were the days when we walked
hand in hand on the top of walls
of our imaginary fortress
we thought that we were stronger than eternity
our eyes were blindfolded by the band of our reveries
our fondness as a boxwood grown in the King's garden

those were the days when we were tailed
by an obscure, dark presence
Morgan le Fay cast her curse
upon our heads

you are a sad queen passing by
a grave where your hopes were buried
beside a sword and a knight's armour.



PHOENIX -
LET THIS BE OUR PYRE
JONATHAN O'FARRELL

Not to remain in any shape,
removing the real flesh,
body,
actuality
of the warmth
of my exhaled breath.
Seeing to it
that
I cannot
and will not
now be confined
to a box
within another's life
like, let me see -
a fondly remembered
dead pet.

As you took
my breath away,
so do I
now.
You have provided well
and amply,
regularly,
assiduously,
dry material.
Tossed in from time
to time,
a spark,
even flame.
But how could it catch
a heart still aflame itself?

I have unwillingly
and in a retardant fashion
taken now little pieces
and so,
latterly,
unwittingly,
too long,
scraps.

And the chaff
of your intent;
chafing,
It rubs.
Heating yet cooling
in the reality of this,
half life,
I fatigue
like a light alloy,
metal.
Half,
something else,
darkened and tarnished
love.

Now,
let this
be our pyre.
Let's willingly ignite all,
past, present, future,
in one last conjoined,
strong and resolved
breath
that meets
and greets,
gladly.
The source,
the truth,
of this fire
is a last loving act

Toss it all in,
in one moment,
consumed utterly,
rising smut be us.
Heavenward ascension
and free to go which way
or that,
with the four winds,
embracing something
so much greater,
than the two,
as was.

Now,
as then;
Phoenix,
two wings strong,
ascendant.

IN A FIELD OF GREEN POPPIES
CARELLA KEIL

we lay together

on a bed

of blackened tree stumps

he whispered bubblegum dreams

blue trees that grew their icicles

to the moon

silver men that sway

from the sky's trapeze

girls who pin

the hearts they've broken

in butterfly cages

the hearts he's

broken

sandcastles swallowed with the stars

beneath darker waters

where copper mermaids

braid their green hair

i told him of memories

that glint

below the silver sway

of distant seas

all those copper wishes

i threw away

pennies sinking like stars

caught
in the mouths of dreaming mermaids

he kissed
my tears
smoothed my forehead

ran his nails along my
slit
wrist

we waited
for the scythe of moon
to rise through the smog

there was something
i needed to say, but then i
closed my eyes.

I BURN TO LIVE

CLAIRE REBERGER

This happened,
when I was young,
a kind of death.
My bud was sliced open,
my fledgling soul
destroyed.
This is the dying.

In the scorched earth
of my womb grew
a flesh-eating rage;
a sexual wildfire.

Arms, legs, flesh
craving the O,
plunging groin to groin
in a sea of satin sheets,
spooning their seeds
into the wound.

This is the rebirth.
From this fire of rage
I rise over and over,
burning through men.



BURNT HAIR

EMMA CONALLY-BARKLEM

After Guinevere

Delftware blue, my palms fan open

Dense, bitter smell as smoked horsechestnut tree leaves

A lichen's clinging to sapling

A potter's wheel dung of clay

My name catches in your rosethroat

Like a quill between the front teeth.

Incisor me into parchment and Tudor lions,

Bite that which feeds you

Burnt hair can be buried underneath bog and thistle but you know that

Don't you, know that- tell me what you know of loss!

Pre-Raphaelite eyes, evergreen-harpy

You roll the marbles of history then brick me up in the fireplace

My upper arms chimneysoot black from your lies

WIN, PLACE, OR SHOW

ROBIN HARVEY

Corralled against the stable wall
steered, stark-mad and spooked
Daddy would blare the bugle and whip Mama up
to her mark, get set and go.

Round and round the track Daddy rode upon her back
his ticket to the triple crown: three squares, a clean shirt
and some bouncy up and down.

I'd watch their endless walkabout our little "home sweet home"
see Mama posted on the boards: ironing, cutting, washing,
rutting
chomping at the bit for sugar cubes of his sweet nothings.

He filled her hope chest
from a pocketful of lies
with bridle bits, blinder cups, tape ends, bailey-nail slips
and little pills, pink for up and blue for down.

All for a bug boy's wet dream come true: my Mama, pinned,
uncrowned.

Thank God, Mama, I'm not you.

On the day it came my time to learn
to longe, bomb-proofed, I balked and reared
this filly has no fear.

I beat the odds, scratched the track
left the blinkers on the floor
rounded that old-boys' club-house turn
burned straight through the stable door
barefooting, free, unclipped, uncrimped.

I won't be broken in
or saddled with a riding-crop man on my back.

I'm no-man's ride.
This fresh new shooter
is no one's favourite chalk.
She's a tarpan in full stride.

Mama, smile for me.

I'm a unicorn.

Win, place, or show,
this winner takes all.

