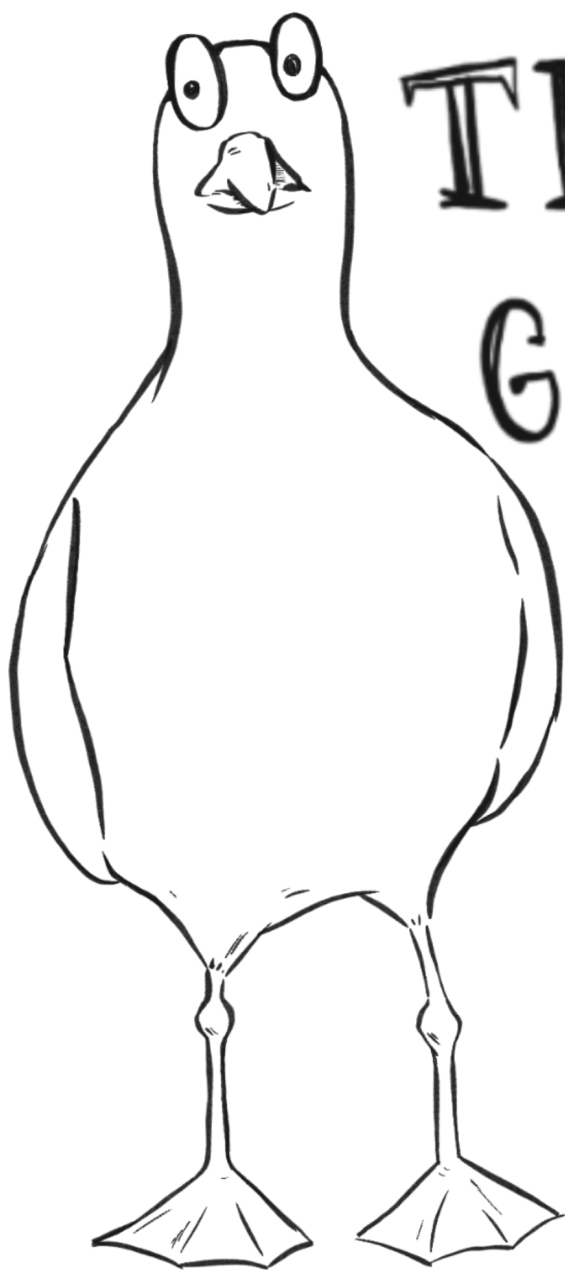




THE

GENTLY

MAD

LITERARY MAGAZINE

Issue 2



The Gently Mad Muse
(who was late for work)

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A Girl and Words

*and she loved to read
for words helped her feel everything this world couldn't.
~ Salina D'Agostino*

*"I am my own muse, the subject I know best."
~ Frida Kahlo*

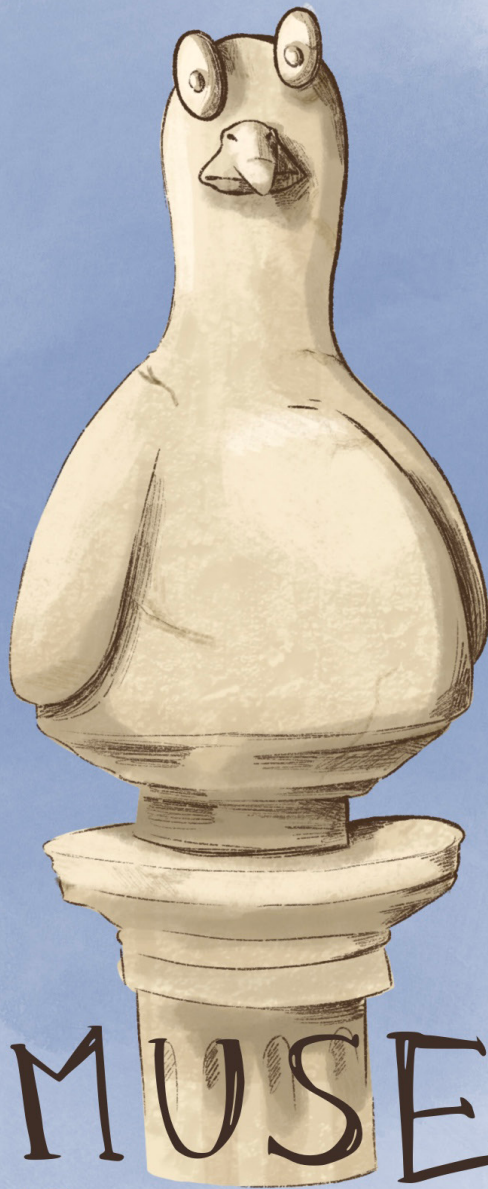
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THE GENTLY MAD



MUSE

Who was late for work

On Missing Muses and Mad Musings

Serafina Piasentin

I called upon the Muses to help me write this introduction, but I received no answer. Before you lies the unordained ramblings of a poet whose inspiration is self-constructed.

Us Creatives are guilty of waiting for a calling. This elusive ringing from above, often echoing in our ears and driving us gently mad, is attributed to the Divine shouting at us to CREATE. And once this celestial call arrives, we're afraid of what will happen if we ignore it. Will the Heavens split open? Will the Muses stab us with pens until we bleed ink and art forms, anyway? Or perhaps nothing so violent—the Divine calling will go straight to Voicemail and the Muses will dial someone else, someone with a more memorable phone number.

We (the Creatives who answer the call) like to think this path was appointed to us—that we were given the laurel wreath to wear upon our heads like a crown—but let's not get ahead of ourselves. Perhaps the Gently Mad Muse did visit you in a dream and order you to submit to this magazine. Perhaps she rained ink over your bed until you were swimming in words and had no choice but to write them down. Perhaps you truly do have a gift. But what happens if the Muse doesn't show up to do her job? What happens if she forgets to turn on her alarm and is running so late that the light of the furthest star in the galaxy would sooner reach you? What happens if the Muse forgets to bring you her gift? Dreams would become deserts of golden sand—ideas trickling through an hourglass, slipping away in time. Ink would become water, drowning each poem. You would wait by the phone for a Heavenly call that just never arrives. What then?

