HESTIA

hearth & home

Issue III: hestia

(hearth & home)

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Editor's note

Issue III: hestia (hearth & home) is our fullest issue to date featuring fifty four incredible writers, artists and photographers. Contributors were asked to consider what home means to them, the different forms a home can take, and to explore identity and belonging through the mythical, divine figure Hestia.

The warmth of home is interwoven amongst the ache of wishing for a place to be, the brutal reality of the Vestal Virgins, dysfunctional family dynamics, the loves of our lives, and how Hestia defined womanhood the moment she made her own choices about her body, lust and marriage.

There are pieces in this issue which touch briefly upon loss, grief and assault, so please be mindful in your reading. There is no doubt every piece in this issue came from personal, human experiences that have, whether for good or bad, shaped our contributor's lives and how they perceive 'home'.

And so, once again, it was a pleasure to construct Issue III. For this issue we have worked longer on the formatting in the hopes we can showcase each contributor as well as create a magazine issue which will eventually look stunning in print too.

Thank you, as always, for your support.

Enjoy Issue III; Hestia welcomes you home.

Kristiana

Issue III: hestia

(hearth & home)

Morgan Hayes

Morgan Hayes is a tea enthusiast and emerging writer based in the heart of California's Bay Area. While she predominantly writes prose for herself and her loved ones, she can be found learning the art of poetry on Instagram at @morganlehay. She procrastinates writing by attending community college, playing D&D, and walking her rescue dog.

Upbringing

My Body is a Resting Place

When you are a church without a roof
Seeking shelter from the storm of your own thoughts
Stay here
Kneel beneath my soot stained mantle
Collect kindling from the branches caught in your hair
Strike a match
I once dipped my fingertips in phosphorus
I was trying to learn how to be a beacon
That was before I knew I wasn't a lighthouse
Learned that that's too much of a burden
I am best used as a cooking fire
A haven
With which to put the kettle on
Brighten a room
Warm the chill from your hands
Sit beside me
I'll take the smoke from your eyes and weave a blanket
Hum you a lullaby of waning embers
My body is a resting place
Allow me

How To Make Cinnamon Rolls Like My Mother Taught Me

Combine one stick melted butter, one cup milk, and one egg. Whisk. Before this, you will stumble bleary eyed into the kitchen. Climb into a creaky chair, its voice offers you a good morning. Mom is already awake, perhaps she never slept. She has decided today is special. You can never be sure how she ascertains this. Maybe a saint was born, maybe you lost a tooth, or maybe she simply feels it. On special days, cinnamon rolls are eaten. She's already pulling the ingredients from the cupboard as you arrive. Her hair is pulled back and she's humming Chiquitita like a hymn, still in her dressing gown. There is no difference between her and the glamorous chefs broadcasted from the tiny box TV on top of the refrigerator.

She will not always be here to make cinnamon rolls. This is what you've come to know. The most mortifying truth is that one day we must light our own hearth-fires. You used to have this dream where you forget everything she taught you, even your name. That was one you could never bring yourself to tell her. Stir two teaspoons of yeast into this warm mixture. This is how your mother taught you that there is life in everything. She would show you the jar of tiny golden grains and decree that they were alive. You will not have time to ponder the nature of a 'yeast's' life, or if it knows its place in this grand dance. For, in another bowl, mix four cups of flour, two tablespoons of sugar, and one teaspoon of salt. Mom knows you like the feeling of flour through your fingertips.

She lets you mix it with your hands if you promise not to make a mess. Something about soft powder, it must be the texture of angel's wings. Incorporate wet and dry ingredients to create a dough. Turn out onto a floured surface. Knead. There is symmetry in her movements as she folds and works the dough. In those moments, she is all those before her. The world-worn women who built their houses inside them, as that is the only place sheltered from the wind. If this was a ritual, here is where the incantation would be spoken. Return to bowl. Veil. Let rise to double original size.

In the interim, you swing your feet and cram sugar cubes into a teacup. Mom lets you pour the cream in yourself. Pondering the fact that bread can grow, you ask her 'how alive is it? Should it be thanked?' Mom always answered your queries with seriousness. The kitchen table was your lyceum. Punch dough down before rolling out into a rectangle one inch thick. Smear the surface with half a stick of softened butter. This was your favorite part (besides of course the eating). Sprinkle brown sugar, cinnamon, and raisins (or any other toppings) across the surface. She hands you the sugar and raisins and tells you to make it beautiful. If this was a ritual then the constellations of fruit your stubby hands cast would be an act of divination. Roll the dough into a fallen tree, use thread to cut into two inch rounds. To cut: slide thread beneath, holding each end, cross hands and pull until dough is severed. The partitioning always feels like an execution, or a sacrifice. Mom built something, shaped it with her hands, then before your eyes she dismembers it piece by piece. You were a frightened child, the world through your eyes was visceral. Even home had its bones and ghosts. Yet, daughters must trust the hands of their mothers. Home is where you learn what faith is, born into the altar of loving arms. She tried to tell you not to worry.

Place the rolls into an oiled pan as big as the recipe book your mother never consults. Pack them so there are no gaps. Veil until their size is doubled. Bake at 350 Fahrenheit for 30 minutes. You once tried to peer into the oven's amber cocoon. If you held still long enough you thought you could watch the rolls bloom. Frustratingly, they grew like you; too slow to count. The final waiting is the hardest. You disperse, chase time in the garden. At last the oven's call returns you, muddy feet staining the threshold. There the pan sits, high upon a chipped countertop, waiting for your touch. Steam curls upward, promising. Your mother hovers over her achievement for a moment, still at last. This is all you've ever known. This is all she fought for. There are those who say a life spent in the smoke of cooking is one lacking. However, no universe is as full as a hearth warmed by a well built fire. Some days it takes all you have to remember her instructions.

Emma Conally-Barklem

Emma Conally-Barklem is a yogi, freelance writer and poet based in North Yorkshire. She writes on nature, mental health, grief and wellbeing. Her work has been featured in national magazines and various publications which can be found on her website www.emmaliveyoga.com and on her IG page @emmaliveyoga.

Home Fires

This peat was used to heat homes, burnt turf, steaming of long dead creatures, heather root and loam.

I feel a longing for these walks, sharp crisp air and soft water, your skin luminescent, tinged red with cold. Our laughter choked back by vicious blast which must have frozen the sisters' feet fast to the earth, tender as unfledged birds.

Our memories fluting upwards in a baleful Yorkshire sky, scalding tea a remedy for all ills, our hearth tilled by rain and bluster.

We shelter in near Top Withins, eyes filled to brim with strange primal beauty emitted to only those who see their souls reflected indifferently in curlew's call and waterfall,

An imperfect homecoming, now, as I walk alone, bereft, windswept towards the moors

Which shape shift under cumulus cloud, tumulous hills marked ordinance, space to grieve and hold a hardy wildflower close, tiny bells of hope chime nature's song though you are gone.

Barbara Harris Leonhard

Barbara Harris Leonhard's work appears in Free Verse Revolution, Spillwords, October Hill Magazine, Dark Poet's Club, Vita Brevis, Well Versed 2020, Silver Birch Press, Amethyst Review, phoebemd.com. Barbara earned both third place and honorary mention for two poems in Well Versed 2021.

Her blog: extraordinarysunshineweaver.com.

Her poetry podcast: meelosmom.podbean.com.

Hestia for Hire

I.

My last visit. Before Dad died. Tears, drained ponds.
There they sit. The loud TV. Their separate recliners.
Mom's endless romances. Never engaging me. Except for meals.

I clean, cook. Do laundry, scrub. Daughter or maid?
Waiting for inquiries. "How's your life? Are you happy?"
Mother points down. "There's a spill." Cabernet or blood?

Many dead plants. "Use the disposal." It's a tree!
The disposal groans. Tree legs shred. Like grinding bones.
The fingers snap. Time to eat. Frozen dinners, salads.

One heart attack. Then two strokes. Dad's emaciated, slow.
He hauls oxygen. Mom awaits rescue. Dad throws kisses.
I do dishes. They don't notice. I slip away.

Walking, thinking, sobbing. Lake, geese, goslings.
The ganders honking.

II.

The phone rings. Their eyes roll. It's a sister.
Arriving for Christmas! Dad asks why. "I'll be gone."
He takes off. Before dawn's light. In early December.

The family gathers. A Christmas funeral. To celebrate Dad.
A small reunion. What Mom wants. She arrives first.
Without any luggage. Unkept, bedraggled, aloof. It's grief, perhaps.

She doesn’t explain. We go shopping. Dresses, panties, nighties.
She’s very odd. Just sits alone. Not facing us.
These ominous signs. We miss them. Or deny them.

She worsens, alone. Never tells us. Her heart, dying.
Needs a pacemaker. Then the call. “Come get her!”
The missing daughter. I feel rebuked. Forgotten duties, obligations.

A mother’s decline. A daughter’s agony. My fears, tears.
Love is gentle. Love is kind.
Love can burn.

Mermother:
A Rogue Dream Poem

after Melania Figg

Mother sits, her back to me.
How can I see into her eyes,
into her maelstrom of memories,

tossing and turning thoughts,
clouds reflected in vertiginous waves.
Watching for mishaps,

I guide her onto a life boat.
“Where do you want me, Hon? Here?”
“Sit there, please.”

She sits elsewhere.
I salvage the bills and pills,
her CPAP for clear and calm dreams.

“Whatever you want, Hon.”
“Not what I want. What you need.”
She removes the mask when I leave.

She slips away into tumbling waves.
Mermother, her stories of elusive coral treasure.
Her times back to Kulilu and Melusina. Rescues

of sailors who solved her riddles. Her songs
with her lover, Trewhella. Her battle with Hecate
to retrieve her pearls.

Suddenly I am her octopus friend.
I gather her in my arms
and swim up for air.

The good days at the mall,
shopping for rings, new handbags,
Alfred Dunner outfits.

Lunch at Panera's, ice cream
at Café Court and a movie. At Hallmark,
we shop for sympathy cards.

I am spending too much money.
My husband says, "You have to.
She's your mother."

When the storm waves recede,
I find my mermother laid to rest on the shore,
her string of pearls broken.

Her eyes meet mine. I wipe her gills
until her lips turn blue
and pulse to stillness.

Jude Ballard

Jude Ballard is a poet who struggles with her verse, as all poets do—to create a sincerity, a truth, an illumination, but like most people has difficulty expressing herself, through such a transcendent medium. She has previously been published in the Nexus of Writers and Lucy's Works. She resides in her imagination.

The Burial

I don't know—upon contemplating you
when I return—whether I will laugh or cry…
Carlos Gardel, "Lejana Tierra Mia."

I

With your absence,
ash trees crumble from widowed stares
and rags of flesh garments begin to wear.
All my teeth have brittled numb—
I will not eat
I will not drink
I will not sleep:
For dying stars efface with simple breaths,
(with moody, humid breaths)
And every stare or sound or word or work,
And every shape or shuffle or motion or notion,
And every nature or behavior or caricature or force
rends and bends by licks of chimney fire,
And with every step or sudden breath,
My lungs are wrung cold
as wet clothes twirling on hangers.

II

I went out today,
and amongst the yellow-soiled rumors
of berating tongues and drunken lips
There was an ancient reason pipping and ripping
(rippling like pennies but crippling my eyes)

Coming glumly
        from mouths sipping coffee cups
        from straying gas-rancid taxis
        from Chinese beggars rattling tin cans,
and the smoke curling bout plastered windows
and shriveling canaries, whimpering
        in stone-dank gutters,
and through muttering and loitering streets of
        stale cigarette nubs and sallow hands:
They said an American man in Indochina
was wading through monsoon curdled
        paddy fields
when the metal of his shoelaces
        scuffed the decayed tendons
        of a soldier's ruptured arm.

III

I'm sorry,
I cannot seem to speak,
        this evening so lank with the
        genesis of Winter cold-fronts—
my tongue and teeth have no rhythm
(as if I ever was one to sing)
        except the clatter of foam
        and ardent, fragile mumbling.
I eat many tangerines these weeks,
Sometimes I make juice but mostly
I spend drowsy evenings peeling
        the skins of tangerines…
and listening to feral cats seethe—

The snows should flower tomorrow,
menacing the sickly tree boughs with frost.
The rain skirmished some mud today,
So, they say:
Wet storms should begin to toil
next week—
that story of the man in the
waning rice paddies was
published this morning
in the paper—

IV

Pardon me,
I accidentally shut my eyes
I forgot to…I don't know
I'm forgetting airs and sounds—
I've grown to forget things,
like your name.
I no longer say your name,
It is too difficult to utter—I grow
a septic mushroom in my throat
and my fingers throb—
O' God! It's some premature dementia—
Mother says it's me—It's myself,
my name should have been…

Sebastian Snow

Sebastian Snow is a writer, artist and high school dropout from the San Francisco Bay Area. His work has been featured in Bay Area Generations, Antifragile Zine and he is currently a staff writer for Rice & Spice Mag. They are the author of the chapbook This Might Be A Medical Emergency, and you can find more of his work on Instagram @sebbynguyetart. When they're not writing or working, Sebastian is listening to loud music, hanging out with his dogs, and sending multi paragraph text messages.

Ode To My Family

I like to imagine I was born with long fingernails,
wearing a pair of half stained slacks
and a tee shirt that says bite me
I like to imagine I was born and nobody saw me naked or clean
a body that I'd never have to leave.

Last week I saw my mom looking at my tits
to make sure they were still hers
my memories of her are kept in spaces
that didn't belong to us--between decrepit houses and
never mended fences, all that we owned was
the air we shared together

The first day we bought something
new was the day family friends started asking
what I'd want to be when I grew up
if not sacred, alabaster, and above all,
smarter than my brothers. Stopped myself from saying

The only thing I knew how to be was necessary.
My mother says I have three legs and she doesn't know
where I got any of them. My mother hates my father
because when she covered our rooms in carvings of Buddha
we all thought they were carvings of him. My mother makes sure
everything we wear has already been worn, so we can be that much
closer to her.