19:26

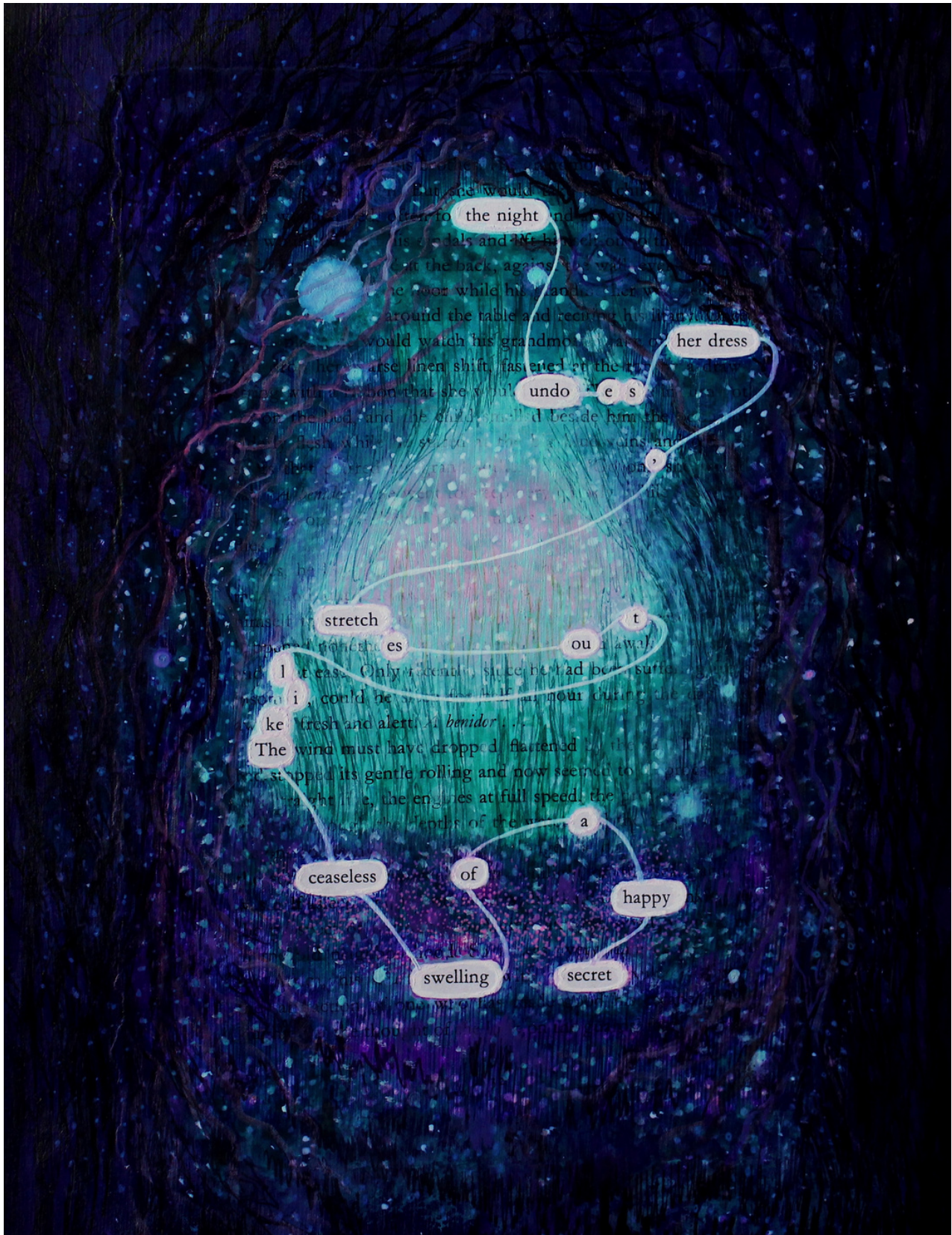
AMY DEVINE

Truth be told, I could never blame Lot's wife for looking back.
I hope that in that split second, as she turned her gaze on the destruction
of all that she knew,
She was comforted in knowing that running was the right choice...
I hope that as she was scattered across the desert in nameless crystals she
was assured that, even though the unknown is a horror,
it is not a fate worse than death.

Or, perhaps, it was.
And there was relief in facing neither. Neither fate nor death.
She would only catch stray beams of sun on the sand
And be salt.

REVELATION

NINA NAZIR



watercolour & gel pen on paper, 2022/ text source: The First Man by Albert Camus, p.32

THETA WAVES

CARELLA KEIL

Every now and then, along with images of startling beauty, my dreams will give me poetry. There was a boy with a flower growing out of his back, and the flower was his heart. His mother was the first kiss of rain in the desert, his father was the first ray of sunlight over the horizon. The petals of his heart floated away on the wind like dandelion seeds. And wherever they landed they planted upright, turning into tiny golden keys. And every key opened a doorway, and every doorway tunnelled deep underground like a thought.