Milton explores it best in *Paradise Lost*. After falling from perfection, humankind had no choice but to create a Paradise for themselves. An individual Heaven—a literary haven where you can write whether or not you receive a call. Many Creatives boast that they've been given a Divine gift and that is why they write, but whoever said you couldn't give yourself a gift, too? Locate Heaven

within. Become your own Muse. When you lack inspiration, practice discipline. Write anyway, even if you have nothing to say. And if you can show up to work as both the Muse and the Artist, imagine what else you could create.

We selected the following poems, tales, and artworks because they are worthy of a Divine calling (whether they received it or not). Each author has shown us that even if their Gently Mad Muse doesn't show up, their project won't fall apart like Eden did. When they were forbidden from eating the apple, these artists did not starve. No, these talented individuals continued to hone their craft by stepping in for their Muse. As you flip through these pages, you will read a love letter to creation. From defining poetry to finding Heaven, prepare to be inspired. There are stories of celestial cadence, the strength of absence, the struggles of a human life, and the art we create to make our cosmic dance worthwhile. Travel into the crowned head of the poet and take the stained hands of the artist—only then will you become your own Muse.

To avoid hypocrisy, I attempted to write while uninspired. I wrote the ending to a poem, but I wasn't inspired to write the beginning. A few months later, I stumbled across these four lines again and began to form a poem around them. The ending morphed into the beginning, and the Author morphed into the Muse. I wasn't inspired, yet I wrote because I enjoy the process of poetry. Maybe that is what art is all about.

Pocket this Poem, then Read

Serafina Piasentin

How to start a poem with no engine &
only an ending:

So, I hide away in my pocket of
silence & wait for someone to
pick me
out.

Out of where? The Muse
um ear? The Mus
eum corners? Corn on a
cobblestone creates more
cobblestones—yellow.

Regardless of gender,
search the soul. There's an invisible
pocket where many hide,
waiting like a blackberry
to be plucked. Waiting like a fret,

fretting like a wait. Wait!
Where did the beginning of this poem
lose its meaning?
I blame the Muse—her head's in the dirt
with the blackberries fallen
from the Delightful Garden—
she contemplates Genesis &
reenacts the happy fall. Now,
her head is in the soil,
a seed that refuses to grow
a poem. Why?
The longer this goes on,
the deeper I slip
into the cobblestoned corner of my soul,
the museum in my mind,
a waiter
serving blackberries on a silver platter—
will you eat this poem
without a beginning? Will you eat
my ramblings
even if they're forbidden?
Will you eat my soul?
Carve it up like ribs &
call me woman?

Ripening Muse,
removed from the soil
removed from the story
& planted & plotted
in my pocket
where I wait
on readers
to pick me out.

An Opening Remark

Lindsey White

One intricate and delicate sentence—
words dwelled upon, chosen,
lifted carefully, and
inked on old, beige, bumpy paper.
I suddenly feel I am no longer
and have never been
alone.

For there is someone out there,
sitting behind a desk in their dark apartment,
penning those words that describe the feeling
in my chest—capture my existence;
a sudden connection linked across the space between us.

Some person, in a distant country,
who doesn't know me at all,
can bottle up my being and pour it out in
writing. Maybe I know them,
know their mind because I know my own.

Maybe they have always felt alone,
but one sentence I write will reach for
their hand and impart some wisdom
we both have always known.

a lonesome star

Daniella Papia

If the stars could align just for me—
a vivid and wild joy—
I'd capture it in the realms of my mind
unlike any other.

But I can never find my constellation,
no consolation for this lonely feeling.
When I look up and only see a black abyss
while others see the milky way.

Celestial transcendence of my heart
is all my soul yearns for.
Some have their stories scribed into the night sky,
perpetually intertwined with each other,

but my story ends here.
Forevermore terrestrial and crest-fallen,
never bound to the heavenly bodies,
never accompanied by another.

Evangeline

Sarah Murphy

Look how she lights up the sky—
my love, Evangeline—
twinkling in the inky black,
written through history.

A temptress, a goddess, a muse,
a golden candle in the dark—
I knew her once, before the sky,
she burnt out to make her mark.

Look how she glistens and gleams—
my love, Evangeline—
shining, shimmering, glimmering tears,
I'll miss you in every dream.
My art, my poetry, my love
will never again be the same—
longing for the day I see you again,
my light, my star, my flame.

griefscape

Vanessa Shields

my grief is the shape of her smile
her smile gives my grief a scape
she escapes my grief with a smile

my grief is an open mouth
she wounds open like grief
grief mouths our wounds open

my grief is a sacred language
her shape is the scape of wounds
silence sacreds our smiles

Drift

Peter Billing

sometimes I phone my voicemail to see if I'm alive
while Monet dabs impressionistic droplets of icy rain on my window to remind

I will forget you
and you will I
but we won't mean to
at all

these confetti thoughts fall
as snow on long lost winter
nights
as I write
tearing into pieces our wonder
as if we never touched at all
as if we never paused longingly to
admire our soft youth

I will forget you
and you will I
yet the same moon we shared
is destined to tell our story
as we drift
as we d r if t
one forgotten eve

Perfect Strangers

Grace Calabria

There is so much bottled now;
I have grown, and it has fermented,
and you have left and come back,
but not to me.

If I don't expel it, it will eat me
from the inside, so that
by the time I meet the right one,
I am hollow.

I've been thinking
about what arrives in absence.
When I'm not there
to fill the void, someone else does.

Someone else
does a better job.
The sound of the wind through the trees,
and the same sun setting again.

Now the birds outside live in my home,
the one I'm abandoning, but they don't
say anything
I don't already know.

I could fill my journal with pink penmanship, and still,
I won't have said what I mean, and
still, you'd never know,
and still, I'd never tell you.

cloudy eyes

Bethany Zondag

have you seen my friend?
i can't find her—
she has hair and two eyes
and a mouth and a nose
what colour were her eyes?
she was here a moment ago—
you look somewhat like her
two big wide eyes
though not quite a mouth
no she didn't have a mouth—
can you help me find her?
i don't know where to look
or how to look
but you have such eyes
surely you could see
—who am i looking for?