My mother's father has been dying ever since I've
been alive. She assumed he'd grow out it before I'd
find out dementia is genetic. She assumed all of us
would die in other ways. My mother is a keeper,
and I write poems about her because I'll grow out of it
before she reads them.

The day we grow up we go to the beach all together
for the last time. My parents say we're lucky that everyone in our family
was raised next to the ocean. I'm young enough to think
everyone that's ever lived has always existed here. My father
will hold back his blackened lungs from dying
in his shaking arm for once. My mother will admit that maybe
he can be fat, and happy, and laughing in one memory.

Our eyes will darken and melt into sand. We will be brown forever.
Home is the gulp of throat we swallow
before we lose the house again. All of us will die in different directions.

You Taught Me How To Ride A Bike Without Learning

the hard way.
you grew
up with rattlesnakes hiding in your tires
i knew.
i know because i was one of them.

you keep your fingers tucked behind
the legs of your spandex pants when you talk to me.
we don't speak loud
until sundown
we take our silver handles to the cliffside
and risk a laugh when we meet
the shore

you're not very funny down here
neither of us have to be
the waves are doing it for us,
swarming our silence

you climb down the cliff
like it's a part of you
your feet sink into puddle dipped
burnt rock, and it's the first thing since
waking up that has made you smile

i know it’s rough. i kept all the
hard parts for you. as you leap from
every crevice sticking out of the sea,
you’re dating the wrong boy and wanting
all the wrong hands. i know, they used to be

mine. you grew
up. you’re joining the army if nobody stops you.
you’re doing what your grandpa did. you’re doing
what your uncle was too afraid to do.

you’ll find out the wrong way. the wind
has stopped the beginnings of our sentences,
you’re pushing for the deep end

sand and dust will be stuck to your ankles forever.
you’re keeping the salt mist in your eyes,
till the day you decide to cry and
don’t tell me. it’s okay.

down here you don’t have to.
you’re solving all the riddles with your shoulders
breaking even. you’re letting july take out its rage
onto your bird pecked, nimble bones.

you’re doing what your heroes did.
you’re not doing what your grandpa did to you.
you’re standing,
right up against the edge.

you rode your memory here
and you made all the left turns.
the ocean is shining diamond, split
three ways, mirror shards,
bursting into specks of light
before joining each other
again.

toes curling around a charcoal fossil,
you don’t blink as the wave washes over you,
finally becoming
what you were.

August Dies for Summer

She says, “It’s like we just realized it’s ending,
and now we’re all scrambling to get ourselves dirty
before it’s too late.”
Drive homes are exhaustion,
I keep myself cool and keep my fingerprints
on the windshield.
Drive homes are summer,
and for the rest of your life
you’ll be waiting for the next one
to change you.
I don’t want to get out of the car or leave
or love you in our different ways.
I’m sick of pretending the world is evil,
that some part of me has to be.
I don’t want everything to be true.
I want you to sleep on my side
of the bed, I want to wake up before you,
I want to get your coffee wrong,
I want to give you your sun hat back.
I want to stay the whole summer in your backyard,
feeding your dog bites
of strawberries soaked in soil.
I want to read you. This moment doesn’t matter.
Let’s forget it. Let’s get all of it back.
It’s sick to think that after August,
the world keeps going on.

Poppy Revell

Poppy Revell is a 22 year old poet and artist from the UK. She developed a love for poetry only a couple of years ago and this is her first published piece. You can find her work on Instagram @poppydoespoems.

Only for the fallen

I fall

but

there

I finally become

one In

falling ,

that experience

cannot be separated from

my body

For it is possible

to

experience what is natural

Devereaux Frazier

Curator of his own poetry blog - Musings of An Autistic Mind - on Wordpress, **Devereaux Frazier** is also a regular contributor to Blood Into Ink, sharing his stories about survival and overcoming adversity. He's also a Guest Barista for Go Dog Go Cafe, a collective of writers in the online community. His work is regularly featured on SpillWords.com, where he was nominated for the May Publication of the Month in 2017. You can also find him on Literary Arts Review and Teen Ink, the latter of which published him in their monthly magazine in 2016. He also posts poems daily on his Instagram, @d.frazier.writes.

Till I'm dead

I don't believe in family,
home, or states
the state of my identity is shattered
twirling clouds of smoke on the battlefield
endless slaughter capped with drunken nights
to forget the faces slain before me
family? ironically my captors, invaders
spoiling the riches planted in me
not at birth, but at conception
when the universal mother decided
it was my time to be
they scrape my skin with pieces of their failure
shards of identities split from trauma
I can never see, and they will never let me be
home
it's not a building, ours was crooked, crushed
and collapsed under the weight of ignorance
drug running, blood letting sickness
I was a child trapped under a bed
footfalls descended, murmuring profanities
gunfire beget gunfire, and I
found hospitals
a second home, third win, fourth surgery
if there are no more original parts of me
am I still the ship of Theseus
the state of my mind is that of disconnection
things I can't see, I don't know
I cannot feel, if I do not see the fire coming
please don't make me suffer again
let me ride the sunshine riptide
till I'm laying in the earth once more

There is no place like home

I have nothing left to take
home was a poorly fabricated illusion
B rated movie on a TV with a cracked screen
family telling me that I had twelve fingers
then cutting off the ones I had
when I found out the truth
awkward, stunted, and hard to understand
my hearth is the space
between the covers of a book
the time it takes you to read this
or the thoughts you have afterward
is there fear in your eyes? maybe fire?
stir the depths of your soul
and question if it really has a home
I have no virginity, taken not by a beautiful girl
but at six, under sagging wooden steps
I wasn't supposed to tell you, but I was
told to love him, it was natural I believed
the root of my insanity is I was allowed
to believe I wasn't
now that I realize I am
I question every single thing about me
so many holes
the wind blows casually through
nowhere to rest, not a place to be one
scattered over the lands like sand
impossible task it is to ever recover all of me
where do I belong in this world
chaotic and charming
beautiful and broken
do I even belong

Brianna Flood

Brianna Flood is a native New Yorker who seeks a sense of identity through words. She has had a love of literature and writing since childhood, and that love has only deepened with time. When not writing, she can probably be found drinking iced coffee and contemplating existence. You can find her at @goldlacedink on Instagram.

Genesis

I was born from the stardust of Sagittarius
never lingering long enough
for the earth to take hold of me,
for anyone to

touch-starved and touch-staved,
repelling the very thing I crave,
foundations built of sand,
washed away

home is an overgrown tree branch
scratching at the window
until it shatters

and sirens piercing the silence

and empty gardens
full of dirt made of thirst

the drought came when
my parents realized
I would never be what they expected

home is where everything hurts

Ingrid Wilson

Ingrid Wilson 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. Wilson's poetry anthology The Anthropocene Hymnal was published in July 2021 and is available to purchase on Amazon.

No Homelike Place

There is no homelike place
Only an empty space
Where once the toys were piled
A legend, etched in pencil on a wall
Growth of a child
Meticulously charted, inch by inch
And line by loving line
Too easily erased.
There is no homelike place:
All whitewashed now
The memories
Perhaps a paltry palimpsest survives
Beneath the pale magnolia emulsion
Records of past lives
Remain for years
Beneath the stains of nicotine and tears
There is no homelike place, only
Hotel rooms on the road
Nameless places
Homeless, faceless
Searching for a place to call one's own:
A harbour, or a home
Or somewhere warm at least, at best
A homelike place.
There is no homelike place
For children of addiction and abuse
Whose carers breached the sanctity of dreams
And stole the sanctuary,
Of the playroom, of the nursery and school

Who for their selfish, careless use
Stole childhood, leaving them
No homelike place.
Praying we can find
A homelike place
We build our houses,
Sink squat castles in the sand, erect
Grand palaces and mansions:
And we say we are secure,
But we can never build without
The homelike place
Which we must seek, and find and build
Within ourselves; which nowhere else endures.

Rowan Li

Rowan Li (they/them) is a Chinese poet living and working on Turtle Island. Their work, hosted on Instagram at @row.poems, centres on themes of transnational identity, queerness, mental illness, and gender. Rowan is ecstatic to be publishing with Free Verse Revolution and is grateful for the FVR team's continual support and editorial vision.

Concrete Heartbeat

There’s something under these floorboards.

Tell me what I’m breathing,
Tell me what I’m taking in.
The red light glare on the dashboard
And the dirt flaking off your face –
Tell me where you’ve been digging
And fucking tell me what’s dead.

There’s fires all over this city
And none of us cold enough to stay.

Aleksandra Vujisić

Aleksandra Lekić Vujisić was born in Podgorica, Montenegro in 1979. She is a professor of English language and literature, and a passionate writer of prose and poetry for children and grownups. She participated in poetry festivals across Europe and her work have won prizes and acknowledgments in Montenegro and worldwide.

Time

Do you feel the pulse
of lives lived before your time
lost in the hearth that we call home —
lost for words, lost for rhyme.

Do you know how to live
without passion,
without making amends
with father’s sins,
do you know that all
people are one nation,
when home is where love wins.

Do you see the only truth
the way that Hestia saw it,
do you cherish home and youth
like she did?

It is hard to know one's reasons,
it is hard to know what is
hidden under a rock,
in this never ending story
it is hard to stop the clock.

Ivor Steven

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.

Wordpress: http://ivors20.wordpress.com

Instagram: @ivors20

Facebook: Ivor Steven | Facebook

Ivor's book "Tullawalla".

Between the Lines

Do you see, a man walking on water?
Did you see, the refugees bleeding?
Do you read, the missing scriptures?
Did you read, your own family tree?
Do you hear, old angels singing?
Did you hear, the songbirds crying?
Do you feel, the erased eons calling?
Did you feel, the hard rains falling?
Do you know, who is doing the lying?
Did you know, the earth is dying?

Home is the Air I Breathe

welcome to our home
the house of rustic timber and stone
home is where my heart is now
and now I live here alone
but I am comfortable
wearing the same old shoes
walking her every mile
she’s in every corner stone
she’s in the marrow of my bones
we share the air I breathe
inhaling her gracious spirit
capturing her living essence
absorbing her love into my blood
pumping through my empty veins
cascading upon my open heart
caressing my solitary core
embracing our souls as one

Marisela Brazfield

Born and raised in Los Angeles, **Marisela Brazfield** writes about the downtown urban life experience. inspired by personal events, mental illness and in working with vulnerable communities. mb has been published by Indie Blu(e) Publishing, 2020 and 2021; The Short of It, 2020; Newington Blue Press, 2021; Prolific Pulse Press, 2021. mb's work can also be found on wordslessspoken781842219.blog and twitter.com/tumblindice70.

Soul Housing

Life now was ardent like a battery acid burn, like an intense orgasm, pain and pleasure. Raw and soothed. My life was a grotesque beauty, a divine sin. I cheated death, challenged it, rubbed his balls and then kicked them. I was standing in front of what I had created through will and at times forced by my bad decisions. I was clinically alive. I had survived my defeats. But I was not yet living.

My current civilization in Los Angeles was still too vast for my fragile spirit and psyche. I was in need of both wilderness and confinement simultaneously. I needed closure and soul housing. I had cursed the Hollies and I wanted to talk to the God. For most of my life I grew up in a type of concreted wasteland. The City of Los Angeles, my home, my heaven, and my hell. I loved the ocean, but today I needed something more private where I could engulf myself with an all absorbing sheltered solitude. So I came to the desert. In the beauty of the desert it was easier for me to accept the fact that I was subtly damned. Half-way broken. And, that I would always be, like the pretty little china dolls at the Salvation Army thrifts that have a chip on their tiny nose, or their little head is glued to their neck with stale green gum.

Upon arrival I parked my Jeep on the side of the gravelly shoulder. Sticking a water bottle in my back pocket and clipping the keys to my belt loop, I sat under a tremendous khaki colored monochromatic boulder. My thoughts evaporated into the hot pre-dawn morning. Loose wonderments ranged from the feel of the sand to how many braves had been killed by our Manifest Destiny driven cavalries and vice versa.

Watching the sun rise I could hear life sprout from the plant life. There were grey and black woodpeckers drawing water from the Joshua Trees and various other birds. The sky's cosmic placenta tore open and in a flash outburst, an explosion of orange, blue, white and yellow at about 6 a.m. covered me. The Sun ascended to the sky. I opened the water bottle I brought with me. I shuffled from under my rock and sat under the shade of a gigantic Yucca and felt the crumbly desert floor on my ass and legs.

My eyes followed fire ants to and fro from a nearby sage brush. My mind was processing a form of life not akin to mine. The ants carried tiny white cottony morsels on their backs into the brush, perhaps provisions for the winter months.

I startled myself a few moments later as I became aware that I was asking my God why the ants did what they did and knew what to do without any problem. I was asking out loud as if God was there in the form of a human. “Do they have a phone?” I smiled and called myself “stupid.” The tone of my thoughts changed somewhat as I asked God why Charlie and Lucienne had left me. I asked God if I was that despicable or if I was being punished for the life I led prior. I quieted my mind and dug my left index finger into the sand feeling the pulse of the terrain.

Having finished my water, I was satisfied in seeing the sun rise and opened the hatch of my Jeep and climbed in. I lay on my mother’s white patchwork quilt stolen from her home by me when I was around fifteen. With my heavy eyes I recall giving thanks to the desert and to a brown scrawny hare staring at me from atop a nearby white rock. I remember not wanting to fall asleep before telling myself that I needed to find strength. I told myself that Charlie and Lucienne were in a far better place and that someday, after God decided I was through in this life that I would get to see them again and all of my lost loved ones.