BREATHING UNDERWATER
CARELLA KEIL



BAPTISM

YODA OLINYK

Sizzling sand scorches my soles as I scurry to my spot—
my own little patch of shore inhabited by just me
and the seagulls, sharp shells and sand bugs. Lumpy earth
sticks to the brine of my body. My skin itches. The air swells
with gnats. The sticks and stones that lie beneath my beach towel
all have stories which I will collect later. For now, I dry my hands
and dive them into a rolled-up bag of salty chips. I float on my back
and my eyelids become a kaleidoscope of neon pink and black and gold.
Birds and planes glide above as clouds swim by. I watch as the saltwater
freestyles down my limbs, tie-dying the earth around me. My hair
shamelessly air dries as the day turns into more day still.
I lift my body only once, to slather on a creamy coconut salve
and to sink my teeth into an ice-cold slice of watermelon.
A staring contest with the sun begins, and I keep staring
until the time of day between when I feel the undertow
of missing you, and when everything will be okay.
I immerse myself in a deep breath as I devour the golden medicine
that is this sky. Each lap of water feels like a new chance,
so I fill my lungs and close my eyes. The sun has met its match in me—
it tires, so it sets. The water becomes a shiny, obsidian mirror,
boomeranging my melancholy back to me with every wave. I know
we're in the deep-end now, so I wade into the expanse, bathe
in a magnanimous sea. I walk the coast, and I'm surrounded
by watermelon rind smiles. I do not know if the salt on my face
is from my lunch or my sweat; the sea or my sadness.
I put one foot in front of the other as if there are taste buds
on the pads of my feet. I savor the day and gather
a pocket full of sand. I watch as it floods through my fingers.
I wish my grief worked the same way.

MERIDIANS & PARALLELS
NICK REEVES



My thoughts

circle back to

the magic of

meridians and parallels

I wish

I could say I filled these miles

MPA
3M
98
LA.

Blanchet
rest

MIRACULOUSLY SLOW

KAREN E FRASER

These days I live slowly, more like a garden snail
carrying the universe lightly everywhere
I go, emerging briefly for the taste of sweetness –
 lush green leaves,
 a lover's tender touch,
 the glimmer in rays of sunlight,
 kindness in all its forms –
always emerged in the potent waters of life,
pregnant with less words and yet more worlds
 ever ready to emerge into awe.

POST TRAUMATIC GROWTH
(OR MAGPIES FROM THE ASHES)

JENNIFER COX

Little parts of me rise
Iridescent birds from the ashes
Immolated predictability

Scraps previously left behind
Deemed unworthy by someone or thing
Labels burned away

Reborn as
wing-ed mothers squawking
"I claim this!"

AND SO SHE EMERGED

YODA OLINYK

this time, not as someone's girl.
not as someone on a diet.
not as a girl who has her shit together.

this time, she wasn't brave. she wasn't tough. she wasn't surrounded
by anything except the ether and her own truth.

this time, while she was searching for whatever word means
the opposite of numb, she pricked her finger and gold poured out.

this time, instead of changing herself, she returned to herself.
but first, the scaffolding had to come down.

there was a rush—and then a cry.

this time, she put her ears and nose and tongue to the ground.
she listened as the gold crashed into the darkness:
a love letter from the divine. a humble nod to her sacrifice.
a canonization into herself. a two hour bath in the middle of the day.

this time, there was no knight in shining armor. there was no reboot button.
like Cortes, she burned all her ships—all her chances for going back.

there was no man, there was just me.
and my gold
and my God
and my truth
and the water hugging my curves.

this time, I listened. I rested.
I took big bites of my story
and spit them out at the world.

this time, I was worried I might not return
from the place that means the opposite of numb.

this time, I swam in the ocean of myself
in a tub made of rose quartz,
massaged myself as I listened to my favorite song,
as I spoke to my womb.
as I forgave.
forgave.
forgave.

and so, she emerged.
lighter. stronger.

a lioness
wrapped in lavender bubbles.

A GIRL CAN DREAM

BARBARA HARRIS LEONHARD

When I was five, they said,
Next year, you'll be six. Felt like
years away. I forgot to be five.

At twelve, I dreamed to be fourteen.
Parted my hair on the side. Draped it
over my right eye. Blind to thirteen.

Eager for the first kiss,
I missed the soft touch of breeze
off the lake. The sand between my toes.

Longing for the proposal, I failed
to see the real man. Forgot to peek
behind the mask.

I hoped to bear a new world –
My mother asked, When? –
My pansies wilted in a chipped pot.

After he left, the slow leak of sorrow
filled the slab house with wild fungus
and no one to clean the gutters.

I hear, Hurry, it's time.
I rush forward toward
the haze. The hunger.

THE RECEIVING WELL

KAREN E FRASER

I ache to sit still and receive
For days or at least long enough
To witness the beauty of one thing
As it completely unfurls, opening

Perfectly just as it is, nothing more –
Without fanfare or embellishment –
Even if this one thing can only be me.

It's the slow reveal into complete exposure
I crave, free from the need to be
More of anything or even utilitarian.

Oh, what a relief it would be. How
The whole world can be so full as to
Reach right inside and fill the well of you;
To be this one wondrous thing that is

More than enough.

METAMORPHOSE
ELEANORE DYKES

Born in the cradle of the Beartooth Mountains
I longed to trade snow-capped peaks for skyscrapers
my head filled with dreams of more
too large to fit within this Big Sky, bitterroot place.

The price of sacrifice, paid for in lost friends
the distance of 1,200 miles between family
and the girl I used to be growing smaller and smaller
in the rear-view mirror, this new life paved
over the bones of the old one
built upon grit and hope and tears.

Yesterday, I saw the woman with golden hair
smart camel-colored wool coat and leather gloves
must be heading to a cool job in the city
all bright lights, neon-pretty
strutting down the sidewalk like she belonged
like she was always meant to be there.