‘you caught my eye’
by Harleen

Honeymoon Phase

Jordan Cobb

Shades of white, and the ceremony was over. I left my heels in the ballroom. Stepped outside, still in the strawberry dress with the plunging neck, into the thin summer air of the high desert at the base of the Rockies. Colorado, the only state I've seen the Milky Way spill through.

The grass licked my heels & soles as I crossed the lawn under the stars. Tilted up my eyes & pictured, for the rest of time, a forever I could stay inside. For a moment, forgot I was afraid of space & the endless expansion of something called nothing.

That's how you found me, in the dark, when you had finished dancing.

Grace vs. Goose

Grace Calabria

What do you know about being lost?
I sit and silently observe them
the way I'm sure most things are meant to be.
duality. Dark dog chases
of the water, and today,
the goose might've been able to take me.
brave.
for that goose

Fine, okay, I won't fight
I would have killed the goose, if
What is it about me
I'm trying
when I think he's gone,
sizing me up in my peripheral,
Goose is going to come
You see it,
are here to spite me,
the wrong things again. So what
is

I grew up counting
I did wrong, keeping track.
the penance. Say

I come back to the garden
here. I am a thing grown
and wondering: what good does it all do?
I'll find the next being

I want to start by saying
and to clarify: I have nothing
that's also to say
the goose doesn't have anything

I heard the trees aren't, so
from a short distance,
Everything in me is
Goose along the edge
I think, in a fight,
Lately, I haven't been feeling
Though I'd worry
if he crossed me on the wrong day.

any geese. I'm not saying
that's what you're thinking.
that looks angry?
to put it to rest, but just
I spot him
and I imagine the second I stand up,
soil my spot.
right? The geese
spying on me writing
I was going to tell you
I still haven't said it.

everything
Confess and pay
you're sorry.

because I belong
in this holy ground. Wandering
If the geese pay me no mind,
to project my malice onto.

I'm not always proud of myself,
against geese as a species, but
we can't be sure
against me.

Pigeon Silence

Denis Robillard

Like the pigeon Cher Ami who was sent by the allies
to deliver messages across the lines in WWI,
my words fall away from me like so many wounded
birds from flight.

My firm craw holding the last cold crumbs of a meagre
code of syllables, having traversed NO MAN'S LAND
and bombed out scenes of chaos only to be dropped
before they reached you.

Silent words, like all the words silenced by
Vesuvius.

All the words crushed to dust in the Villa Suburbana.

All my blue-grey fluttered words
fallen

into complete pigeon silence in war's apogee.

silencio

Patricia Melendez

don't speak spanish.
don't speak up.
don't draw attention.
don't ask questions.
just don't.

silencio.

focus on school.
focus on class.
focus on work.
just focus.

¿pero cómo?

four years.
no spanish.
only english.
no presence.
only shadows.
no tears.
only silence.

¿quién soy?

The Secrets in Words

Salina D'Agostino

Two-hundred pages in, I flip,
one-hundred pages more, my eyes explore,
down and down,
left to right,
page after page,
I flip I flip,
only one-hundred left, knocking at my door,
when will I know?
The questions, possibilities, predictions—
how many pages more?
The answers lie within,
smiling
winking
I beg for more,
and when I've neared the last,
ready to piece together words past,
I close the book—
the pages giggle, the author snickers,
the words fall from the pages,
bleed into my fingers and travel through my skin, listening to me beg the pages to
let me in, then, the end, too soon—
words win.

Peanuts at Rock Bottom

Jacob Piche

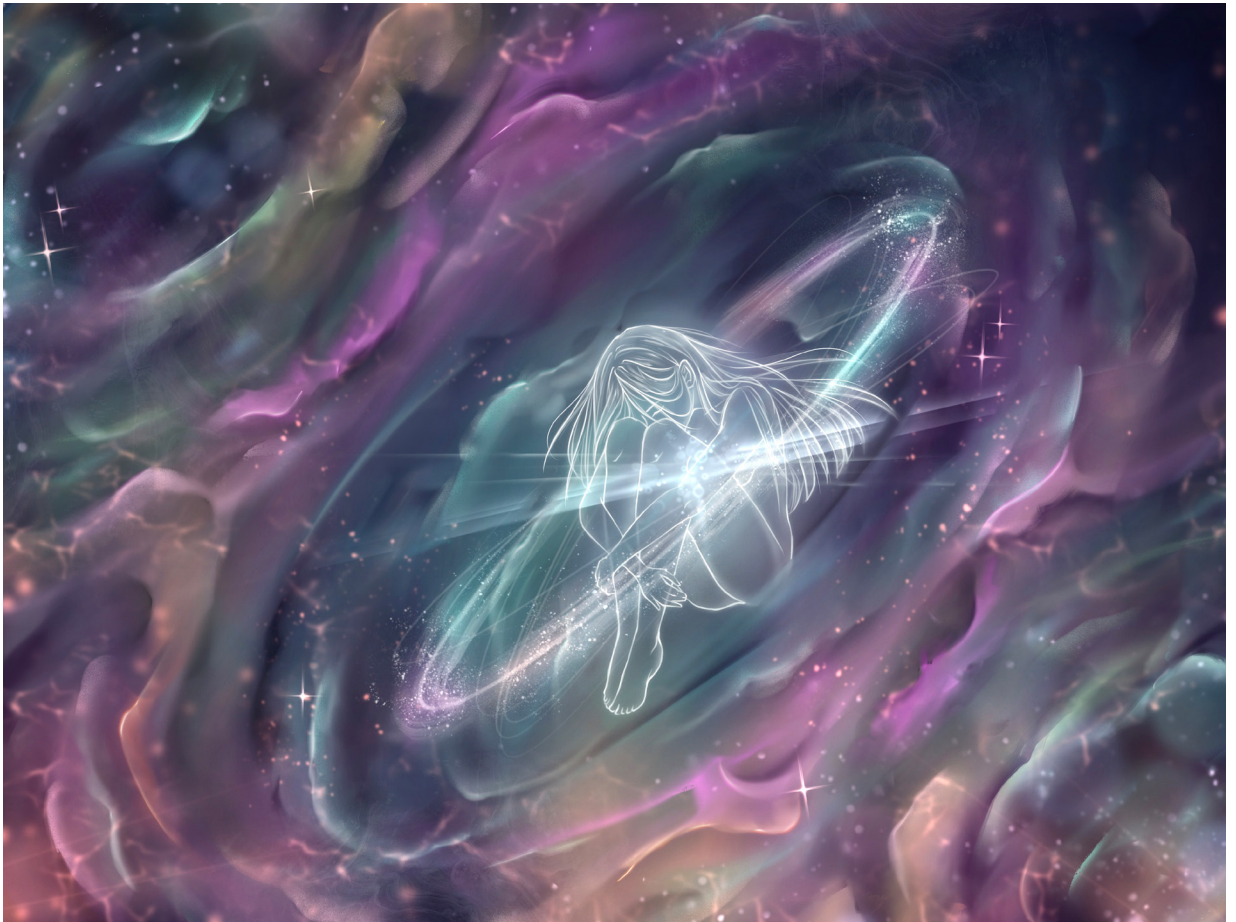
What news from the bar my breakthrough?
I dreamt of your leaning on the post
telling stories about working remote and asking about John—
you'll like my sweatshirt and touch my arm.