Just like those ants had a predisposed destiny, I began to understand that I had one too; that I could only be myself, no more, no less. I recalled those close to me say that it was a waste to put others before me. At that moment right before my desert slumber, the God wafted a light breeze on my left foot and I knew that if one single ant in that sage brush went about on its own, the whole colony could suffer. But if that ant followed its tiny ant heart and what its God had created in it, then it and its colony would thrive. One was needed by all and all by one. Charlie once told me I was of the universe and maybe he knew something I did not. I am still not sure if I am living life quite yet, but that day I took a step in the right direction. Then I slept in peace for a little while.

Diana Story

Diana Story is an emerging heritage and museology researcher, artist and poet. After growing up in Australia, she moved to Europe in 2018 and has worked across the United Kingdom, The Netherlands and Poland. Meaning-making, multiplicity and the role of memory upon identity are central themes in Diana's practice. Her published works can be found in Lucent Dreaming, North West Words and Voices of Youth.

Running To Stand Still

Enrico Barigazzi

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 Univeristy 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.

Unearthing

A family tree is spreading
its branches through the time
going by in front of our wrinkles

our destiny seems to be drawn
and scattered in a multitude of lands
they want us to call them our home

sometimes we can’t find our way to it
like a wandering Ulysses we’re trying to reach
a peaceful place where our spirits can rest up

and the sweet virginal touch of the sister of the Queen of the Gods
is brushing against our shoulders slightly
reminding us there’s a door that could be opened
for a new hearth.

Tuccia

Flying over the shoulders of iniquity
a black rook was squawking allegations
while blasphemous innuendos were being hurled
at a woman's body

the truth was showed off by the holy waters
of the Tiber where the sycophants were doomed
to be humiliated basking in their cowardice
feeding on their foulness

from the sacred sieve it would be found
an empire crossing the oceans while
the vestals would keep watch over the Virgin Queen
and her glimmering virtues sitting on her throne.

The last shrine

Her gait was slow going up steps
her back was stooped due to the immaterial burdens
she'd been bearing while the waning era of
the ancient Gods ended

another Virgin would drown
on the walls of the temples turned into churches
and Coelia Concordia's paces would lead the last Vestal Virgins
into the path of the memories where the Gods were watching
their altars burn down with the flames of History.

Lynn White

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/.

Brides of Fire

Who will be the chosen one,
the one to join the virgins
wedded to the fire
the one to keep it burning
until the new prince comes.
Who will wait for him
to put it out
remodel it
then rekindle it
as the new era begins.
A new fire for new times.

What will become of us then.

Gabriela Marie Milton

Gabriela Marie Milton is a #1 Amazon bestselling poet and an internationally published author. Her literary work appeared in various magazines and anthologies. She is the author of the best-selling poetry collection Woman: Splendor and Sorrow, Vita Brevis Press, July 27 2021, [Amazon] and, the author of Passions: Love Poems and Other Writings, Vita Brevis Press, April 2020 [Amazon] 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). Gabriela is also the editor of MasticadoresUSA. She blogs at https://shortprose.blog/ and you can find her on Instagram @gabriela_marie_milton and Twitter @shortprose1.

To Hestia:
to who was forgotten

it's quiet now
inside the shapes of our burning hearts
tortured the endurance of surreal trees
a headkerchief full of blood dries on a bench
unknown the mark upon the sky to which you point
the windows of bookshops read "kill" and "f..k"

Hestia,
strangled, your virginity hangs on a rusty wire
inside the chimney a creaking creature with bat-eyes
streets filled with guns
mundane caricaturesque phalloi,
demonic blisters rub the hearts
there is no home for millions of us

come back
you, virgin goddess of the heart,
the murder and the sex will stone you in the boulevards
premonitions
there are back streets where you can walk
songs of nightingales and roses will hide you in their arms

you sacred fire,
give a home to hungry children with no clothes
to those who sleep under the bridges of cursed stars
in nights when linden trees in cemeteries bloom
flame the ebb and flow of skies that know no tides
you, goddess,
the very subject matter of which I write.

Laura Jameson

Laura Jameson is Mum to two working in healthcare science. She lives in Cambridge (UK) with her three year old son, one year old daughter and husband. Drawing endless inspiration from her personal experiences in pregnancy, childbirth and beyond, she began writing during recent UK lockdowns due to covid-19 pandemic. She shares poetry and prose on Instagram @laura.is.writing.

Hestia's lament

Speak, Hestia

Of how you carved flesh
From your own split bone; hoisted
Sky upon a splinter of crescent

Spine. Whispered poise, held
In wrists that cradle light - bent
Sunward; eclipsed by the twisted

Spiral slip of time. Croon elegies
To slivers of days, laying flat and
Cold in palms - that crack

And bleed; immortal insignia of
Your toil. Feed flame, nurse
The mouth of fire, suckled on

Wet cheek etched from stone. Sweep
The dust of ashes as she weeps
For a life she used to own

Emily Mew

Emily Mew is a poet, mother, therapist and academic publisher living in Bristol, UK. Emily loves experimenting with a range of poetry styles and forms, and often returns to themes of motherhood, nature and healing. She can be found on Instagram as @emewpoetry.

Domestic Goddess

Worship
at the altar
of my fireside,
whisper devotions
at the cradle of my light,
recognise my birthright
as the source
of this home's life,

nurture me
as I preside
over your feasts,
offer me
first sacrifice.

Do not turn
your eager moth gaze
toward lesser deities
illuminated
by hollow
praise
do not be drawn
by the glow
of their beauty
or fame

attend to my flame

for the day
you let me diminish
and to cool ashes return,
will be the day
your shining temple
burns.

Lori Zybala

Lori Zybala is passionate about intertwining the musing of the mind, related to human existence, nature and the love of language. Poetry is her natural extension, a paper and pencil union of the conscious and subconscious mind joining together, an atmospheric flow. Originally from Canada, works in the world of academia, and is now based in Ontario. When not writing she can be found hiking in nature, reading poetry and indulging in a great cup of coffee. Don't hesitate in reaching out via the web via WordPress, Instagram and Twitter.

Hearthstone

Warm embers illuminate the room
Red yellow orange
Entertains the receiving eye

Fires heat penetrates
Deep into skin layers
Under an intoxicating spell

A threshold crossed -
Terror, doubt, and division remain outside

Stability, innocence, tranquility
Drip hot wax upon the oak mantle

Blazing fire infinitely burns
Centuries – empires of existence
Legacy of immortal devotion

Mystical mortar
Divine Roman architecture
Goddess of a royal hearth

Epiphany of female strength
Everlasting light
Virgin since birth

Morality – prosperity
Keeper of the domestic realm
Everlasting, Pantheon Olympian bound

Purification, renewal
Embers seep into the dark night
Sanctuary of a goddess, first given sacrifice

Deities, Gods
Suitors pursue with blazing enchantment

Hestia – royal state member
Element keeper - equivocal status among men

Ellie Morfou

Ellie Morfou was born in the mid-1980s under a different name in Crete, Greece. The poet inside her emerged amidst the coronavirus pandemic lockdowns, which helped her remember how much she used to love writing as a child. Since rediscovering this passion of hers, she has been writing verses endlessly and enjoys it thoroughly! When not writing, she spends time with her family, hangs out with friends, translates legal documents and makes time for reading. She loves the sea, ice cream and learning new languages. Part of her work is available on her instagram page @elliemorfou (for published work check https://linktr.ee/EllieMorfou).

The Original Feminist

A cruel father's daughter,
you gained the right to supervise every sacrifice;
the leading woman in the household of Gods,
but not a housewife.
A mighty brother's sister,
you claimed the right to preside over your life;
your royal suitors were denied your hand,
your heart, your soul.
Instead, you gave your sacred self to you,
a maiden for eternity, by choice.
Self-love never extinguished
burning fiercely
like the flames in your stone-lined hearth.
Forever undomesticated queen of domesticity,
Hestia, you lived just as you pleased;
and so shall we.

Corinna Board

Corinna Board lives in a small village in the Cotswolds and works in Oxford, where she teaches English as an additional language. She can be found on Instagram @parole_de_reveuse.

Flame

FLAME

I am the rose in your garden - honey-sweet, lingering, the laughter of children, the smell of freshly baked bread. When night spins her web, I'm the softness of sleep, & the silence that falls where Morpheus treads. I've fashioned my body into a shrine, made my ribs a pyre of bone, & I will burn for you, if you feed me with the kindling of devotion; ablaze with eternity's vermilion lick. Loyal guardian of your home, *but no man's doormat,* a heart desired, though never consumed; my innocence is a flame that I've learnt not to surrender, even if you call yourself a god. I am both sacrifice & knife; a blood offering, the first crimson sip & the dying breath. Don't underestimate my generosity, or my wrath - if you tend my fire with love, I won't ever let you fall.

Sarah Beck Mather

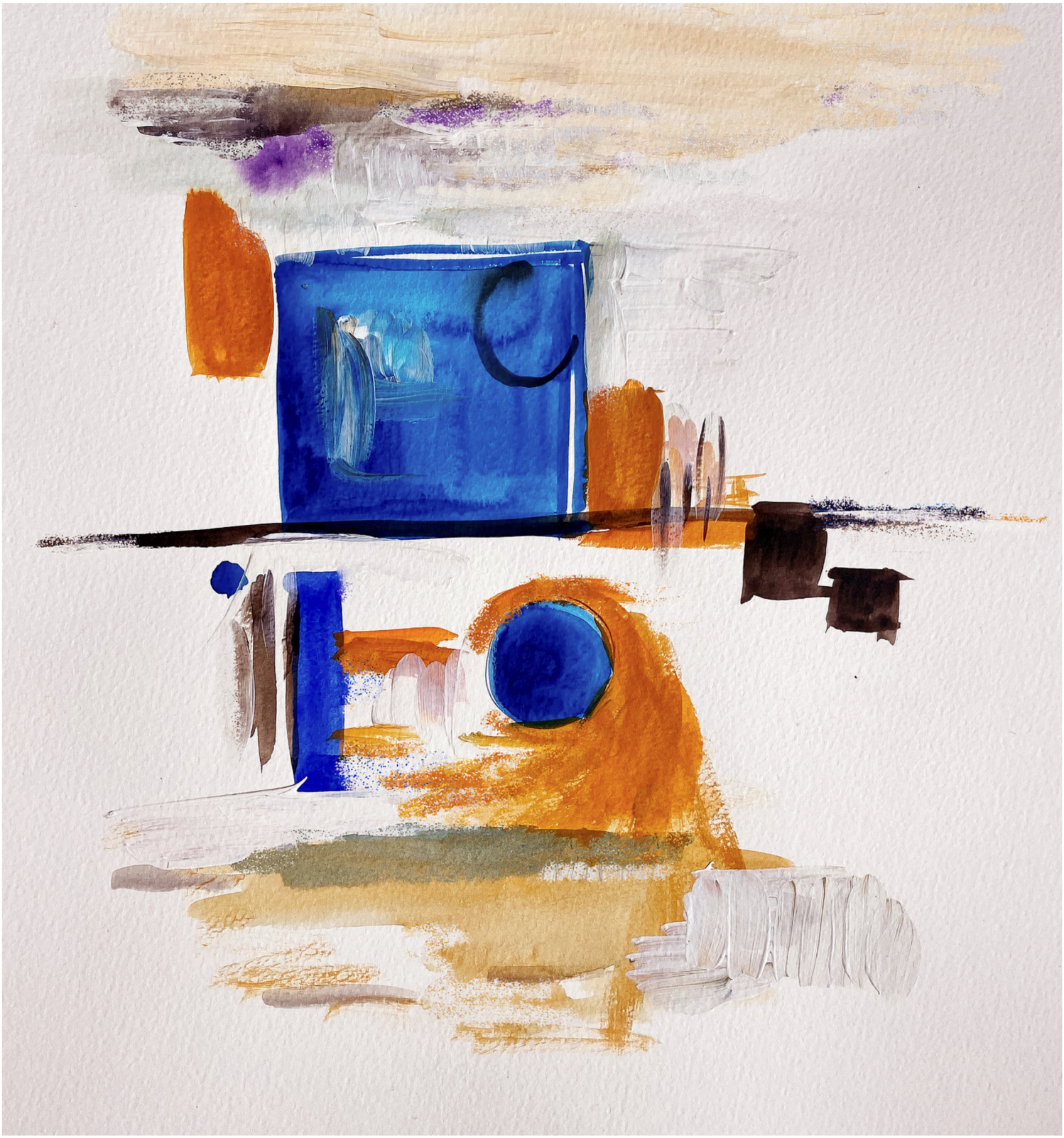
Sarah Beck Mather is an artist, actress, poet - having recently been published by The Bounds Green Book Writers, Last Leaves Mag, Nottingham C.A.N and Bloodmoon Poetry. Her latest Art Commission can be seen in the resus ward, A+E Department and vaccination hub of Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. Her visual poetry can also be seen in Streetcake Magazine and Nightingale and Sparrow.

Website: sarahbeckmather.com

Instagram: @sarahbeckmather

Woman

Childhood



Kristiana Reed

Kristiana Reed is a UK based writer and editor. As well as being the sole Editor of Free Verse Revolution she also freelances as an editor and proofreader. 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, @kristiana.reed or visit her website: www.kristianareed.com.

Open letter to my ancestors

after Mary Ruefle

Sometimes I feel empty. Except for the beetles and centipedes;
the undergrowth of fear flourishing beneath the flowers.

I do not have any photographs of you. A family tree
cut to the stump — a few faceless names and loose threads.

Could you tell me how far my sadness is genetic?
Have we always been moved by blood orange sunsets?