Then came the epiphany
a firework of realization exploding along neurons
after seven years of playing chess with myself
trying to make the right moves.

It was my reflection that gazed back at me
and I smiled at her -

Checkmate.

PHOENIX GIRL

ELEANORE DYKES

She stands in a pile of kindling
naked in the cold light of stars
waning at the zenith of this incarnation.

She knows she must burn that form, her old flesh
she has served me well and she has been strong
but she is tired, so very tired
something shifting now under her skin
stretching her bones, needing to break free
to breathe.

A match is struck
someone holds its ember lips to the torch
a kiss of fire - it is my hand, I am trembling
I am priestess and sacrifice
light the pyre, bloom into flame.

This is a ritual not a funeral, not death but life
and I rise from her, from the cinder
and soot womb, skin pink and tender and new.

Soul-forged, tempered, transcendent
becoming ancestress and descendant both.

I stand in a pile of ashes
naked in the pale light of morning
waxing at the dawn of this incarnation.

METAMORPHOSIS

ALLANA STUART

i.

exuvia breaks at
the edge of 40
shell splits to reveal
a tender unfurling
iridescent wings
once dry in the sun
shimmer with shifting colours
and in flight
everything old
becomes
new again

ii.

my words used to fly like bees
floating on a summer wind
until they holed up and hid
just like the rogue colony that
built a hive in our porch roof
one July

in the heat the walls dripped with
sweet syrup
but my mouth stayed
sealed shut
sticky with silence
like I had honey
smeared across my lips

after I licked them clean
my thoughts took flight again
like the bees
after the keeper came

but it was me that reached in
pulled them free
hands dripping words
like fists full of
honeycomb

iii.

writhing and sinuous
she sheds
inhibition like a skin
the past slips free
as silk
slides to the floor
puddles at her feet

reborn
she rises up from the
basket of her bed
sways under her own spell
moves to her own music
marks this moment as

an arrival
an arousal
an awakening.

UNBECOMING

APARNA VENKATESAN

it is becoming of a child to believe in magic, to be able to string words –
into worlds beyond the horizon of what adults perceive. it is becoming of a girl –
to parade pigtails and submit to silence, to be seen and not heard.
it is becoming. I am becoming.

it is becoming of a student to accept no less than perfection, to be averse –
to the colour of mistakes, to excel in the language of books and be fluent in verse.
it is becoming of a student to look in the mirror and see a master they will never be.
it is becoming. I am becoming.

it is becoming of a girl to learn to keep a voice as soft as her hands, to keep –
her eyes downcast, to dull the sparkle that leaves –
souls blind. it is becoming of her teeth to remain grit, and never flash a hint of her anger.
it is becoming. I am becoming.

it is becoming of a woman to chase every dream as long as she finds her home –
in the kitchen, as though her ambition was crafted to remain tethered to grinding stones.
it is becoming of her hands to be stained with turmeric just as her mother's are.
it is becoming. I am becoming.

it is becoming of a writer to tell truths even when they coat it with a lie.
it is becoming of me to be honest with you even when disguised.
it is becoming of this poem to end with a resolution.

but I must confess that –
I am a broken child, I am a –
counterfeit student, I am an –
impertinent girl, and I am an –
unfettered woman.

I have always been too much,
I have never been enough,
I am something more.

I am the one to write my story.
I am not the one who tells it.

yes, indeed. I revel in pride. I relish the realisation.
I am unbecoming.

HOW TO DIE GRACEFULLY

LUNA MONET SIERRA

Instructions for the Inexperienced Initiate

OR
(Ego) Death in Five Parts

1. Draw yourself a bath—
when your self-love is often a half empty tub, adding rosemary & lemon balm makes it feel half-filled; salt the water so when you cry, your tears feel at home in this artificial ocean you learned to craft by memories as warm as the water you draw;
2. Change your name—
name your insecurities with all the letters of the Greek alphabet until you can spell them backwards & forward, until they sound like the name your mother used to call you to come sprinting down the stairs when she never opened her mouth, the name you hear her whisper to you before you fall asleep in the months after she's died, so hidden in your name becomes all the things you'd like to change about yourself—your absentee father's nose, how you claim humility is a repugnant quality but are too scared to chase your own greatness, how you fall in love hard & fast except with your own life so you write yourself into a new hero every night. Name yourself an archetype. Step into it & bathe in the becoming so deep you could drown.
3. Drown—
drown yourself in sleepless nights & starlight, in sweet smoke & sticky sheets, in humanity's cruel & cunning minds; in fresh & rotting fruits of this world that don't quite take the edge off the emptiness of your belly. Drown in the listless waters of your own mind. Drown in the dragging of each hour until you are no victim of time but it's eager witness.
4. Bury your corpse—
hide it behind the garden of your smile. Bury the abuse under a laugh, the pain under a painting, the passion in a poem; Transmute the addiction into attraction. Bury the scars under swatches of cloth so vibrant no one looks at your skin. Bury yourself in your skin. Make your soul an anchor you cast into the depths of the Arctic that fills your veins.
5. Live—
learn to live as if your soul can never die & you have always walked between gravestones of those who do, daily. Rejoice & mourn a half-life spent between death's embrace & rebirth's call.
Live because—Beloved—there is nothing else you can do.