What news from the garden old codger?
Old bones and blue eyes white dragons,
what genre is it tonight? What'll it be next month?

Give me the good news diaspora poet,
give me a big hug and a hot coffee.
Give me perspective on life and bring me closer to God, or just tell a story.

Here I am again cracking peanuts,
watching weirdo Chewitt coomers saunter in and out of restrooms,
waving to Joe and his dog Joe.

Daydreaming to the tune of this old man
assuring me about this and that.
I wanted to ask him if he could remember
the clouds moving or our handful of stars,
or if he's felt moss for a second,
if he's tasted life and licked the plate clean.



Ophelia Piasentin
Digital Illustration

Liturgy

Holly Castleton

Four small strawberries
on a blue plate:

one prayed in praise of
the square white teeth
bloodied
and breaking
tearing
and taking,

one prayed to the
warm breath of mold
growing
softly,

one prayed to the petals haloing
yolk-yellow pistils,

one prayed to the seeds
exposed on red flesh,
tiny pregnant seeds you couldn't
taste but were

white
white
white.

A String of Pearls

Zeeshan Fatima Rizvi

I was gifted a string of pearls
glittering, glimmering,
shiny and hard,
tethered to ashell
pinching, piercing,
globular and dark.

They nestle inside the warm cocoon
cleaving, clawing
their sinuous shards,
empty vessels then bleed out hollow
throbbing, thrusting,
crimson and scarred.

I stifle down—the pulsing waves
searing, stinging
leaving me marred.
They carry on the tug of war
pushing, pulling,
wrenching me apart.

Note: This poem is about my PCOS (polycystic ovarian syndrome), which has been a mystery for me for the past many years. I have tried managing it through different medicines and treatment plans, but it has always been an elusive, unexplainable phenomenon, not just for me but for countless girls/women.

Through my poem, I wanted to express the feelings of pain mingled with a sense of alienation from my own body caused by the many symptoms of this disorder. The title of the poem ‘a string of pearls’ is in fact a medical terminology for this disorder, representing the pearl-like placement of multiple immature follicles in the ovaries. The stanzas of the poem are also positioned in a similar manner.

Cutlery Windchime

Vanessa Shields

someone has spidered a fork
each prong lifted in a cardinal direction
plate potato steak smile
never eat sour watermelon

time is a tarnished soup spoon
bent and brassy
words arrive confused
in lonely single letters looking for liquid

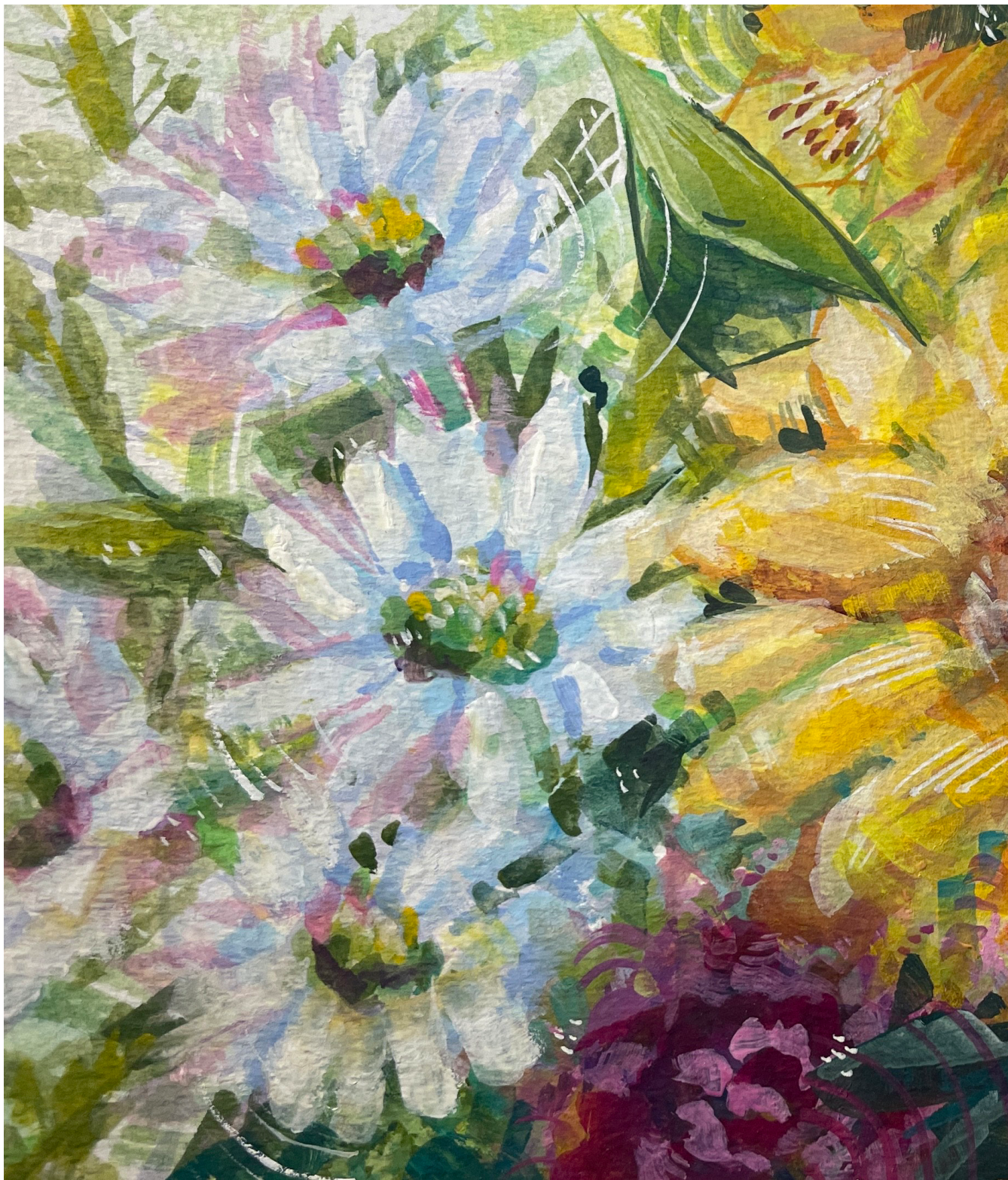
fingers yearn for summer
for sticky for sweat for secrets
traced down the map of a neck