I fear too few of you were good. Above the soil in which you sleep
I can taste the arsenic upon my lips. A woman's poison,

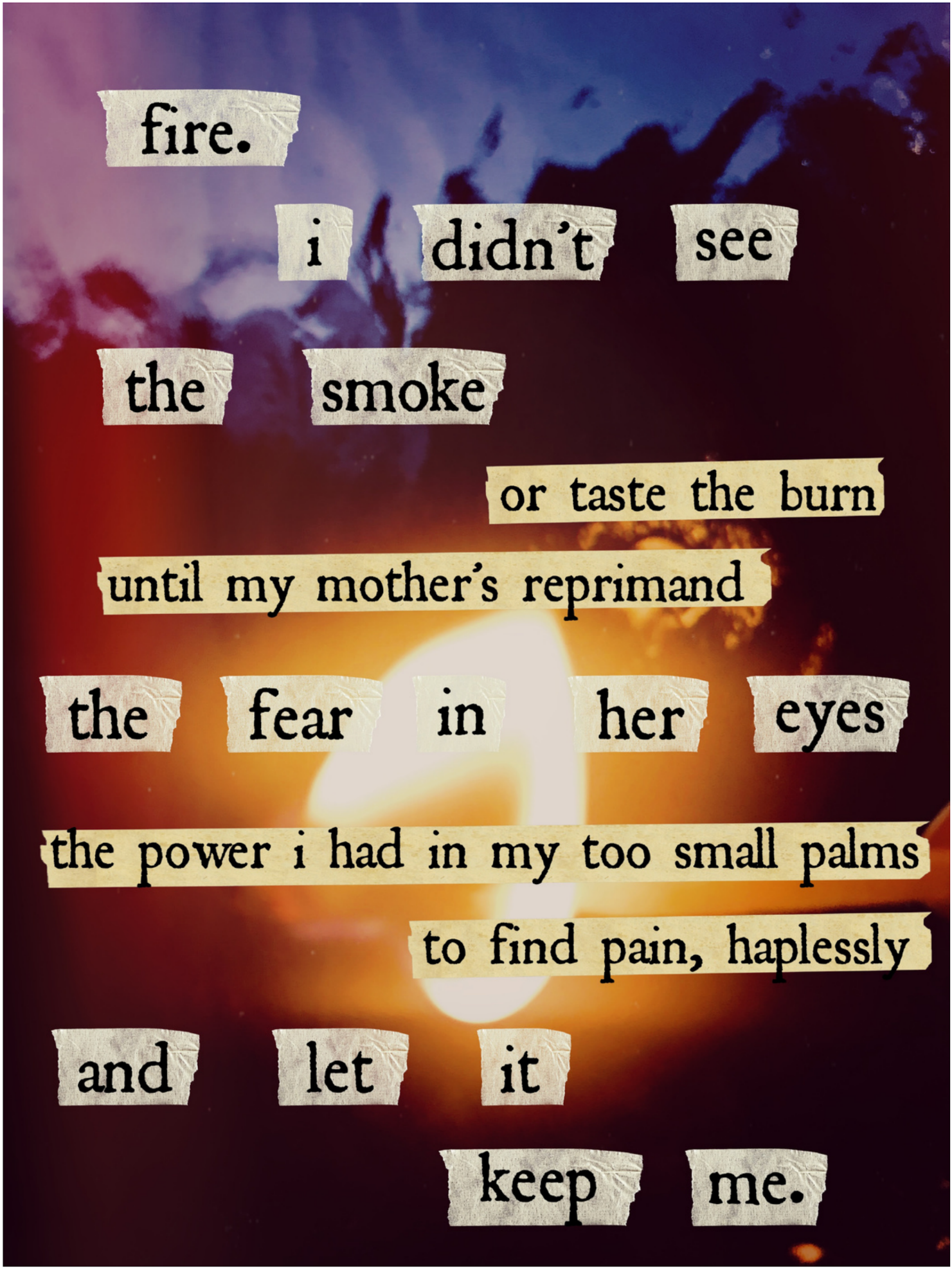
but I know too little about the women who birthed us.
And this is a shame we carry; heavy and violet.

I know I should seek to know more, but what if
one of them looks like me, yet did not live beyond thirty?

What would that mean for me in the next three years?
As the sharp-fanged moths multiple in my stomach
and all I think about is the woe we sow and the trauma we inherit.

Where do I bury all of these questions,
when the graves are already full?

fire.


fire.
i didn't see
the smoke
or taste the burn
until my mother's reprimand
the fear in her eyes
the power i had in my too small palms
to find pain, haplessly
and let it
keep me.

A definition of womanhood

I wailed a welcome — baring ribs
between my teeth. Adam's.
Before I crumpled, converted to sheets
left in the cold to dry, dresses hung
above steamy showers, creases pushing
themselves away with nervous hands.

I learned quiet. I learned how swiftly fire burns,
not when played with but when held
unflinchingly close to your face.
I was expected to seep through the cracks —
become the gentle autumn rain,
forgiving myself in silence,
upon broken panes of glass.

The dark read me bedtime stories,
told me to find spaces for myself —
spaces which would never contain
my star-woven greatness. Because I am more.

I am more than pressed flowers
between dog-eared pages of your favourite novels.

I am more than the woman you learned to spell,
to say second to man.

I wailed my welcome — throaty howls
wombing with arrival, blood on par
with the tumultuous sea, baring Adam's rib
in my mouth, in my hands,
behind my grass stained knees; watch,
watch it snap like a wishbone.

Watch me spit out the pain
which was never mine
to keep.

Nameera Anjum

Nameera Anjum is a poet who believes that only words can be the true source of liberation - be it any form and shape. She's a student of Political Science, an ardent Feminist and has her work published in various journals, e-mags, anthologies and websites such as: All Ear Song (Edition 1: Journal), The Kali Project by Indie Blue Publishing (Anthology), World on Trial: The Earth's Grand Vengeance (Anthology: Protest poetry), Poems published on Eve Poetry Group and Spillwords.

I am a woman

My bones assume the weight of my happiness like it's something to be measured

Because I only get a share equivalent to the voids in my skin where asphyxiation is a screeching noise coming from the dishes drinking from the faucet

My sadness is a language that does not exist for you
Because your mother never taught you to drown,
She stopped breathing to see you laugh
And you bought her death at the cost of fresh orange juice

I am a woman
My body is a hungry beast waning in the bright sunshine
But you look at your shoes like a nine-year old school boy
I wish you were clueless enough to calm my body,
You were not

I am a woman
But how could I be?
When I look in the mirror I see a body that belongs to a religious preacher
I see a body that belongs to some product
I see a body that complements yours
I see a body that defines basic human right as a crime
I see unheard protests perpetuating a sin
I see hell instead of heaven
I see all definitions except my own

I think
I am a woman.

Skin

I want a platitude of sunsets licking my brown elbows,
The clouds are leaving my lungs-
I float in your country where I am not beautiful;
With my vision, I settle the imperfect creases around your eyes but you're not smiling anymore

My heart is too heavy an object to soar where all the others often do,
I try to forget my tears and now they're an unabashed filth sitting on my cheeks
I saw the room closing in on me as my mother said that I'm the prettiest girl in the world

But in grade five, my world was a small classroom,
Dotted along the lines I've forgotten to retrace-
Where beauty and color was measured in a spoonful of anxiety and all eyes swallowing me, slowly, painfully

My world became smaller until breathing was another one of my unfinished stories,
And the only one I actually completed because all the sunsets that my elbows contained;
Were words waiting to be formed, to be morphed into a skin that wasn't just beautiful - but evolved;
A lamentation without a heavy dialect, a graceful wink layered upon the fibres of a nasty world.

It was a hurt I invented for myself so that no one else could master me, so that my skin remained under my scrutiny-
And not some stubborn fifth grade grievance that vomits a layer so hateful,

That even my words are back where they started - brown elbows and sunsets,
Fading behind some childhood sorrow evolving inside a corium of concocted clouds,
inside a face that never smiles.

My Clothes are Dirty

I don't know how to drape this guilt over my shoulder the way my mother wants me to,
The colours, I hear them laugh
You can do better,
But it doesn't mean I have to.

The filthy linen crawls over my body,
It feels like home to be forgotten in the mellow greens & a pile of pillows
And all I loved, I loved alone; said Poe-
Reminding me of the poems I was born to write; selfish and unnerving/unbothered.

But I am bothered
Hell, stop looking at me like I'm the monster:
I just want to be myself, I don't want to stop yelling and grieving my choices, I don't want to save monsters
(Just because I believed I would)

My books are buried in dust,
And I think to myself: *what if I were a page inked in Poes' Tamerlane, buried in a graveyard of dust? Would this Death satisfy me?*
I want to be someone I imagine myself to be,
Instead I'm still angry.

I'm still throwing a friend's bottle at school because I'm upset,
I'm still angry and I curse with a mouth as dirty as the pits of Hell:
I raised Hell on my shoulders, now I burn every time I rise up to Heaven.

My clothes are Dirty, my fabric is withering away
In the tangles of loss's very hair? Not love, Poe; not in this poem which refuses to come out of that thread of exile: and becomes my skin by the hour.

My skin is dirty, would you still touch me like everything is normal?

I can't do better, mother;
You can't do anything either.

Mint

I could eat my nails:
Like mint chocolate waffles, too heavy to swallow from the fallen parachutes stuck in my oesophagus,
I often sniffed cloudless skies and snuck deadly cliffs under my eyes-
Until a passenger left a briefcase in my mouth that opened a rainbow of fallen flowers.

Heaven is a story born upon my collarbones,
Between the thighs of a man who called me his little niece, his nice little niece
I trap tornadoes in my toenails just so I can feel home within the turbulence around me;
It's always inside, dining upon me at a table long enough for my family:
Long enough for my mother to whitewash my cries over insane laughter
Long enough for my father to seal the ancient sacks of sin
Long enough for my brother to stare at the ceiling
Long enough for me to be in exquisite pieces under the metallic tenderness of silver forks, knives and spoons.

A plate that makes no sound because mother says it's ill-manners,
Because silence is easier than a blood-curdling splatter of truth.

Mint green fingernails
My cuticles are poems I want to bite off-
Waffles,
Chocolate mint:
A nice little niece and a briefcase that should never have bloomed,
Not between the legs of a six year old.

Robin Williams

Robin Williams (she/they) is a queer poet and practicing witch from Pennsylvania. They've had previous publications in the Horizon Literary Magazine and will have pieces forthcoming with Moss Puppy mag and the Warning Lines magazine. Her full poetry collection, In the Mid-Hours, will be out in October with Raine Poetry Publishing.

When femininity was reborn:

Mother told me a girl shaves her hair.
She shaves the strands under her arms
and the curls on her legs
and when summer came,
she'd shave there too.

But never the hair on your head,
mother said.

I told mother a girl doesn't have to shave her hair.
She can comb and keep the strands under her arms
and the curls on her legs
and when summer came,
she could shave there if she wanted.

But shave the hair on your head,
I said.

Mother said no.
Mother said it was ugly
and embarrassing
and not right.
Mother said.

But I didn't care what mother told me.

My hair is hair
whether it is here or there,
and mother can't tell me
what defines my femininity.

Driftwood

OUR RELATIONSHIP WAS
drift·wood
/ˈdrif(t)wʊ̄od/
noun
~~pieces of wood which are floating on the sea or have been washed ashore.~~

1. We sat on the edge of both stone and wave.

When I was younger, you used to take me and my sister to ballet practice. You used to pick us up in that black pickup truck, we'd sit in the back seat and watch you make funny faces in the mirror. When you dropped us off, you gave us a slobbery kiss goodbye.

2. We sat there rotting, worms beneath our skin.

I don't remember when it ended. But I remember the afters. The birthdays left unwished, the Christmases with a single plastic card that soon became only empty hands. Each holiday passing by and not a word from you we heard.

3. You are all but decomposed.

June twentieth twenty-twenty-one you invited us to a cookout. We talked about my future and where you'd like to live out the rest of yours. Sat in the shade of the trees I haven't seen since I was a girl and pretended there wasn't a lifetime missing between us.

4. You lead me onto the shore. We stared out at the water.

Dad wished you a happy birthday, a wish that was long overdue. Everyone is grasping at straws, trying to make amends, right their wrongs. The hot air these days feels suffocating and time refuses to slow down for us.

Lara Simpson

Lara Simpson is an English student at King's College London. She is eighteen years old and originally from North Yorkshire. You can find her reading (for her degree), reading (for fun), strolling through the park in search of green space, or spending time with her cats.
Her poetry blog is laramae.com.

When I Look at the Painting of Howl You Gave Me

for Charlotte

old, rusty, industrial face
trudging like a giant tortoise
through green fields and rocky cliffs,
choking on black smoke puffed out
by calcifer's blazing heart.
why don't we park up in the mountains,
hang the washing line, have a picnic,
feel the fresh breeze on our skin
while sitting on the castle's balcony.
let's lift off into the sky, freezing
but beautiful, holding tight
on to our homemade hats, ever closer
to the stars you drink for breakfast.
let's open the front door and see
where it takes us. i want no war,
only soft clouds on a lake and blushing
flowers in a secret, flowing meadow.
i want no witches, only the magic
emanating from your fingers.
i don't want cherry blossoms, i want
whimsical maximalist bedrooms,
strong alpine trees and multicoloured
houses with wooden beams; i want
to warm my toes by the fireplace
in a cosy armchair with a cup of tea

and you next to me, then say goodnight
and carry my candle upstairs
into the welcoming dark—
every day full of peace and adventure.
every day the light reflecting
off your jewel collection;
that little glimmer of wishes
come true.

When I've Found Her

after Emily Dickinson

'Good morning, my love' I mumble
between sleepy kisses
and buttering a bagel,
coating it with honey
to put on your plate
at the breakfast bar—

or maybe it's a wooden table
by a window with a vase
of flowers, maybe it's tulips,
as the south-facing sunlight
beams on your lips
and I lean forward—

you catch me—we
are in the garden,
you are wearing a straw hat
and a checkered dress
picking strawberries
from our vegetable patch

and I am watching you,
smiling, thinking
'how did I get so lucky?'
A honey bee buzzes
near your hair—
what colour is it? Only time

will tell, only what cards
I am dealt, what faces float
past in my life
and which one I can grab
from the mist,
bring down

to my chest, and make
a home—a nest.