REBIRTH

JAHRA TASFIA REZA



REINCARNATED ETERNITY

EVA KOROŠEC

But time is relative
my love
and even eternity
is mortal in its own way
for it dies
 and persists
 and dies again.

WAIT FOR ME

EMILY TEE

after Jiminez Juan Ramon tr. W.S. Merwin 'Wait for me in the Still Water'

you are gone now, and still I wait -
you seem to ask what I'm waiting for;
I answer, it's not yet the time for me,
the river flows on, the tides go out and in,
the moon waxes and wanes, the
sun rises, and you are gone, still.
I stand at the bridge watching water
play like a silver streak passing by,
a thread that links my existence to the
one extinguished, yours, marked by a lily
garland that shimmers as it floats past, that
gleams with the pure bright light of the
morning's first sun and reflects the moon,
a memento rising to the surface that makes
me take a deep breath, hold it in, let it out -
letting it escape as a sigh, like the sound of
longing, as I wait to be with you in the light.



REBIRTHDAY
NICK REEVES

Then, all at once, and everywhere,
an explosion, a mighty crash,
tore the restaurant asunder,

momentarily waking me,
or willing me to sip further
the elixir she held to me,

and the birthday began again.
Rice, like wedding confetti, fell
from above and I was reborn.

THE GROCERY LIST TATTOO

EUZETTE FERMILAN

The man says his tattoo is a masterpiece.
How profound is a thing that looks folly,
yet crushes my soul when I think about it.
If this indelible mark be fire, then I am a phoenix
birthed from it. So I can tell
not through my brain, but through my spine.
His little brother's last request—
Zaahoo, Yakult, Jungle Juice Grapes,
Ice Coffee, Almond, Doritos, Toblerone—
is written in his own handwriting as though
a last will testament. For when the final curtain
draws, your loved ones have something from you.
To remember you by. To remember it's meant
to be scribbled on his arm

in the likeness of his brother's handwriting.

Because the living are much like this,
trying to make sense of what we can't comprehend.
Like my first trip to a Polish shop in Edinburgh,
the names and labels alien to me.
When my eyebrows meet in confusion,
I vow not to be defeated by any single word.
But of course, that's a lie; words are my weakness.
I grab what I think I need. Examining like a spectacle,
item per item, drawing conclusions. For instance,
I know it's vinegar, sugar, or flour based on how
they look. Queuing at the counter, I think how life
leads me here in Harry Potter country. And here
on this page I'm wondering: what if I drink
Dylan Thomas's pen ink? Would it help me
write these words better, or burn more souls?

I HOLD THEM STILL

HOWARD YOUNG

One year ago today my tulips died,
Leaving husked corpses behind
Blinkered old gods, desert brown
With a pallor mortis hint
Of the colour of their old faces
Like that on medieval statuary
Or Ancient Greek temples.

Like the ash-urns some keep,
Beloved on the cold mantelpiece,
I hold them still, simple dried flowers
A model of a good death,
Graceful in the last repose.

They are as calm as Greek warriors
In the fate sifting lines of the Iliad,
On some Parthenon Frieze and metope,
Or as Ophelia by John Everett, 1852.

I protect them from the wind
And bustling dusty draughts,
These decaying memories
Of the day I placed them into water.

And the other day, I tucked these
Self-embalming corpses,
Flesh gone rust, into this barren grey pot.

But the sandpaper of time
Now gnaws away their paper skins
So I will pluck them from this
Beautiful morbid gallery, cradle their head.

I will carry them like the weeping brook*
To final rest, the last bed awaiting
These wafer bones to be reborn.

* *Hamlet Act 4 Scene 7*

ATLANTIC BEADLET ANEMONE

INGRID WILSON

I found jewels in a barnacled crevice
within the cracked rocks on Cullercoats beach
teetering close to the pools like a novice
saltwater gems within reach

I found gold in the liminal lightspace
in the little-boy-blue of your eyes
in the smile on my son's cherubic face
in the sea with its pull, with its sighs

I found peace in the sea-plain littoral
peace and joy, which arose as it fell
in the shore-meadows, dazzlingly floral
in the cove carved out by the tide-swell

In the arc of this day I found heaven
anchored here by the pull of this earth
I give thanks for such gifts freely given
in this summer of love's bright rebirth



LETTER TO DUNA, 19, WHO GOT RID OF HER
AGAINST ME! ALBUMS

DUNA HALLER

Lashing out your accelerated mind &
counting the drops of sweat on the
guitar neck, toothless cry that silences
the tide into the mist,
try not to let too many new clothes in the bag as
the calm sparkles, shrieks, trembles,
the curtains are skylights,
reflections that your snaps make
as they sprout towards the loudspeakers,
as they break your character.

I remember you caught in a hot flash,
black nails,
insatiable rage,
shriveled eyeliner,
distortion-dyed strands,
looks of recognition in the pit,
napes of girls in denim jackets
that take the fear out of your throat
because the new rhythm already breathes.

There are claws in this communal gloom, undone
under embraces of compersion,
protected from your own
chaos, now the memory cracks
again, and brings to the present
the shame you felt
from the desired change of your meat
which now turns to guilt
from the mutated reminiscences while
you're: broken and new on the other side.