what are seasons but chances to taste time differently?

there's a part of me who wants to go back
to remember the rubix of time in my body before
when my sister was threadbare
when my mother was brazen and violent

someone has spidered a fork and it's moving toward me
coaxing a curiosity flicking my earlobe – piercing
I'm willing to eat the wound it wants to plate

the spidered fork clangs against the window



Ophelia Piasentin
Gouache and Watercolor



Will it Outlive All of Us?

Lindsey White

I lift the dark-painted handle of my mug to my mouth, while I listen to my uncle tell me what his doctor said today. He's come to visit me at my brand-new apartment in the city. Well, he's really come to visit his doctor—I am just a stop on the way. A thirty percent chance of living, he says. He sort-of smiles at me through his white mustache, but it looks more like a grimace.

I recognize that mug. I delicately hold it between my hands to warm them up. I'm careful not to cut my tongue on its chipped rim. The hand-painted pattern reminds me of an old fireside story my grandfather would tell about the Cherokee in the Tennessee mountains.

That mug is older than you.

The day I took it, we were cleaning out my grandparent's house after they both moved to a nursing home that was like an empty waiting room. I walked up the drive next to the green barn where my grandpa and I cracked walnuts with a hammer. I thought about the walking stick he carved my name into. I walked past the white bench swing where we once sat, plopping mint leaves in our mouths. I stood in their empty kitchen. The table where we used to eat homemade chicken and dumplings was replaced with boxes on the floor. I frantically searched the cupboards for one thing that reminded me of my grandpa before I left for the last time.

That mug is older than you. I imagine my mother at fifteen rushing past it to catch the bus. I imagine my grandpa drinking black coffee from it on a cold morning as he reads the newspaper and yells at his sons to hurry up. I imagine it existing in the hands of the grandma I never met, a mother who died too young. I imagine my uncle holding it before it got that chip at its rim. As we sit across from each other, I wonder if he's recalling it too—a time when he was younger with all the dreams his future could hold.

He looks away and proceeds to tell me what his new oncologist plans to do about the cancer.

I take a sip.

Mazinaw Rock

Sarah Murphy

Did hands reach down
with soft, supple fingers
to sculpt the mountains
& the rock faces?
Fingerprints dragging in the sands,
shaping and reshaping
sandcastles of our paradise,
of our worldly garden,
gently caressing,
often maddening—
a grain tumbling
brings it all down,
never to reach its peak.

Did fists slam down
with fury and recklessness?
Knuckles imprinting,
forming depressions—
lakes, oceans,
making space for water to rush,
gushing,
blushing to fill them in
with royal shades that glitter under sunlight,
rays that don't reach the murky bottom,
where fingerprints wait an eternity
to be lifted.

Limerence or Love?

Kate Elizabeth

Death is a common muse of the poetically predisposed—
A poet's soul has a penchant for melancholy,
well, at least mine does.
Wikipedia tells me:
“Limerence ... involves intrusive and melancholic thoughts”
often confused with love;
to be in limerence feels not dissimilar from love
apparently
but how would one know the difference
if there is not so much a difference—
Can you be in love and limerence
simultaneously, or does the presence of one
mean the absence of the other?
Is to be a poet
an automatic confirmation
of being in love,
or in limerence?
A poet, by default, is dramatic;
feelings felt fully and deeply.
Laid out on a page (or screen),
intended for a reader
whether singular or collective,
to admire one's ability to
weave words together
in hopes a tapestry might occur.
But does the poetic tendency for dramatics
therefore
mean a sincerity of feelings—of love
rather than limerence?

(To Be Determined)

Love.

Caitlyn Pinto

I used to fixate on the idea of love a lot. It always seemed to creep up on me at the oddest of times—after three glasses of wine during a night out, on those early Sunday mornings when I can hear the birds chirping through the window, and even during the walks around the neighbourhood I take to ‘clear my mind.’

Eventually, time went on, the boys came and went, and I was still left with this feeling that I wasn’t capable of love. That was until I stumbled upon a Twitter thread that quoted a Dolly Alderton book. It said, “everything I know about love, I’ve learnt through my long-term friendships with women.” I was completely taken aback. I sat up in my bed and reread the quote ten more times. I kept repeating to myself everything I know about love, I’ve learnt through my long-term friendships with women. It consumed my thoughts. Somehow, these fourteen words completely changed my entire perspective of love. My whole life, all I’ve ever known was love, but I was so caught up in the romantic kind that I couldn’t appreciate its most beautiful form: platonic love.

Love was never about his compliments on how my body looked in a dress. Love wasn’t about hoping he’d remember my sister’s name, either. And love definitely wasn’t about excusing him for his bad behaviour because “at least he’s trying.”