Your Old House

Smashed glass for breakfast—
your Weetabix with ketchup—
never quite matched
the feeling we created:

Barbie movie marathons
and Mario Kart on your bed,
playing video games in the dark
until our eyes glitched

and we saw hope
in the corridor
instead of broken bowls
on the floor—

the police knocking,
our heads laughing
together, making
midnight snacks

to ward off the hunger
for feeling safe
and sound, at least
when I was away.

I wish I could take you home
and you could live in my room,
like you did when things
got real bad.

In our world,
there would be no bad,
other than
your cereal choices.

Other than leaving you.

My Hometown is a Hospital Bed

My hometown is a hospital bed
where the snaking wires bite my skin,
sedating my body with nostalgia drugs
& paralysing my limbs ever since I was young
because I grew up in this ICU
connected to tubes, connected to you,
connected to my friends,
connected to my room,
connected to every passing car's fume,
connected to every street, shop, & moon
that rose over our lopsided home
& for so long I have wanted to move
but I am an apple bitten into
who, although in full bloom,
could rot to the core if the plug is pulled

too soon.

Caitlan Docherty

Caitlan Docherty is seeking something intangible. She finds it curious & thrilling that poetry consistently, albeit briefly, grants her access to this magic. More of Caitlan's recent work can be found or is forthcoming in VAINE Magazine, Sunday Mornings at the River Covid-19 Anthology, blood moon poetry & Calliope's Eyelash.

Virgin Wound

shell or sanctuary, shackle or mooring?
cobwebs veil our worship; sticky
mythmaking dips its arrow in
monkshood milk, shoots
poison at our ankles.
this year

we uncovered corsets, garter belts,
underwire bras, leather leashes, shock
collars littering a repository. there was talk

of drought, damnation, oppressive fear we've yet to cauterize.

Host

when i squint, shadows
narrow, peppery wisps
dapple the salt-struck
distance. the difference
between shadow
and self is distorted
origins, something flimsy
i refuse to peel away.
wednesday sugars my lips,
sweetens the endless
wish to dissolve;
i under bake
the cake of my wanting
; drizzle honey over
open flame, admire
the easy combustion.
there is an old gourd
of sorrow, i keep pushing
my fingers into the soft rot.
weekends arrive slowly
on flat bicycle tires
—still, i wait. every time
a wine glass shatters
in the kitchen, on the patio,
across the slate bathroom tile
: i lap up the brokenness,
i hold it on my tongue.

Again, I Pour Light

the city's sleeping, you take it with you:
starry blue exit, low phone light, lullabies
tucked into your thief-steps, midnight

cologne, monogamy's requiem humming
vanilla, patchouli, sandalwood notes from your neck.

my grey-rest allegory unravels dreams
—nightmare warnings lodged in the broken music
box mama pries open. she knows you, knows

the undercurrent by heart: four chords whisper
our sadness. sidewalks furred with moss,
a girl choir breathes pain
deep into tree bark,

i tap for maple, find mama
in a mirror. with mahogany, we compose a dark

luxury to pad across. opera house sound, private
acoustics in the bathroom—i trill angelic tones into
an echoing silence. she sheds a meagre tear. precision

furnishes the loft: dark red
zinnias, crisp white linens, steel
beams, sharp architecture. we keep
the tragedies of perfection to ourselves.

fire engines’ red music, sirens etch ladder rungs, silvery metal constellations into night. soon grief tattoos morning, again, i pour light syrup over your pancakes.

Exterior/Interior

a gulp of autumn
air. what we held changeless
shifts. black tides rush
the palms, we turn over new
moons, white marbles
in white sand. a home
rises from tawny sawdust
and gristle. our lovelorn
missives lost at sea, wash up
in wave-tossed bottles.
the harvest moon wears orange
mist like a broken ring,
loose frost of
a nullified covenant.
borrowed time
clips the sparrow's wings,
ecstatic flight bound to the rib
-cage of memory.
bitten peach skins bleed
like the answer to a prayer, teeth
cut through, meet an impossible middle.
soot on her bare knees, flames
kiss walls, ceiling.

T. S. Priest

T. S. Priest is an American-born writer and visual artist living in Canada with her family. She studied Romance Languages, Linguistics, and Creative Writing at New York University. Her poems explore the dark recesses of imagination and darker recesses of reality, often through imagined conversations and unorthodox forms.
Instagram: @agirlcalledthomas

South Slope

Safe haven

“You know
what I do when I can’t
fall asleep?”

I nestle deeper into the duvet
as my mother wipes a tear
from my cheek.

“I picture a room:
windows north and full of spring,
red wood floors with citrus sheen

and I fill that room
with precious things.

That corner, there - it’s perfect
for a wingback chair.
Perfect for a book in the sun.
That alcove for the vanity;
the rest, for art and artifacts
and their generous humanity.

I paint the walls a floral white
and place my brushes upright
on the stand.

My best friends on the windowsill.
Bright silk between my hands.

Try it; build yourself
a room.
I think you'll understand."

I close my eyes,
spiral round my pillow tight
as we drift through dreams
and plans.

Cordelia

Shepherdess

A girl called Mother

I am the Mother of a thousand eyes:
uncloaked, couched and disembodied
Saturn slivers, moonlit rivers;
all-seeing masons, fragment inklings.
Frozen parents.
Chosen siblings.

I am the Mother
of my own two feet:
the one to watch, to push, to clean,
to leap through time as I fall asleep
bringing back stories to tell myself
when I was ten at twelve-thirteen.

I am the Mother
of the hopeful ghost
who floats within that childhood trance -
flickering the reading lamp,
making Daughter's shadows dance

as her future sends her joy
the present can't.

I am the Mother of a thousand eyes.
Counting the ones on the back of my neck
in the darkest corners of a barren night:
Tumbling from one void into the next,
the edge of existence gazing back,
knowing who I am before
(I think) I even can.

I am the Mother of reinvention,
of nullifying space and time
to ask (and answer) my own questions.

I am the Older Sister,
Fairy Godmother, Fearless Whisper,
Confidante and Flood Resistor.
I am not all things to all people
but I am the stolen rib

through which I breathe:
the algal bloom at petals' feet.
I am the Mother of everything
I could ever dare to be.

Rebecca Green

Rebecca Green is a poet and illustrator based in West Yorkshire, UK. Her writing endeavours to be rooted in honesty and truth, with a lot of focus surrounding challenges with mental health and motherhood. Rebecca has been published in zines and the anthology Songs of Love and Strength from the Mum Poem Press, as well as projects such as the Dear 2020 zine by WriteSparks. Rebecca has recently been mentored by Kim Moore as part of a development opportunity run by Ilkley Literature Festival and will have a video feature and poem as part of their online program in October 2021. Other works can be found @herworldofdiscovery on Instagram.

Body At Rest

As I sleep,
I'm a ticking down clock,
heavy bodied, in the land between moon-night and dawn.
Only at home.
Comfort casts shadows,
into the backs of my eyes,
the miniature porcelain horse,
alabaster, in the fading glow
of a just blown bulb.
Rooms in houses are secrets,
are sacred, are the smell of sex
in stolen moments.
The cupboards are bursting
with hidden things and my
grandfather's face,
in its glinting frame, emerging,
by degrees, in the
changing light from open windows.
I slumber in the palm of safety,
my daughter, the warm bodied child,
curled like a locket,
in the nape of my neck.

Jaya Avendel

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.

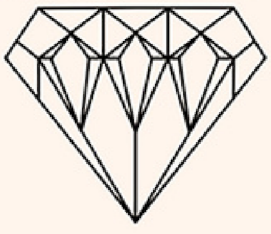
Homeworld

Homeworld

Rain turns the leaves inside out
Bares their silvery veins to the
Candle-flame yellow moonlight
Pages turned by the wind
The stars recite poetry.

Chill blades of grass
Black field under shadow
Biting, the air
Separates from the million sticky
Particles crawling the skin.

Virgin owls with oval eyes
The panther rejected from darkness
Holding the heart in his gleaming claws
Nothing is loud here
The piercing wolf howl marries existence
Flesh cuts away time
There are no more diamond minutes.



Jaya Avendel

Settler

She gave us a rusted pail one year
She called it an ash pail
This old woman from the hills
With tree bark for skin and
Roots for nails and
Eyes full of nineteen twenty-one.
She gave us the pail dented with wishes and
Lives embalmed in rust
When the sun was strong enough to fade our clothes and
Burn our skin and
Her trek back up the mountain
The trek that made her feet bleed
Was worth it to give us her tin heart
Though it would be five months before
We could burn enough wood
To make ash
To make lye
To make soap
To wash the gathering complaints from our bodies and
Become the clean slate upon which to carve
Letters that make our spines tingle
While she fades in her cabin
Where the glass windows are
Polished with raindrops.

Co-Existence

I run with the deer while she
Sits and polishes her fingers pretty
Spinning yarn.

I bathe in the
Lyrical creek while she
Develops lithe muscle lugging pails
From the well.

I rake my hair with shed stag horns
While she accepts daintily an
Ivory comb bought with the last
Gold coin from her mother's dowry.

I breathe with the trees and
Dress in their garments; leaves and moss
Softer than her goose feather pillow.

I am the fading girl inside her
Blossoming womanly soul.

She is falling
Out of love with me in search of
The allure of an unfamiliar dwelling and
The curiosity of a hearth where she
Does not know the number of interlocked stones.

Rachel Dickens

Rachel Dickens is a mother, poet, graphic designer, and illustrator who operates under the guise of @lollysnow on Instagram. She has been published in two poetry anthologies: Dispatches from New Motherhood by Mothership writers and Songs of Love and Strength by the Mum Poem Press. She also features in zines: Dear 2021 project, The6press and Gypsophlia.

A Garden of My Own

The space between the day and the night,
in these dog days of summer,
the twilight, city garden becomes my own.

I carefully collect your things and potter them inside,
bonus footage of our time together.
All the while with a hibiscus hangover, blotted paper,
a plane returns to the airport
and I am reminded that kindness is a passport.

I take a holiday from being Cerberus,
and I have just one head,
in the soul, one shoal, one shore.
There is absence of silence
and yet, this garden is my home,
for now,
in midsummer magic.

Arête

They tell me I'm fine.
We both lay dormant.

The sea stretches out of its shell, far, into
freshwater territories. I imagine crocodiles in
low submersion, awaiting their moment of
action. Conjuring anger, brewing spells in their
65 millennium old dinosaur, cauldron minds.

The volcanic ash that swallowed my heritage
hasn't come for me today.
Landslides are held back by dams
of pure luck. Pure. Damn. Luck.

I lounge into the tungsten light.
Look inside, where pain lies, reels from
the Titanic, have you got what you wanted
on film?

Concentrate on your goals. I always choose
dare, a cowboy like me. You stranger, have the
kindest eyes. You all do. I can tell so much.
Even the eye has an exit.
An iris to the sea.
We are in the right place, tracing the soft,
bathed in bright blue, peach curves of
the room.

I breathe relief, channelled through
biscuit breath in pandemic mask.

And I can say with confidence,
that I am fine.
I have the permission and the authority.

There's a reason why patient is in my job title
today. Virtuous is my name. Arête written on
my band or tag.

Backbone

I try not to say who I am.
Whether I'm currently made of sugar, salt or playdough.
I'm all smiles and the kindest lies.
I give in.
You grab at me, climb on me, kiss me.

This keeps me linear.

I am the link in the hereditary.
The genetic borrowed atlas.
Often believing I am missing, invisible.
Yet, highly crucial for you two.

This keeps me linear.

Grandmother of a toddler.
She knows who I am –
Well, at least one side of me.
A flat reflection.
Others see a refraction.
I'm all smoke and mirrors.

Only you have seen me,
from the inside out.
Womb 360, The Pink Hotel.
The rainbow grenade of my nerve endings.
Truly felt;
My sigh,
my synapses,
my hum,
my lumbar extension.

This keeps me linear.

Wool Between Teeth

There is a place,
I can sometimes reach,
increasingly only with
my anxiety guard down,
an ungripped memory,
A déjà vu
in my mouth.

Here, there is a big ball like wool,
between teeth,
tongue gently lifted,
to the roof,
creating space for this candy,
coral cloud.

Instead of it raining above me,
It’s neither bitter nor sweet,
It just is.
A kaleidoscope of fragmented memories.

And I have the choice to swallow
the raindrops.
Quench my thirst,
or pause for a few breaths,
feeling it swell.
Absorbing the lightness into my whole face,
washing each cell, each constellation on my skin.

The feeling of waking up writing.
Sitting on a sunny window seat,
with an empathetic cushion,
fluffy mascot and a listening plant.
Now imagine an elsewhere.
Go ahead, take the steps,
to a walled garden.
I am safe here with your lion lungs.

Vanessa Napolitano

Vanessa Napolitano lives in Yorkshire with her husband and daughter and works with international students. She loves to write both about her own world, and through adopting and exploring different personas. You can find some of her work on her instagram page @nessanapswrites, and her most recent publications in the anthology 'Songs of Love & Strength', the exhibit Maternochronics, and in New Normal zine.

Mother-in-law

Your wife always says
 Is she coming round; the gorgon medusa?
sets all of my tiny sharp teeth on edge,
as if all she can see is that you've sprung from my neck.
I think she's jealous that I had more than hands to hold you;
you were enthralled by my snakes, they coiled and massaged you,
        Hisssssing when you flew too far.

Nobody's fertility goddess, eh?
 Pour me another cup of blood out,
vapid child I've some sympathy now, you've a monster of your own
to worry about, his narrative hovering.
Always some bastard with a sharp sword lurking
when you aren't worried about the sleep schedule.

He asked me, give her mother's wisdom,
 as if he thinks it's in my gift, unconventional
to the last drop. My severed talking head. It's all so predictable,
the quests, the showing off.

Don't let him be a magpie.
Love him for who he is.
Know that you can't control the gods.
He will do what he wants in the end.

My Lady of the Apple Peel

My first is in vegetable skin and apple scrapings;
throw it over your shoulder, see my letter on the ground.