TO BE READ WHEN YOU TURN 30

AMY DEVINE

There is a painting in your living room that looks like a city melting.
You stole it from your parents house
when you moved out, too green to burn for it.

You stole it at a time
when you felt as though your bones were made of neon, some days
you were an element and some days
you were a flickering bulb and there was something
about the structures before you, melting like a reflection that you needed at hand.
It said:
Everything you build is as temporary as the shifting light and that is scary and that is
good.
You will skin knees at 2am and you will cry in every bathroom at least once.
You will live on tuna cans and tea leaves.
And every day the colours of the world will run together a little more but will never mix,
no matter how much you pray for a monochrome skyline.
Nothing is permanent and everything matters,
And matters
And matters nonetheless.

The horizon will disappear
And your safe harbour will meld with everything you had built. And the neon.
And nonetheless -
Nonetheless
You would build it all again

SCRYING AT DAWN
NINA NAZIR



ink & watercolour on paper, 2022



MEET THE CONTRIBUTORS

ADE (she/her/they/them) is a poet and author currently living in Appalachia. They are passionate about various social issues from nature to gender on their blog, adifferentexistence.com. Follow them on Instagram @_a_different_existence_

Allana Stuart (she/her) is an award-winning poet, writer, and former radio journalist at Canada's public broadcaster. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in a variety of literary magazines including Prairie Fire, Goat's Milk, Throats to the Sky, Orangepeel, Minnow, and more. She lives in Canada's capital city, Ottawa. You can find her on Instagram as @allanaraestuart.

Amy Devine (She/Her) is an artist from a lineage of artists whose poetry has been included in several publications including Beyond The Veil Press and Gems. She is based in Sydney, Australia and is currently working on her first book. She can be found at devineinspirational on Instagram.

Aparna Venkatesan is a 24-year-old doctor and poet. She is passionate about the art of storytelling; perspectives are to her as lenses are to a photographer. After running out of notebooks, she decided to hoard her poetry online. You can find more of her work on her Instagram page: @weathered_storms.hidden_stars

Barbara Harris Leonhard is author of Three-Penny Memories: A Poetic Memoir (EIF-Experiments in Fiction), a best seller on Amazon. She was voted Author of the Month of October 2021 on Spillwords and is the new editor for MasticadoresUSA. She loves connecting with poets and writers.

Carella Keil is a writer and digital artist who splits her time between the ethereal world of dreams, and Toronto, Canada, depending on the weather. Her work has appeared recently or is forthcoming in Columbia Journal, Skyie Magazine, Wrongdoing Magazine, Deep Overstock, Nightingale & Sparrow, Existere, Superlative Literary Journal, Stripes Literary Magazine, Writeresque, Chestnut Review, Glassworks, Door is a Jar, Grub Street and MONO. Links: instagram.com/catalogue.of.dreams & twitter.com/catalogofdream.

Cassie Senn (she/her) is a Swiss/British poet now studying in The Netherlands, with pieces of her identity strewn in a multitude of places across the globe. She largely explores topics such as love, loss, and loneliness in her work and published her first poetry collection 'The Changing Temperatures of Heartache' in 2020 and is now working on another. She has also had poems featured in a Sunday Mornings at the River anthology 'Cheap wine in expensive glasses' and you can find her on Instagram @poems.c.h.s.

Claire Reberger lives with her family and a dissociative disorder in Sydney, Australia. She received a Highly Commended in KSP Writers' Centre 2022 Poetry Competition and has been published in Visual Verse Anthology. She blogs about mental health and autism. You can follow her work here: <https://sarcasticfringehead.blog/> and on Instagram: @fringe_therapy_blog.

MEET THE CONTRIBUTORS

Duna Torres Martín (she/her, pen name **Duna Haller**) is a poet, writer, collagist and musician from Madrid, Spain. She has two poetry books out, 'Limbo' (Bottlecap Press) and 'Desierto' (Reflector Libros), as well as several poems and short stories published in various anthologies and zines, including '99% Chance of Magic: Stories of Strength and Hope for Transgender Kids' (Heartspark Press). Her work usually deals with mental & physical health themes, LGBT+ issues, memory and relationships, and she's always inclined and curious towards collaborative work. You can see more of her work and contact her at her website: <https://dunahaller.pb.studio/> or at Instagram @dunahaller.

Eleanore Dykes (she/her) is a legal business consultant and poet currently based in Chicago. Her poems have appeared in Aurelia Magazine, Genius in a Bottle, MadWomxn Magazine, Scrittura, and The Wee Sparrow Poetry Press' Hope is a Group Project anthology. Forthcoming publications include Querencia Press' anthology Not Ghosts, But Spirits Vol. I - art from the women, queer, trans & enby communities. Her debut chapbook I Don't Have the Words for This will be published by Dark Thirty Poetry Publishing in 2023. Eleanore has a deep love of folklore, history, mythology, and nature that often informs her writing. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, travel, visiting museums, and going for long walks in the park. You can find her on Instagram at @eleanorechristine or on Medium at <https://eleanore-dykes.medium.com/>.

Emily Tee writes poetry and flash fiction. Originally from Northern Ireland she now lives in the Midlands in England in the liminal space between town and countryside. She has had recent pieces online in Unbroken Journal, Visual Verse and The Ekphrastic Review, and in print with Poetry Scotland and some publications from Dreich. She's on Instagram @emteepoetry.