Love was my hometown friends freeing up their schedules for me every time I visited because they knew those four hours would make up for the four months I hadn’t seen them. Love was my parents inviting my friend from high school to all of our family gatherings because they refer to her as their “third daughter.” Love was when my friend from university gifted me a painting of poppies in a field for my birthday because she knew how much my grandfather, whom I called Poppy, meant to me. Love was hearing the laughter of all five of my roommates in the kitchen and dragging myself out of bed to join the conversation, even on my worst days, because isolating myself from them felt worse than wallowing in whatever self-deprecating thought overwhelmed me that day.

I was so infatuated with the idea of love that I forgot I was already in the midst of its abundance. My friendships with women have taught me everything I know about love. The compassion, depth, empathy, patience... it all came from them. There was never any pressure to say the right words or do certain things—I could just be. It was so pure and so fulfilling. They always say, “You accept the love you think you deserve,” and while I never knew I deserved this type of love, I found a deeper love than I ever expected—one that never had to be earned, only embraced.



Ophelia Piasentin
Graphite

Once More

Peter Billing

I want to fold under the nape of your neck and forget yesterdays
remember what it's like to be loved once more
or how a single man can write love poems from particles of time
O how I adored your sweet scent and half smile
now at a distant glance

you see, in your cathedral of life I am nearest to your rhythms
attuned to your higher power
wanting nothing more than to breathe again
in the language of you
tracing the braille of your skin
guiding
teaching me to love again

yet these words you follow are by an aging love poet like I
a lover not yet quieted by time that sands down the edges of unfinished love
though singularly in love with love
once more

THE LEGEND OF THE THREE SILVERSPOTS

Terry Brennan

We hover in the gentle breeze, flutter amid the sweet-smelling passion vines, and flourish in the kind summer

I'd been in the park, miserable, down on my luck, uncertain of the way ahead, when I noticed it. Out of the way, carved on the back of a bench, it was circular, five inches in diameter and deftly worked. Someone had taken a lot of care to execute the design, and it was so skilfully rendered I could think of it only as art. And for some reason as a portent. It took a while to work out, but eventually I could see the butterfly motif. Instinct told me it was the symbol of a lost soul. Who? Where? When? The premonition didn't carry that level of detail.

Five years later, and in a better place, the original butterfly a distant memory, I came across a second symbol. It was there etched on a tree in one of the lanes behind the Plaza. Again a butterfly but with wings spread wider.

And then, just a few months ago, I'd chanced on a third, this time located on a friend's roof garden. I'd been at their house party, ventured out for a sweet cigarette, and came across it—wings fully spread—adorning a wooden toolbox. Conchita, who'd sneaked out with me, said she'd seen similar designs—MesoAmerican, she reckoned.

Conchita and I bonded over the lovely butterfly, and it was on our fifth date that she turned up and told me about the legend of the three Silverspots. In the time of the Aztecs, three sisters had promised never to marry until each had found a husband. The young women were spirited, clever, and beautiful and there was no shortage of suitors, but candidates never appeared that suited all three at the same time. While they were still young, bandits attacked their village. The women were feared dead, no trace ever found. Later at village celebrations and fiestas, three striking butterflies appeared and fluttered in balletic unison. There was awe at the sight of these beauties, broad in wingspan and with a delightful golden colouring flared with black veins and tips. More difficult to view were the bright silverspots on the underside. It was claimed that catching a glance of them would lead to true love within the year. Conchita said our rooftop butterfly depicted the silverspots. We knew we couldn't go against legend, took long slow trains, were enthralled by the views. And yesterday we exchanged vows in the Guadalupe Valley in the village of the three sisters and promised each other fifty kind summers.



Butterfly's Conceded Lament
Daniella Papia

Living Mausoleums

Lucia Cascioli

Clickity-clackity heels heading • high • in a hydraulic hoist • joining and splitting • its slit • stopping and spitting shoes • onto padded floors and padded rooms • with swiveling seats and techno typewriters • tippity-tappity tippity tappity • stamping script on screens • of fluorescent white • wiped clean with swipes • while silent ticking and tocking • of electronic clocks • clocking hours in towers • spilling swarms of worn out • wired and tired • têtes and tootsies • trudging to trains and wheels • beepity boppity • automobiles peeling • for feeling • far from compartments • stifling squares of seclusion • illusions of grandeur • enduring evidence of archaic archetypes • to condos crawling • with dreams dying • in beds • whamming bamming • thanking the madame • minutes of melodic melding • melting • moving to deluding • till death do you parting • booing and hooing • ptoeing apparitions • of a life unlived • unloved • rubbed out • stuffed in • a coffin

//Verses//

From 'The Book of Sonnets'

Leilani Taneus-Miller

Another night, temperate. Rocking in the belly
of the ship. Wasting youth away. Some may claim
me, a sight of beauty, well-combed and minded.
I see they see, and I see they don't. Rumbles
of discontent, gnawing, awaiting rupture.
Hording my desires in a crawlspace.
I've heard it tell, live this moment
and I live it down, knowing up
would take me too far, too deep over crouching oceans,
to lie contained, fathomed in the latch of his arm.
A promise would keep me there, and a child's scream
would tear me away. A free spirit, not a joke indeed, I
would finally be traipsing into the verses, those unproposed
gathered places, between our minds.

Head Space

Keegan Oke

Sometimes my head feels like a prison.
Not quite Guantanamo or Alcatraz
& more like the empty cardboard box
you used to play
Cops and Robbers with your cousins.
The idea of a prison is enough
to keep you there.
It's part of the game.
But what happens when you get tired,
or have to pee?
You can't just leave;
You would ruin the fun.
But it's just cardboard,
not an actual prison.
Right?

Spite

Hannah Montello

You live in the ley lines of my mind—
every moment of acrimony,
your name becomes my accusation.
Anger forever ripened in my heart,
fresh flesh never condemning to a scar,
you left me as monstrous as you are.

In the Thesaurus, “Free” and “Natural” Are Synonyms

Grace Calabria

The armpits don't want to:
that's what I argue, when you ask
why I stopped shaving.
It's been two, maybe
three, months without
this fake obligation, this
irritation, and I don't see what it even has to do with me.