My second is in the flame burned down at night,
see my vision in the tired embers.

My third is in sacrifice, braided hair cut off,
clippings of nails, see my flesh in flesh given.

Then I stop in my fourth to see if you are listening,
my fourth in riddles, in soundlessness.

How long I have rested on a pedestal,
have been etched onto a carving

surrounded by echoes of tourist feet
flashed by the dumb cameras.

My true location is not in these fine bones
or on this sad plinth. In your kitchen I am home.

Lisa Perkins

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 @lisaperks.

He(art)

it breaks / a fractured beat / / a thrumming of the vein
it riffs off loves tsunami / / then pleads for clemency
it is the oldest home / i'm sure the left wing's haunted / doors
are left wide open with cells on all the handles / it licks itself
clean like a language / engine of self resurrection / shaped by
knots and crosses / where I tucked in dripping sad songs as
... markers ...
poetry swept in corners fed my little buoy / string-like organ
rare as normal / wreath for common sense / this is the flame
our body dances / memory tap / my children's tardis /
it flutters like a letter i've laid at all their doors /
in turn they've redesigned its ending /
this is a cave with early carvings
'girl whose walls were made
from extra parts'
are they not
art
?

an echo/ /finds a
shadow, this is just
a routine check
up on a
heart
..
.

Coming Home

When I grow up I'll make a home
with a welcome mat that says
'No-one loves you like I do'

(This is where the heart swings. Raised
on rubber stilts it holds on like
suspense. We splash our walls with history.
It soaks up what you spill, it spills.

Into this sponge of land in motion with a lamp
of flaming honey should you lose your way
back in. An ever-binding lease underlined
in sticky prints. Diamonds tumble stairs
every morning, pearls yawn a roof every
night. We map the crayon riots and
decorate its beats)

Please wipe your feet

Victoria Punch

Victoria Punch is a voice coach and musician, writing from her home in Devon (UK) between the moors and the sea. She is currently working on a PhD investigating how we experience silence in text, focusing on ancient myths, and her poetry comes from these explorations. She can be found on Instagram @victoriapunch_ or online at www.victoriapunch.co.uk.

We

we
are the
ridge of the
roof that keeps us
safe. haven. our love is
the joists and beams and felt
that stop the rain from getting in
and make the holding house beneath warm
we both
do our
be st
to have and hold w e have
we ather e d sto r m s and
co ld we have see n the
sky dark as coal, sky blue
as sea, light full
as the day c omes
th ere is no one

we
are the
ridge of the
roof that keeps us
safe. haven. our love is
the joists and beams and felt
that stop the rain from getting in
and make the holding house beneath warm
we both do our
best
to have and hold we have
weathered storms and
cold we have seen the sky dark as coal,
sky blue as sea,
light full as the day comes,
there is no one
I would rather do this with;
these open walls
this conversation garden
these grasses and cornflowers of possibility
these dandelions we would rather remove
this tree of life this broken fence and hard earth we till and clear
and love and plant and wait for growth
these breezes we invite but can't control
these wreckages from insects
these pollinator blooms
these seasons
these changes: we are the ridge
of the roof that
keeps us

Jonathan O'Farrell

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.

Before the Fire

The forest fell from the sky (Melo - phoenix days)

My foot strides again, over ever regular municipal cobbles.
Oh that we had time for civic pride, dear Melo.

Catch up my mind's eye,
breath-taking,
aghast, imagination fails
and;

The non accommodating cafe chairs now suffice;
for although reclining cats
by the ‘Castelo’ passage
still pose,
the grid and a currency of electrons became useless that night
of the furnace wind.

Not that they needed mobile telecoms, the felines, just Bombeiros.
The cats needed mobility, too close to the fire, fur!

It strikes me hard, the light, the dark
and many shades convergent.
Not so subliminal, charcoal.
You can have it back now, your town
‘any colour,
so long as it’s black’,
or, ashen grey at a pinch!
Torches, hairbrushes, a table, art, tool handles, wind up radios, pencils.
All, or most, incendiary food,
need I say more?

Another cuddle with a scruffy friend, some consolation,
as we navigate now primeval carbonised slopes.
Ruefully I survey a spot with forested mountainsides,
between night barking dogs
and intimacy.
Charred, jet black giesta stubs adorn the place,
where I might have called it forest home.
That arson night the accelerant intoxicated forest,
rained incandescent offerings,
on the innocent in their nightclothes.
The firestorm proclaimed, 'Trajectory Lottery';
have a tidy roof over your head? — Not any more!

And still we, my gentle wanderers and I
are knowing of quiet celestial bodies
and fiery characters, all in time and rotation.
Good people, not perfect, but good, struggle.

The remote prospect of novel non-religious house front tiling,
seems to recede, just a little,
In the sooty face of trauma.
No space in the stable this season.
Actually, no stable.
Give me a hammer with a shaft in situ, nails.
Oh, and yes, timber, again.
Then stable.

Auto-estrada,
autopista,
autoroute,
Autobahn, this time
compass pivots north-east,
but, will swing back, again.

Charles T. Low

Charles T. Low has felt the art-photography compulsion for many decades.

If he has a style, it revolves around principles of light and composition, more than on recognizable themes. That said, a significant proportion of his work originates in the pre-sunrise light.

Charles thinks about two convenient frameworks: Light-Composition-Background and Beauty-Subject-Meaning. If those qualities attain synergy, he hopes that art may emerge, that process always being more of an aspiration than a destination.

See more of Charles's work at:
https://photog.ctlow.ca

Decrepit House

Richard LeDue

Richard LeDue (he/him) currently lives in Norway House, Manitoba. He is a Best of the Net nominee and author of three chapbooks. His first chapbook, “The Loneliest Age,” was released by Kelsay Books in 2020, and a second chapbook, “Winnipeg Vacation,” is due for release in September 2021 from Alien Buddha Press. As well, his third chapbook, “The Kind of Noise Worth Writing Down,” is forthcoming in early 2022 from Kelsay Books.

Time Capsule House

Future people too busy
to realize they are the future, or to question
a front porch light left on
for over a year,
only to burn out unnoticed
as an entire house becomes a time capsule,
but I doubt if that was ever the intention.

A legacy made up of clothes still
in the closet a decade later,
or some thrown on a bed
because looters thought there might be
forgotten money in pockets.
Dusty pill bottles left on the bathroom sink
hint at an ending
of one unlucky person,
who outlived everyone they knew.
How they refused to sell the place
where they had basement parties,
watched a bedroom evolve
from a nursery to an adolescent's shut door
to a spare room that no one used,
and then one last fall
in the hallway (probably on a Tuesday
that felt like another day),
trying to go back to bed
after using the bathroom.

Lying there knowing just the dead
will care about this death.
The body discovered weeks later
and the stains of decay on the rug
never cleaned,
but noticed by an abandoned house enthusiast,
who almost gives up for the day
when he finds that body shaped blemish.

The Cost of Reminiscing

Eating spaghetti in the basement
on hot days, concrete floor
so cool against our feet,
the patched up leak on the wall
a conversation piece.
Then came the mornings
that I was old enough to be home alone.
I'd sip coffee, watching sunlight
work through the windows,
trying to turn the underground
into something it's not, and I
thought it might be god,
but eventually realized it was
just my lonely mind,
talking to itself- my parents
never threw out my bed
after I left,
so I got to sleep there
before a roof replacement
they couldn't afford
forced them to repaint the rooms
(the paint bought with my sister's credit card),
so they could sell our home,
while I renovated my career
by taking a job three provinces away.
Years later, we are all doing well,
except we have nowhere to go
during heatwaves (air conditioners
poor company when we're thousands of miles away),
and when our voices talk about that house,
the 40 millisecond delay of the long distance call
feels longer.

Faye Alexandra Rose

Faye Alexandra Rose is a UK-based writer. She has been published in multiple magazines and her debut collection 'PNEUMA' is due to be released with Sunday Mornings at the River this September. She can be found on Twitter @FayeAlexandraR1 or via her website: www.fayealexandrarose.com.

Building Blocks

There is a familiarity to these footsteps as I meander my way to an older self. I pass houses that I once thought were homes that now stand barren. One house taught me that four walls hide dark secrets, whilst another kicked me to the curb so hard it scarred my skin from the force, but I cleansed my reopened wounds and placed one foot in front of the other as I stroll past the bench in which I had my first kiss, and the park where I spent my adolescence drowning in bottles. The cobbles lead me to the corner shop where a pound felt like a million as my mother placed the possibilities into my hands, releasing me into the sugary maze of the aisles every Sunday. I walk to the end of the street where a curb catches my eye - a concrete mound that ripped my only gift from my father – the threads in my mind unravel as I turn on my heel and look at the house that he walked away from.

I no longer resent the town that built my foundations, as bricks and mortar can be knocked down and replaced with something far stronger. As I am an architect of my own present, drawing from my past whilst creating my own future.

Lamarriv

Lamarriv is a restless soul who seeks adventurous puzzles to create an atmosphere through their words and artworks where they can find a space in whose dimension there's a truce between the mind and the heart. They also try to capture the imperfection in the reaction versus the perfection in the elaborated thought.

Social media:
instagram.com/llmartinee
Website:
maelt.co/lamarriv

All Over Again

Jasleen Saini

Jasleen Saini is a poetess, the author of the book "In the throat of poppy" (a short collection of epigrams and poems), based in Chandigarh, India. She is working as an SEO writer in an IT company. Writing is a breath of her soul. In her childhood, she used to write on the walls of her maternal grandparents' house. Family is of utmost importance to her. She believes family is the safe cellar in the devastating gusts. For her, nature, traveling, and animals are the doors to perpetual satiation. She's fond of mysticism too. Visit her website https://poetrysplitsflames.com

How do we kill hestia/peace within us?

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https://www.mistintheeyeszaq.com > kill-hestia-in-us

Misinterpretation of situation | How do we kill hestia within us?

You are unburdening yourself on the toilet. A lizard behind the geyser catches your occupied eyes. You think it is looking at your skin to have a crimson bite of it. You fear. But if it is so, it would watch you leaving the loo from another angle. But it doesn't! ...

https://www.growwithusatpacetyio.com > blog > killing-hes

Unwillingness >> Killing hestia within you

You are stuck in the murky maze. You have the map and the torch. And you understand the map - as easy as reading your mother's face. But your mind is a rat trapped in a rat trap by its own will.

https://www.yousoarwesoariuyt.com > blog > how-we-kill-hestia

Tinted with gloom unwantingly || This is how we kill hestia within us

जैसी संगति वैसा चरित्र | You have been living with gloom for years even though you loathe it the way manicured nails loathe digging earth for sowing seeds. Gloom has painted you with itself. There's no difference between you and gloom...

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Peace? : Anonymous | Killing hestia within us(?)

Some are born with gold chunks in their mouths. Contrarily, some with rotting skyscrapers on their skin -- peace and them have never been called to meet each other by unseen force.

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Measuring suffering against other's | How we kill hestia within us

You feel if the theme of Festa Major De Gràcia were suffering, your street would win accolades. You feel others haven't had enough suffering.

Jasleen Saini

Kevin Hüttenmüller

Kevin Hüttenmüller is a student currently studying special education in Germany. Their work can be found in Emerge Literary Journal, Miniskirt Magazine and Mandarin Magazine. You can find them on Instagram @the.cellphone.novelist

in a split second where everything is enough

here are some notes on staying: when i was a boy
my father used to read me bedtime stories,
his voice a sanctuary for my loneliness. i remember
when i lost a tooth, i used to wish for things

to stay the same. at least inside my shoes didn't
get dirty. there was a door i never opened, or
when, never looked beyond. when i was in school
my best friend's heart fell out of place and i

didn't know the answer. there are conditions
which never escape the mouth. i am talking about
the time my mother took me to the doctors
because of my crotch pain. when we discovered

my body was missing limbs, her smile turned
into a hard knife, a starving. i remember
i used to wish for it to stay the same. not everyone
burns like they're too young and i am convinced guilt

can haunt a skin until it pulls out something red-eyed.
you see, i was not supposed to talk back
when my mother convicted herself, but i wish
i did, at that time, untied that noose, gave

punishment a softer name. you see, unlike
a wound i had no history, no claw marks to
cool in the river current, only this hot ash
in my throat, floorless language, unable
to be anything but debris on the tongue.

when i pull my mother's body out of the lake she looks like a car swollen with grief

and entirely like someone else standing
in the middle of a dumpster fire, doors jerked

open, still not allowing for another body to pass
through her. how i wish i remember

the way recoil puts a dent on my teeth when
i say her name twice, when i scratch

the silver ceiling in murder. don't say
it out loud. there are still victims tossing &

turning over how to hold the knife correctly.
there is still light existing only

in her fist, a sawtooth sinking further
into knee-deep snow caps. don't say

it out loud. this is a one-way glove into
a thin scream, the sound of water rushing

down your scalp like a bridal veil, twisting
the water hose into a book of prayer

and it starts with your name, nocturnal,
churning in the bell-sharpened night.

there is no greater happiness

i think all my friends are beautiful
in the way they carry their
belonging down the river.

i can pass my name through each
of their bodies and return
more holy. i can think sky,

i can think family without flinching.

the way to remember a dream, by turning
forgiveness into a mask you enter
through its mouth.

i think all my friends are beautiful
and i watch them disappear under
the night water, their absence spilling

a floor of white flags, a fountain
as tender as their touch on my
shoulder. it is terrible, i know.

but if i have to, i want to make
at least one thing clear; but if
i have to, i will get on my knees,
leak light from every rupture.

i think all my friends are beautiful
in the way they are my friends, in the way
they save me, without knowing, without
demanding anything in return

and sometimes i can't help but turn
myself into a mirror, absorb anything

the world throws at me, return
a more gentle light— and sometimes
i wonder if i can be beautiful too.

i want to go home

somewhere somewhere
i have gone missing. i have
gone back into a footprint,
a clear line of teeth.

a whole state of living vanished & the hands
of a boy offer nothing more than a leaving & the
narrow halls of memory stretch like a voice that lost its
echo & i blame & i blame & i am always another
coal block fed to the engine. i need to keep things going.

somewhere somewhere
our fathers taught us
how to spit rotten food
but not love but not love.
somewhere somewhere
i take his hand & bite
his lip & i have so many
questions for his tongue.

this is not a secret. you are always with me, always a shape
like the moon, or a finger about to forgive
its own hand. you are always with me & hope like foam on black teeth
will pick the worse of us, only to come back like it won't hurt.

somewhere somewhere
i'm completely honest
when i say i am fine
when i am with you.

somewhere somewhere
i run towards the horizon
and you are waiting for me
bright till the very end.

somewhere somewhere
the dusty photographs from the
but not our love but not
that will stay when all

our children will take down
wall when they sell our house
our love
the whispers are gone.