After graduating from OCADU in Toronto in visual arts/painting, Toronto resident **Eric Avalon Huhta's** work was featured in numerous Toronto group art exhibits. His first solo exhibit was held in Toronto at The North York Civic Centre's public library auditorium. His unique images are created with miscible oil paint, using textured impasto overlays.

Euzette Fermilan is a Filipina-born writer. She moved to the UK in 2018 and after a nomadic stay to and fro Scotland and England, she now lives in Poland with her son and husband. She is currently working on her debut collection, and one of them is what you have in your palm. When her domestic demand is low, she is found reading or rereading important nothings, writing, or wandering about. You can follow her on Instagram @euzette_and_write.

Emma Conally-Barklem is a yogi, writer and poet based in Yorkshire, England. Her poetry has been published in Free Verse Revolution Literary Magazine, Black In White Community Collection Anthology, Please See Me Online Literary Journal, Aurum Journal, Sunday Mornings At The River, Ey Up! Bent Key Publishing Summer Anthology, Tipping the Scales Literary Journal, Small Leaf Press, Super Present Magazine, Harvest Anthology QuillKeepers Press, West Trestle Review, Not Ghosts but Spirits Anthology Querencia Press and Wild Roof Journal. Pushcart Prize nominated, Emma had a summer residency at the Bronte Parsonage Museum and was named one of Ilkley Poetry Festival's New Northern Poets 2022. Her first collection, 'The Ridings' has been accepted for traditional chapbook publication by Bent Key Publishing in March 2023. Her yoga and grief memoir, 'You Can't Hug A Butterfly: Love, Loss & Yoga' has been accepted for traditional publication by QuillKeepers Press in 2024.

MEET THE CONTRIBUTORS

Enrico Barigazzi was born in Venice, Italy. He has always had a deep interest for literature since he was a child and this spurred him to pursue classical studies, graduating in political science from the University of Padua in 2005. He began writing when he was 34 years old, relatively late. He usually writes in both Italian and English. He has published two poetry books in Italian: *Il colore delle parole* published in 2017 for Irda Edizioni, and *Parole scomparse* issued in 2019 for Irda Edizioni. Some of his poems have been published by different anthologies –Alidicarta.it, Clubpoetico.it and Scrivere.info-. As far as his work in English is concerned it can be found on the English poetry site Allpoetry.com.

Eva Korošec is a 25 year-old creative writer and poet from Slovenia. She started out writing prose, mainly in the form of short stories, but she has started preferring to express herself through poetry in the past year. She loves to write about all kinds of mythology, but she also gets her inspiration from other stories, like literature and history. Her poetry can be found on her Instagram: @shit_shewrote

Gemma Haank is a British born, Amsterdam living author of 4 inspirational and self-discovery themed poetry books. A nurse by background, Gemma fell in love with writing during her travels across the world. Today she can be found freelance travel writing, sharing poetry online @poetrybygm and forever pondering her next book.

Nika's pronouns are they/them and for 22 years they have been a human on this Earth. Recently, they got into writing poetry but still have to find their everything: personal style, vision, it's all in the open. Besides writing they enjoy drawing, philosophy, and cuddling fluffy animals.

Howard Young is a poet and writer from East Sussex. He is the author of the 2022 collection "To Know The Way Back" published by Sunday Mornings At The River Press, and he has contributed to many other publications and anthologies in recent years. He lives in a small house near the sea with his wife, children and too many typewriters. He can be found on Instagram @brighton_typewriter_poet.

Ingrid Wilson is the owner and editor of the publishing house Experiments in Fiction, which boasts several Amazon-bestselling titles, including 'Wounds I Healed: The Poetry of Strong Women,' and 'Three-Penny Memories: A Poetic Memoir' by Pushcart nominee Barbara Harris Leonhard. Her latest title, 'Archery In The UK,' is due for release in February 2023. This collection of modern Lyrical Ballads is a collaboration with acclaimed author and poet Nick Reeves.

Jahra Tasfia Reza is a citizen of Bangladesh. She has been a painter for 3 years. She participated in a group exhibition at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, National Faculty of Fine Arts. She has taken part in many International Online Exhibitions and has been selected for Offline Exhibitions but couldn't participate as artworks are not allowed to be sent abroad from Bangladesh. Her artworks have been featured in Whimsical Contemporary Art Magazine, the past two Lacuna Festivals, the past three Braintree Community Centre online art exhibitions, and in many more publications. You can follow her here: <https://www.facebook.com/jahratasfiareza/>. She loves to create art with a view to framing the beautiful sights into reality and spreading peace everywhere.

MEET THE CONTRIBUTORS

Jennifer Cox (she/her) is a poet, mother, and lawyer. Her poetry primarily revolves around motherhood, birth, and the climate crisis. Her writing has previously appeared in numerous publications, including the League of Canadian Poets' Poetry Pause and Literary Mama. She resides in Ottawa with her family.