Trapped within this skin until or unless
it dreams; and even then, the limitation
of it all is like fighting, seatbelted,
against the airplane chair that refuses to recline
on a nine hour overnight flight. I'm kicking
like a toddler, like a tantrum
I could throw on any given Tuesday.

There are only so many ways to feel
free, living in a body, always so perceived.

I separate consciousness
from this skin to cope—
an egg yolk's yellow
from the white, as if for some
dessert recipe I've already mismeasured
not even halfway through, though
I keep pursuing
a perfect end product; done
in the oven after I've set the kitchen ablaze
and walked away.

You don't think to say these things, unless
or until they're real. Not because you don't dream,
but, in fact, because the dream of the daytime—
reality's heartbeat— is lost on you, or in you.

break my spine

Laura Muetzelfeldt

leave me
pages open
face down
on the bed
ready to be
picked up
at any moment
feasted on
& pored over
my pages
fingered
words under
-lined chapters
finished
then a tired
peak at what's
to come

i want to get
inside you
and take root
like weeds
on wasteland
i want to
rot away
there
like something
you loved
a smell
that clings
to inky fingers
like old
paperbacks dusty
& well-read

you left me
& now my
pages curl
even when
closed
i still bend
to the shape
of what i was
before



Ophelia Piasentin
Digital Illustration

Between the Pages of Literary Fervor

Caprice Strgar

I've spent the night
bent over fading pages.
Poring over stories
spanning through the ages.
The rest of the world awakens
and I've just stripped sheer meaning naked.
Completely taken
by the immensity;
a haven
born of interpretations.
Awe
untempered wonder:
a revel of ambiguity,
a picturesque meaning in cognitive clarity—
I deny reality
—sometimes—
and live blissfully inside
the workings of another mind.

Stay

Sofia Ellenor

Don't let yourself float away to the moon,
or you'll miss the flowers under your feet that
bloom—
the quiet colours, the soft swat of time,
hidden in the earth, in the rhythm of the climb.

Up there, the stars might sing you to sleep,
but down here, the world is awake,
its whispers tangled in the wind's embrace,
telling you to stay, to remember, to take.

The Cart Corral is my Kaaba

Jacob Piche

In daydreams an orchard painted orange in the morning.
Inside greyscale painted cinderblock break room in between scrolls and sips employees chug along.
An honest day of hi there and excuse me.

How much have you lost to things you enjoy?
Sitting around and having a time—
scrum-coated hand-me-down blankets on the sidewalk,
folks have a laugh in the MAID lobby, and Tim's telling me his church boils eggs and gives 'em out.

Hey man,
slow down and feel the rain,
stare blank down the walkway
with reverence at the dented green aluminum
in some nowhere plaza.

Now there's a hill to climb—
a bounty of breath and blood
always moving to the spot
where we go to whine and cry.

Haze today,
wildflowers pressed down like a bed just for you.
Blooming mulberries just for you,
dense grass-scented pollinated air just for you.

My Uncle's Cabin

Lindsey White

The green tin roof,
the hand-laid rock chimney,
wood-carved shapes in the doorways,
a canopy of trees surrounding us...

I often wondered what heaven would look like.
I imagined a lot of white,
a lot of clouds, a lot of golden
streets. But now, I hope it'll be
alive with the serenity of green.

Light Therapy

Jordan Cobb

In the sheets of gray between storm and shelter,
Evelyn and I had time to meet at the coffee shop
where the barista with the ear tattoo once worked.

On days like today, where the landscape is heavy,
waiting for the next burst of rain, we usually
hunt for a spot of dry land, untouched by the
light but instead, we are headed to the gardens.

The walk is meant for catching up –
How were the holidays?
Did your parents get along?
Can you remember the last time we sat in the sun?

We're past the solstice now, the giving and upselling,
but I never learned to read the shadows after
daylight savings, too afraid of time speeding up to
meet me once more.

It's like I'm still a kid, sleeping next to a clock
face, watching the second hand spin like God was
alive in the batteries.

Sometimes, I wish I could have stayed
a believer. But how was I supposed to
after everything went digital?

So we go on, Evelyn and I, one foot in front
of the other, ticking away the time,
cautioning our steps around the magnolia
petals that have fallen after bloom.

Hourglass Musings

Michael Goodman

Where does it go? I wish that I knew—
it fades oh so quickly as the days ensue.
Yet something that happened a lifetime ago
is still fresh in the mind, like an afterglow.

The days can be long, it all depends,
but time is not constant, it seems like it bends.
We're suddenly faced with a new month starting,
Though we've barely noticed the last one departing.

As the seasons go by, it is quite unsettling,
that sense of the lack of time feels threatening.
It's not as if we have any control
over all the ways time can take its cruel toll.

The longer the gap since the years of our youth,
the faster time passes, it's a strange and hard truth.
The years slip away and for that there's no cure,
but we can make the most of each day, that's for sure.

The passage of time is our greatest opponent,
so what we must learn is to live in the moment.
Rediscover an interest that's long been on hold,
or find something different, exciting, and bold.

Make everything count. Look around, and you'll find
there's so much you can do with a new frame of mind.
Let new thoughts and adventures make your days bright,
and time will slow down once you've filled it with light.



Miriam Dokotliver



Freedom

Lorelle Benson

an unknown
pause
yearning
unconsciously
existing in the
nothing (ness)
of old images
no longer
lingering frame
by frame rapidly
unfurling
from broken reels
into dreamless sleep
envying the
Ulysses freedom
subtle breezes
igniting
embers within

What a Damn Shame

Rakele Harvey

Armed,
with the avant-garde facade of rebellion
no rules to abide by except for
the Aristotelian.

*Embellishing the memories we crave to remember and sometimes forget.
Singing the ancient verse to then realise we're just a vignette.*

We are all weak here.
(Read this passively like mundane news in a gazette.)

*Trapping the fiends in frames, torturing music until it screams,
testing the dexterity of words until they bleed—*

There is an art to all this, you know. To look back at time's youthful face, when the
memory is old and crippled. Filling the cracks with imaginary atoms...