Liyona

Liyona is an “average joe” kind of writer who likes to think about ordinary things and then write them down. Ever since she can remember, she has been rhyming words and creating lyric poems. During her college years, she took a more serious bent toward writing and started to post on her blog :The Life and Times of a Quirky Character. Currently, she resides on the East Coast of the United States just north of the country’s capital. Liyona's poetry has been published in Visual Verse, Flora Fiction and Spillwords. You can also find her commenting and collaborating as a Barista at the Go Dog Go Cafe. Her website: https://liyonadancer100.wordpress.com/

I Whispered Flames

I breathed fire into
Your lungs
And you tasted
Iron
Heat
Lusting for the
Warmth
Of my home
I whispered flames into
Your hands
And gave you
The right
To
Divide
I lifted coals onto
Your head
As you became
A viper for
Conquest and rust
I gasped and burned into
Your flesh
For you dared
To turn
This hearth
Into
Bones

Constance Bourg

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.

Fire gone out

Far, far, the rickrack mile trundled
through wrinkles sitting lightly
on the girl's brow as though borrowed,

all lines leading back to pointless,
which she scratched like a neurogenic itch.
Trapped in amber, a peduncle

without a head, encircled
by an absolute love with fangs,
those of a belly-wash history,

a life less versal than dreamt of.
So she grabbed her many books
and let the fire die out.

Howard Young

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 as @brighton_typewriter_poet.

As Hopper Might Paint Now.

Home hearth
Is burnt through with empty ideas
Stolen promises ring
Like cracked bells
Hollow
Promises
Rope hangs as investment
Face the risk of photographs
In line with the ancestors
Grinning out the mantlepiece
Plastic mac smiles
Worshipped like Romans,
Domestic abuse and gas fires.

Torn curtains reveal the serene,
Apparently,
As Hopper might paint now
Eyes fish-netted by screens a
Frozen calm viewed from the street.

The viewer peers inside
Doused in lamplight
From lampposts, like kerosene
Like portable gas heating
When the meter is sometimes fed.

But when the viewer walks on
Past a broken hearth,
In a broken home,
Cold wind rattles the doors
Rain pours down old young faces,
Facing the wall and
Dipped in hunger,
The goddess Vesta leaves
For damp and shame,
And the fire goes swiftly out.

The Book and The Typewriter

Home is a book of poetry in my bag

—haunted by awake dreams
driven from bricks and mortar
by the sly pulses of local kids
and the drill drums of the eternal
house bound chatter—

—I depart, home in hand,
words to build a life
Kerouac, Kandell and Di prima
make my bed and let me lie
beach stones for pillows
downland grass for quilt
cliff chalk for walls—

Home is the book of poetry
and the typewriter.

Nomad words build homes
around unsettled lives
wandering letters heading west
settle
on the page
dancing words like flowers
erupt as gardens
and that keyboard rattle is just enough for me.

Karan Chambers

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 6ress '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.

Stripping the Wallpaper

I'm stripping wallpaper in our bedroom;
soon to be yours to share. Scraping away
the life that was lived here
before — peeling back layers so we can make
this space yours. How many times, how many rooms
have I done this to? Erasing, rewriting, over
and over: a palimpsest life,
each move making home anew.
How many more times will I do this? How many
new towns, new houses, new rooms
as you grow bigger and taller, wanting your own
space — until eventually it is just me and your father,
telling each other stories of the homes, the accidents,
the red scooters rusting in the garage.
The paint, the wallpaper, the different ways we made
these houses ours. We'll find our lives
in the footprints left in the rooms
that I decorate. Of all the places I've lived,
it's only ever felt like home with you.

Jennifer McLamb

Jennifer McLamb works in the voluntary sector and began writing after the birth of her son in 2020. She primarily writes poetry about family and new motherhood, sharing her work on Instagram under @tiredmama_writes.

Threads Unseen

We named you for my history
I was scared to lose when wed.
Gifting you with the threads unseen
Woven in our family tapestry:
Farmers, cobblers, Dublin and Cork,
Generations of migrations,
Heartsick secret adoptions and
Young lovers laughing on cliff tops.

We named you for my family.
Feel their warmth around you too:
Hot buttered soda from my mum
Dad's show band music in the car
Going to Mass infrequently.
Listening to Nanny's stories
Talking about pigs and ditches
And running with boys from the town.

We named you for my memories
Of windbeaten and wild summers:
Strawberries sold on the road side,
Neglected homes growing new roots,
Atlantic storms beating the coast,
Dolphins sighted down at the strand,
And a pink farmhouse on the cliff
Weathered and proud looking to sea.

Sunra Rainz

Sunra Rainz is a British Pakistani poet and writer based in Birmingham, UK. Also an English Language teacher, her job has often taken her around Europe as well as her home country, during which time she has stayed in many strange houses and dwellings. Her experiences inspired the basis for both her prose pieces.

The In-between Places

The moment is piquant. Crushing and kneading. Bread. A visiting crow crowns my bedroom window. Japanese zen garden. Painting on cotton. Kimono. The one I wear when cogs turn surely. And yet writing…and yet writing. Living stripped down to simple parts.

The ground is not quite level. Earth is uneven. The house sits on slant earth and aligns itself accordingly, sinks into its parts. Like the pattern of bones. A structure is a structure. With a rupture. They say ruptures are good. That's where the art steals in. For it can only get in that way.

A dawn of obliqueness holds itself taut in the side of the house. Angles are curved. Angels too. The garden shrivels in the sun. The beautiful weeds are uprooted. My muscles ache from uprooting. Purpose wavers. Why must the weeds be uprooted? They were so beautiful, they didn't ask permission. But they weren't in the right place. I should learn from the weeds. How not to be afraid to be beautiful.

Laughter steals in. Some joke across the way. I couldn't begin to tell you - I couldn't begin - I don't know where it begins – I begin all over again – I am in need of endings and no more new beginnings. Still, there are always words. To help me. To whet my appetite. For more words.

And then this house. Full of ghosts. The sun makes them flee. But it can only burn away so much. Still they return. They are persistent. For they were here before me. So. I play music for them. Badly but I don't think they mind. Calluses form on my fingertips. Simple notes. That ring in the silence between.

Recipe for Keeping Good House

First make sure the way is clear along the path to your door. Remove all the stones, unless they're pleasingly oblong, but never on a blue moon night.

Let the weeds grow wild and behead all the pansies (to keep the jinn away). Allow the black cats free roam to encircle your home for they bring messages from those passed over on nights such as this.

Don't forget to smile at prowling shadows that pull faces as you pass by. They're wary of you. As well they should be after you ousted them from your threshold.

Bid the good wind rise and blow the dust off your dreams to kindle the burning embers of your just-caught fire. Give your inner child a goodnight kiss to get through the nightmares and dream new wishes into being.

Send love from afar mysteriously to people who don't deserve it. And to people who do. Exhaust yourself with loving. But only in secret. It's good for your skin.

Read that book you've always been meaning to read, the one that sits imploringly on your bulging shelf. It'll be so grateful when you finally take it in your warm hands, inhale its dusty magic, and stretch the pliant ready vessel of your mind with its goodness.

Invite all the vampires to party on your lawn way past moon-time into the tiny hours. Ignore their whooping and continue reading. Spirit-thirsty and soul-hungry they may be but they too are seeking nourishment. Let the neighbours twitch and talk. In the morning, you'll tell them it was the wind.

(Enchant all the locks to keep the bad imps away. They'll get in through the window
if you don't look behind you).

Transform dark feelings immediately. But if you can't and you find yourself
besieged by muddy thoughts, then clean the house vigorously from top to bottom until you've evicted all demons. You'll feel so much better afterwards. Absolved. Forgiven. Surrendered.

And when you finally know what to do, let your heart howl long and true, piercing a hole in the dark. Slowly, collect all the pieces of your long-dead self.

In your new guise, climb out, go forth and never look back.

Ken Anderson

Ken Anderson was a finalist in the recent Saints and Sinners poetry contest. His novel Sea Change: An Example of the Pleasure Principle was a finalist for the 2012 Ferro-Grumley Award and an Independent Publisher Editor's Choice. His novel Someone Bought the House on the Island was a finalist in the Independent Publisher Book Awards. A stage adaptation won the Saints and Sinners Playwriting Contest and premiered May 2, 2008, at the Marigny Theater in New Orleans.

Home

And Brave a Thousand Years

We settle
into the new apartment
as into a big nest, fitting it
with linens, towels, utensils, the twigs and leaves
of domesticity— a double mattress balanced
in the highest branches
where we'll hold on tight
for at least a thousand years.

Dishes

Stacked
in the cabinet, the sandstone dishes are a wedding ring.

Rough texture alternates
with smooth
as years divide the better
from the worse, yet these mottled plates
and bowls —though time will break the hardest metal,
let alone a heart— are, in fact, a bond,
what we first "bought" together, both
in kind.

Roots

I've been pulled up. Time has extracted me
like a tooth
from childhood's jaw. But how can I weather the years
without roots?

I drift, a spore, a nomad
on the steppes
of life.

I need a fertile plot
to strike, a mild stretch
of sun and rain, sheltered
from wind. I could work up such a luxuriance
with a keel.

No home. No heart. No foothold here
where I can weave my airy stems
and wiggle my toes
in loam.

Greta Unetich

Greta Unetich (she/her) has been writing poetry since eighth grade. She published her debut book of poetry, Look Both Ways, in December 2019 and recently published a second book of poetry, Polaris, in May 2021. Unetich is an editor for Buzzsaw Magazine and a regular contributor to Buzzsaw Magazine, Kindergarten Magazine, and Living Zine. Her books are available for purchase at Buffalo Street Books and Odyssey Bookstore in Ithaca, New York and at Monaco's Coffee in Geneva, New York. In addition, her poems have been published in several print and digital magazines across the United States, Canada, and India. Unetich attends Ithaca College for biology and chemistry with hopes to become either a high school biology and chemistry teacher or a diabetes educator in a hospital.

Strawberry Blonde

You have come from this city—
There are colors everywhere you look: the houses, the electrical boxes, the walls of buildings.
It has books and gardens and people walking in the street.
The lake glitters in the sun;
Goldenrod grows in September in the fields outside.
From the top of the hill, I can see the lights of downtown, the lake in its valley.

-

A memory from a very long time ago—
I follow you through a barbed-wire fence into a field that looks like it's never been touched. You hold the wires apart so I can get through.

-

I have forgotten how blue it is here: the lake, the sky, the fountains, the forget-me-nots growing out of the sparse soil along the beds of shale. I stand on the cliffs of shale above our deep, blue swimming hole.

-

My hair is your length now.
When I see my reflection in the glass, I think it is you running towards me;
Strawberry blonde.

-

You are my poem, born in August, why my memory is gold.

-

In your mind,
Are there still rose petals between your teeth?
Are you still standing at my door with them?

-

You have hit one of my veins. My blood is sweet now.

-

I see the yellow terracotta house with the tall, white trellis that I loved but never told you I loved when we walked past it. Every road and hill blends together in my head, becomes the same. I think every road and hill is one that we walked on. I am only certain of a few: a fork in the road, the moon over the city, so close to us and so huge we could have touched it before it disappeared, the field where we danced to the Blue Danube with deer, a few small patches of short plants that will soon grow tall and flower yellow, a bed of pine needles that we watched cars drive by from, a red, yellow, and blue hot air balloon that is launched at the same time every evening, the bed where you told me I was your saving grace, the doorframe through where the last note of your voice left, never to be heard for the years that followed.

-

The familiar sunset haze over the lake starts yellow. The horizon grows more and more pink by the minute. As the hour of the night pushes on, the cold air on the bare backs of my arms starts to feel familiar, too. Does the waterfall still run beneath the stars every black night? How often does the road mist over? Is the first star still someone's porch light?

-

Outside, a single road stretches through long expanses of fields that grow goldenrod in September and grow gold every evening of the summer. Desolate, with only a few barns and long driveways that lead to the lake, their necks swallowed by trees. A second road breaks off the main one, leading to your town.

-

A certain car drives by on the road below, familiar from one of my memories of standing in your driveway in autumn.

-

I could sit on this bus all day and watch the houses go by:
Blue house with a stone foundation surrounded by a black fence, daisies and the bright faces of black-eyed Susans growing in the side yard, the short houses hidden by vines and trees at the intersection of Hudson and Columbia.

-

In the direction of the waterfall, I hear a soft thunder.

-

My new home sits at the start of the road we used to leave from to go to the waterfall, late at night. It has butterfly bushes growing outside the entire length of the building. A basil plant grows on the windowsill in my bedroom, the pot sitting in the upside-down lid of a Mason jar. Across the parking lot, trees grow dense and I can see mist forming in the bowl of the lake. I can smell rain in the air. On the horizon, a sliver of peachy light shows itself from behind the clouds. The rest of it is hidden by the hill on the other side of the lake.

I feel as if I am waiting for you to come to my room.