Jonathan O'Farrell found himself in Norfolk, England last year, a leap of faith and love in pandemic times. He moves to love possibly a little too easily, but he thinks that's an asset, like a good fruit tree. He writes poetry, dreams spawn poetry. There's a book 'Pilgrims Decade - the dead reckoning' ... it progresses, in fits and starts. In the meantime there is light in his life and it gives him time to photograph it and the dark too, but mostly light. His Instagram is @jonoaposf. Other than that there is mud, earth, water and what grows in it to keep him busy and solvent. Links: his [blog](#), [substack](#), [Linkedin](#) and [Facebook](#).

Karen E Fraser is a Melbourne-based, published writer and poet. With degrees in Professional and Creative Writing, and Anthropology, Karen has held professional roles as a writer and editor. Her poetry embraces the beauty of the natural world; activism, advocacy and social justice; and the absolute necessity of freedom, love, dignity and belonging. www.instagram.com/be_nourished

Luna Monet Sierra is a 32-year-old transcendental poet. Originally born in New York, they have a passion for thrifting, reading fanfics, and exploring all the aspects of themselves in relation to how it reflects the world around them. You can follow them on the Poetizer app under their full pen name or on Instagram: @lunamonetsierrapoetry.

Nicholas Olah has self-published three poetry collections, Where Light Separates from Dark, Which Way is North and Seasons. Nicholas's work has been published in Humana Obscura, Free Verse Revolution, Querencia Press, and Duck Head Journal, and has been accepted for Resurrection Magazine. Check out more of his work on Instagram at @nick.olah.poetry or visit his Etsy shop at <https://www.etsy.com/shop/nickolahpoetry>.

Nick Reeves is a writer of poetry, to-do lists and short, dark fiction with an MA in Creative Writing from Bath Spa University. He has been published by Experiments In Fiction and scratches away at his debut novel, When Bowie Had English Teeth. He rents an attic in Northumberland and is fond of taking photos of singular gloves found on the street. Find out more at Nick Reeves. blog and on Instagram @NickNick _Severe.

Nina Nazir (she/her) is a British Pakistani artist, poet and avid multi-potentialite based in Birmingham, UK. She's had work published in Black Flowers Arts Journal, Ink Sweat & Tears, Unlost Journal, Green Ink Poetry, Harana Poetry and Visual Verse among others. When she isn't making art, she's making poems. She can often be found tinkering, journalling or upcycling. She's currently trying not to create yet another book tower by her bed. You can find her on Instagram: @nina.s.nazir and Twitter: @NusraNazir

MEET THE CONTRIBUTORS

OLIVIA SNOWDROP is a queer non-binary poet from Manchester, UK. They are the author of two self-published poetry books: *Snowdrop*, and their latest collection, *ANTS IN A JAM JAR*. Olivia is also active on Instagram as [@oliviasnowdrop](#) (when such activity isn't detrimental to her mental health!) and has been previously published in *Honeyfire Literary Magazine*, *Pulp Poets Press*, *orangepeel literary magazine*, and *Free Verse Revolution*.

R S Kendle (she/her) is a poet and writer from the north-east of Scotland. She holds a BA Honours in English Literature and Politics from the University of Strathclyde. Her work has been published in several publications including *Feminist Space Camp*, *Free Verse Revolution*, and *The Survivor Zine*. She can be found on Instagram [@rskendle](#).

Rachael Powles (she/her) is a poet and playwright currently based in Ottawa, Ontario. Her work draws on themes of femininity, family, and home, and takes inspiration from her upbringing in rural Upstate New York. Her poems have appeared in *Detritus Zine*, *Pile Press*, *Buzzsaw Magazine*, *Stillwater Magazine*, and *Loose Tooth zine*. She was the first runner-up in the poetry category in the 2022 Ithaca College Writing Department Contest and the winner of the Golden Egg Award for New Play Development at the 2021 Ithaca College New Play Incubator. Her first chapbook, *THE WORLD ENDED ON A FRIDAY*, was published in 2022 by *Bottlecap Press*.

Toronto's **Robin Harvey** latest book, a poetry collection entitled, *PTSD Poems to Slay Demons*, is available through Amazon, Kindle, Barnes and Noble and Goodreads. Harvey, a graduate of the Humber School for Writers, is currently the pop culture and arts critic at <http://www.notthepublicbroadcaster.com/do-androids-dream-of-pop-culture> and a book reviewer for *IndieReader* and *Discovery*. She's been published on many online sites and in literary journals.

Sophia Murray is a mum, poet, and voracious reader with a dark mind and a good heart. She has been published at *Hecate Magazine Birth Anthology*, *Blood Moon Press Faces of Womanhood Anthology* and has upcoming work in the *Mum Poem Press Zine*. Online work can be found at *Goats Milk Magazine* and *The Cabinet of Heed*. She tries and often fails to post daily poems on Instagram [@sim_poetry](#) or you can find her on Twitter [@sophiaisamurray](#).

Yoda Olinyk (she/her) is a Canadian memoirist and poet passionately exploring the hearty, sharp-edged topics that make us all human, including love, grief, and addiction. She likes the Oxford comma, dark chocolate and long, lazy Sundays. Yoda's work has appeared in: *Button Poetry*, *SamFiftyFour*, *Third Iris*, *Sky Island Journal* and *Quail Bell*. Her book, *Salt & Sour* is available anywhere you buy books. You can find more of Yoda's work at www.doulaofwords, or on Instagram [@doulaofwords](#)