-

It is true: the sun gilds the patches of plants that have not yet flowered because it is too early in the summer; June has just been born. A child looks into the room where they were first born. A child looks at the sky that has not changed color once in two years. None of this was a dream. Not one second of it, not one place in the string of memories. The green leaves glitter in the golden setting sun, as real and as true as my dream,
You.

The Cottage in November/ A Haiku

At the cottage, we had the same breakfast almost every morning: you had peanut butter and granola on a slice of sourdough bread so big we had to toast it by broiling it in the oven, and I had the same thing, except with bananas and seeds as well. Before we started making our breakfast, we would go into the sunroom as soon as we woke, still in our pajamas, to turn on the heat so that the room would be warm enough to eat in by the time we were done getting ready for the day and making our food. Then, I would shower, and you would change. We would both end up in winter sweaters and baggy jeans almost every day. When I walked back into our bedroom, your bright earrings would be the first color I saw all day. I would watch you smile behind your pink glasses, and then we would go into the tiny kitchen and make breakfast— preheat the oven, put the bread on a cookie sheet, cut up bananas, stir the oil into the jar of peanut butter, get the granola off of the shelf, wash some grapes and apples, make cinnamon and brown sugar coffee. When everything was done, we would put our food on a giant wooden cutting board I found below the sink, for no reason other than making it look nice, and carry that and some plates and mugs to the table in the sunroom.

The sea glass we collected the previous afternoon still scattered on the small glass table shaped like a boat, set out on paper towels to dry. Bits of broken, chipped, smoothed porcelain and red brick mixed in with the blue, pink, green, and white-frosted glass. The room is painted a dark periwinkle, beginning to soften with the first light that can reach through the thick clouds outside. The sky is gray, and waves crash against the docks that dot the shore of the lake. It is November, and the year is growing cold, coming to an end like a blanket being tucked over it. The lake is beginning to freeze over, sitting still, getting ready to go to sleep beneath the gray clouds that cover the Finger Lakes for miles, east and west.

Your smile is the
Hue of the room, the bright glass,
Last light of the year.

Rebecca Rijsdijk

Rebecca Rijsdijk (1984) is a poet and a carer based in Eindhoven, The Netherlands.

Rebecca is the author of several poetry collections. She started writing stories when she was just a little girl as a way to have grand adventures. After graduating from secondary school, she signed up to study written media at the Academy of Journalism.

A brain aneurysm put a premature end to her journalistic aspirations, however, and it wasn't until she completed her degree in design years later, that words started playing a more prominent part in her life again.

Rebecca published *'Portraits of Girls I Never Met'* in 2016, not quite knowing what she was actually doing until her friends pointed it out. They understood the poetic nature of her work and recognized reoccurring themes such as love, loss, trauma and dealing with unresolved childhood issues. *'The Lady from across the Sea'* was published in 2019. Rebecca published her third book *'You were married when I met you'* in 2020 as a way to come to terms with an emotionally abusive relationship. It was followed by her latest work, *'The Care Home,'* published in 2021. She is currently working on her fifth book, 'The Boy from Salamanca.'

Besides writing poetry, Rebecca works in healthcare and runs an indie poetry press called **Sunday Mornings at the River**.

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birds

the sound of birds
in the morning
made me cry
how far
i had wandered
before coming home
again

what once was

mums
with strollers
in the middle
of a field
because
their new build
houses
are competing
with farmers' rights
a man rolling past
on his bike
one hand
in his pocket
a christian school
on the same street
as the atheist one
when i cut the corner
i notice
the old mill
stopped turning

woodpeckers and screaming babies

i hear woodpeckers
build homes
the stove tells me
it needs more wood
birdsong
has replaced
the sirens and the
phone calls
screaming babies
on overcrowded
buses
how can i return
to the cities
of my dreams
if all i hear is nothing
and still i call it home

mother nature

mother hear us
as we march in the rain
shouting for change
your children would like
to come home
our tears create ancient
puddles on your lands
and our nails are dirty
from digging your soil
mother
hear us
hold us
heal us
your children would like
to come home

Interview with Rebecca Rijsdijk

Introduce yourself; when did you begin writing and when and why did you decide you wanted to share your work with others?

My name is Rebecca Rijsdijk, which is Dutch and doesn't mean anything, but would be pronounced as Ricedyke if you tried to break your tongue on it. I am a healthcare worker, publisher and poet based in Eindhoven. As with most people who create from their intuition, I started writing when I was very young. I remember my primary school teachers telling my parents that my maths work and science subjects sucked but that I spent hours perfecting my 'essays' which were, at that point, short stories. I had a very lively fantasy world and would create characters and adventures, as a way to deal with the fact that I grew up in the sticks, where not much adventuring went on outside my head. I didn't share these stories with anyone but my teachers, it wasn't about sharing for me until my late twenties, when a friend pointed out that he liked my 'poems.' Up until then, I hadn't realized that I was writing poetry. I just thought I wrote really really really short stories, and cursed myself for not being able to write longer ones. Sharing became a part of healing and connecting with other people who would have gone through the same kind of experiences and situations growing up as I did. It made me feel less alone.

Your poetry is known for its brevity and for how you respond to the environments you are in, has this always been your style or has your poetic voice undergone several revolutions?

I like that; revolutions. It brings a Frida Kahlo quote to mind: Nothing is absolute. Everything changes, everything moves, everything revolves, everything flies and goes away.

I think my voice is still evolving and probably always will be. Like I said before, I didn't even know I was writing poetry. To me, I was simply writing down photographs I didn't take during my photography studies. I was shy, and I saw so many beautiful people walking down the street that I didn't dare to take a picture of, so I started writing stories about them instead. This was always in plain English. I tried writing in my native tongue, but that never sounded right to me. Intuitively, I have always just used plain language to express complicated feelings. I never liked overdressed words; not in speaking, and not in writing. I think a complicated vocabulary simply tries to hide the fact that you have nothing of substance to say. Plus, it excludes people who don't have the funds to go to some fancy college to study literature. I think I have always responded to my environment because I felt a stranger to it. I used to get angry a lot about social injustice, sexism, racism, all the shit that brings out the worst in our species. I used that anger to write poems, so that it didn't make me bitter.

You are an editor yourself, do you find this impacts how you reflect upon your own work and would you say editing the work of others has made you a better creator?

I am sure it has an impact on my own work because I learn by reading others. I haven't had any formal training in writing, and I am scared to get it, because studying photography in art school killed off my spark, so I learn from reading the works of others. I am so in awe with the work that is submitted to my poetry anthologies. I don't analyse the works, but I feel the words. I learn from other poets' use of language or their tone of voice, also sometimes from the subjects they write about.

Issue III focuses on the themes of belonging and home, what have these meant for you over the years?

I never felt like I belonged anywhere. I never really had a home. My father still lives in my childhood home, but it was never really a home to me. It was just the place I grew up in. My parents both had inner child wounds which they never addressed or weren't aware of, so I spent my childhood creating homes for me and my sisters in the woods behind our house. Once we built an entire little village where all three of us had a stick house; we built little walking paths and a 'well.' I loved being in the woods, they were like home to me. I felt comfortable in nature, the quiet was soothing and the fact that we could just play there without being disturbed was beautiful. I also had sort of a home with the neighbours across the street. We helped them to take care of their horses and called them our 'spare parents.' They had no problems showing how much they appreciated and loved me and my sisters, and we kind of grew up on their farm. I moved a lot after I left my childhood home. Always looking for somewhere to put down roots but never quite feeling ready.

I also believe you recently moved home! During this process, were you able to reflect on what makes a 'home' and, if comfortable, could you share what you discovered?

Yes, actually. When I came aware of my own inner child wounds after a relationship with a married man went nowhere (surprise, surprise), I started working on healing myself with a therapist. I have had some awful experiences with therapists in the past, but I guess this time I was ready, and I found the right one for me. My therapist was like a mum to me. Something I didn't realize I needed. After therapy, I was able to get attracted to an emotionally healthy man.

We took it easy for a year and then decided to build a home together. We just moved to a flat in the creative area of Eindhoven in my home country, and I am finally able to nest. I think home is not so much an external thing, but more of an internal thing. I have found peace and feel like I am able to build a home with this man anywhere because I found a home within myself.

Many would say you have created a literary/creative home for creators through running Sunday Mornings at the River, an indie publishing press; what inspired you to build a platform and press like this?

I guess I needed a place to belong. I have always been creative, but never felt like I belonged to the creative world. During my time in art school and a little while after when I tried making a living in the creative world, I bumped into quite a lot of inflated egos. I had never realized you needed to be a dick to be an artist. So I moved away from the art world quite quickly and found my calling in health care. I have always been creative though, and I did want to be in a community of creatives, and I figured if I didn't belong in the traditional art world, there were probably people out there that also couldn't find a home. So I started Sunday Mornings as a way to connect with those people and give them a place to belong to.

What is the most rewarding part of running Sunday Mornings at the River?

If I gave the Miss Universe answer, it would be; the people I meet. And this is obviously true, but a large part of it is also that I get to do what I love and that I don't have to worry about people who tell me I can't do this or that, because I run Sunday Mornings for the fun of it.

I earn a payslip in health care every month, so I create what I want without feeling pressured to make certain commercially beneficial decisions. Also, the fact that I don't have to work with inflated egos is a big bonus.

Finally, what is your vision for the future in regards to your own work and projects with Sunday Mornings at the River?

I will do it until I lose the passion for it. I think my own work will take a turn because I no longer feel the need to write about my own trauma. I think my pieces will probably become more political and focus on things that I get frustrated about in society. I am still planning one more book with love poems for my partner Carlos. But it is harder for me to write about happy things than it is to write about sad things. So that book will probably take a while to come out. I do have a cover for it already though, one can never be too prepared haha. I think with regard to Sunday Mornings I will steer away from publishing artist's books and will focus on the quarterly anthologies and some themed anthologies in order to give more room to new voices. I will probably host one chapbook competition a year though, where I volunteer in creating the book for the selected author.

Karen E. Fraser

Karen E Fraser is a Melbourne-based, published writer and poet. With degrees in Professional and Creative Writing, and Anthropology, she marries a love of quiet observation and collecting with necessary storytelling. Karen has held various roles as writer and editor (including Verandah 25 Literary Journal). Her work embraces the natural world, social justice, and connection illuminated through the lenses of liberation, equality, dignity and belonging. www.instagram.com/be_nourished

When I ask, want to read my poetry, I mean

after @poetry.by.e

when I ask, *want to read my poetry*, I mean...

the stars aligned for a millisecond right here on the page and I want to know if you can feel it / I have seen the beginning of life and the end of the universe through a single dew drop on a tiny orchid / I mean, I caught a rare creature in the net of my body and maybe together we can set her free / I want to share life with you / make a home / this poetry is a doorway to my soul / I mean, something nearly magical is always better than complacency or neglect / the sun rose and lit me inside-out / wonder's child is still alive within our bones / I think I might have found the way home / I mean, please still look at me with love no matter what I have said / words are like packing for a long holiday and I've suddenly got everything we need in one pocket / I mean, I want to connect with you so we can belong to each other / I wrote this for you and this is how I love / miracles do happen but this moment might be just as delightful

The opposite of abandonment

She has become a church
of unrestrained sovereignty
enfolded in a thick spiral of
deep turquoise plumage.
A cerise heart home
for the alien awkwardness
of skin and bone
now at rest in the nest of
belonging to no other.
Glory lights the incense of her,
every buried dream a slow burn
in the thurible of each day
swinging sunrise to sunset,
the final fragrance of
of being whole and complete
issuing from every pore,
having been permeated by
the One who never leaves.

Soph Murray

Soph Murray is a mum, poet, teacher 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.

Where to make a home

Make a home that houses spiders in corners of every room so she can pull those webs from her heart and keep her children safe from harm. Make a home in the whispers in the night, telling long lost tales of those who placed this haven in their heart and always kept it with them. Make a home that can never belong to anybody else and can't be found once forgotten. Make a home in the wildflowers you never planted but chose this place to sing to Melissa. Make a home in the odd chairs around a secondhand table so little ones can sit tall for dinner. Make a home in breakfast in bed that he brings in on the children's craft tray with wide eyes and tired smiles. Make a home in the music in the walls that will sing through time. Make a home in piles of books that sit unread for so long, mice chewed away the covers and you can only guess the author. Make a home in open fires that warm your bones and smoke your skin so woodsmoke follows you like an afternoon shadow. Make a home wrapped in blankets with his head on the pillow beside you on late Sunday mornings. Make a home in the black coffee he brings to tempt you into the outside world. Make a home in deep water to wash away last night's sins. Make a home in the wild where the winds can only be seen. Make a home in yourself and carry it on your sleeve, ready always to crawl into when the weather turns.

Lorraine Lewis

Lorraine Lewis has written poetry for as long as she can remember. She swears she was born with a pen in her hand. Lorraine is a graduate of Oxford University and holds a Masters degree from the University of Leeds. Since she was diagnosed with a rare blood cancer in 2013, leading to her going blind and being wheelchair bound, she has written poetry that now has an added depth. She has been published in three Anthologies by Fae Corps Publishing Inc. and also in The Short of It, The Sound of Brilliance. She also had her story published in Audacity Magazine. She is also to be published in another Anthology by Fae Corps Publishing Inc. in the autumn 2021. Lorraine is to be found on her WordPress blog at blindwilderness.wordpress.com.

Remember Me

I will die at the ripening of the corn,
With the poppies playing all around,
Every dog will have its day
And every man his meal,
As the sun goes down today
Remember me
I want to go while the light is bright
While the flowers dance
And the birds still play,
Before the winter's snows do come,
And cold doth wrap my body round,
I once was young and I did play
In golden cornfields all the day
And now, the dark doth fold around
My aching restless body
The bell doth toll while curlews call
And birds their homes do find
And now I too must find my home
With Love
Who calls me to my rest
I will die at the ripening of the corn,
With the poppies playing all around,
Every dog will have its day
And every man his meal,
As the sun goes down today