*I've seen you before, the familiarity is uncanny.
I don't trust you, but I do, because I know you, but I don't.
I've seen you somewhere but not in this time.
I was yours, and you were mine.
I wasn't I, and you weren't you, but it was us.
It wasn't the same, but I've heard your name.*

Eclectic is the technique, the rhetoric of vraisemblance. One of our hidden talents,
the mutation of our senses. To weave in the tapestry, an illusion.

*Be not forgetful to entertain strangers:
For some have entertained angels unaware.*

And to conclude,
a conversation from a young artist's gallery:

*Perhaps in another world but not this one.
Not this lifetime, no.
No, it cannot be this one.
What a shame.
A very damn shame, my dear.*

en otra vida

Patricia Melendez

i never had to leave my home.
the coquí sings me to sleep,
not from a memory,
but from the patio outside my window.
i am home—
Borinken's sun warming my skin,
cousins by my side,
our laughter tangling with the breeze.

en otra vida

abuelo's dominos still slam against the table,
his laughter still fills the air.
abuela sings softly to me,
her voice steady, never fading.
mami and papi's arms hold me tight,
and i never have to let go.

en otra vida

i don't miss the moments that matter.
no more pixelated faces on glowing screens.
no more "ojalá estuvieras aquí."
i am there—
for the birthdays, the graduations,
the quiet drives down familiar roads,
where the mountains meet the sea,
and i never have to say goodbye.

en otra vida

the beach is always just a breath away,
the salt air in my lungs,
waves crashing at my feet—
and the guilt of leaving,
of being the one who couldn't stay,

never weighs heavy on my heart.

en otra vida

i am not an outsider,
my tongue never stumbles between languages.
i speak like my people —
Spanish laced with jíbaro pride,
fast, sharp, and full of corazón.
i am from Borikén, la isla del encanto,
where taíno spirits guard the mountains,
and bomba drums echo through generations.
we dance, we fight, we endure—
our flag still waves, upside down,
a quiet rebellion that never dies.

en otra vida

mi isla es libre,
i never had to leave my home.

What Is Poetry?

Tia Rose

In seventh grade, a man said me,
standing in front of my class with glee,
rambling on like a bumble bee
asking us: what is poetry?

“Words that rhyme.”

“A story told in lines.”

“With stanzas and confines.”

“Tale as old as time.”

No, no, no! We had it all wrong—
Poetry can’t be defined so long
As it’s like the lyrics of a beautiful song—
To feel emotions, so real, so strong.

There are no guides, there are no rules
All the while he travels through schools
Molding young minds with literary tools
Defining poetry as only for fools.

It has me thinking the more that I write
I even sometimes lay awake at night
Wondering if in all my delight;
Was that man in my class actually right?

Silly Equations

Denis Robillard

One plus one equals telescope.
One plus four equals finger roll.
Two minus two equals poverty.
Three minus three equals food insecurity.
One plus two equals salary grid.
Zero divided by 10000 equals debt.
Six minus two equals family.
But grief multiplied by grief
equals cancer.
When time gets cross stitched to the
tenuous kingdom of the living
remove nine.
When small ceremonies take place
in the sacrifice of night add two.
We have entered the plastic century
so multiply by a million.
You have become a dullard in your mind
a pestering fool filled with hot air
and diatribes
so deduct five hundred.
When these math notes manifest
the wilderness of world logic
like angry ants that gnaw the floor
we all begin at zero again.
When we surpass this crushing
weight of water and the screech owl
goes retrograde
then add one and deduct six hundred.
We can multiply our wants and rants
until the cows fly home
but none of this adds up to pure bunk.
We must invest in soul numbers
divide ourselves from the flesh of man
and multiply our hopes.

Spare Parts

Sofia Ellenor

I am the extra pieces,
the ones left on the floor when the puzzle's done,
the bolts that no one thought to use,
the screws that slip through the cracks.
I was never meant
to fit perfectly

I gather dust on shelves,
forgotten like the spare key
no one remembers until the door won't open.
I am not the heart of the engine,
nor the spark that starts the fire,
just the parts you pick up
when everything else has failed.

I am the afterthought,
the one you can live without
but somehow still keep around
just in case.

To Create Dangerously

Lindsey White

I build a box from pages
I've read a thousand times,
take the thread from bound
books I've silently undone,
and tie my fingers around a pen.

I crawl inside and start to write,
trapped in a woman's need to make sense.
I'll read aloud the verses until it sounds like someone
else's voice—someone you would listen to if she came
crawling around the curve of a word.

To create,
to break down,
to disassemble.
Rip the pages from the structure.
Untie the noose around your hand.
Make confusion.
Read in a voice that hurts someone's ears.
Let words make their own meaning.
Let them mean
just by being.

Whistling in the Dark

Sarah Murphy

Whistling in the dark,
trying to carry a merry tune;
whistling in the dark
so the dark doesn't swallow you;
whistling in the dark
to forget the song of pain;
whistling in the dark
so the dark doesn't take your name.

Humming in the dark,
running out of breath;
humming in the dark
as you quicken laboured steps;
humming in the dark
and pretending you see a light;
humming in the dark
so it doesn't hear your fright.

Singing in the dark
as you start to find your voice;
singing in the dark
like it never was a choice;
singing in the dark
and you start to see a crack;
whistling in the dark
and then the darkness whistles back.

Burdens we Trace

Caprice Strgar

I didn't know what I was writing until I was writing the wrong things—
The scattered scratches of a madwoman

when I grasp
for a pen
turning the weight that is
pressing down on my shoulders
and filling in the cracks of my conscious mind,
transferring it
to the weight of ink,
bleeding my lamentations, love, the aching—
in tracings of dark ink
etching my perceptions of reality—

I think
I just might be alive
and I think
I just might survive.

Disrobing the veils of sanity
I've attempted to adorn
to facade a placid demeanor—
I may have lost myself within the ether.

When I grasp out
for a pen,
transforming the weight that pierces precariously down
into my conceptual heart
and my poignantly tangible soul
bleeding profoundly into
the weight of ink
and I think

"It's a beautiful thing to have a life to write."

110 % Van Gogh Happiness

Denis Robilard

He devised a plan at age 24. Vincent wanted to be with God.
It burned a fervent hole in him but he suffered the Latin studies
and his flame soon snuffed out. He wanted to bring comfort
to the poor through the Gospel.

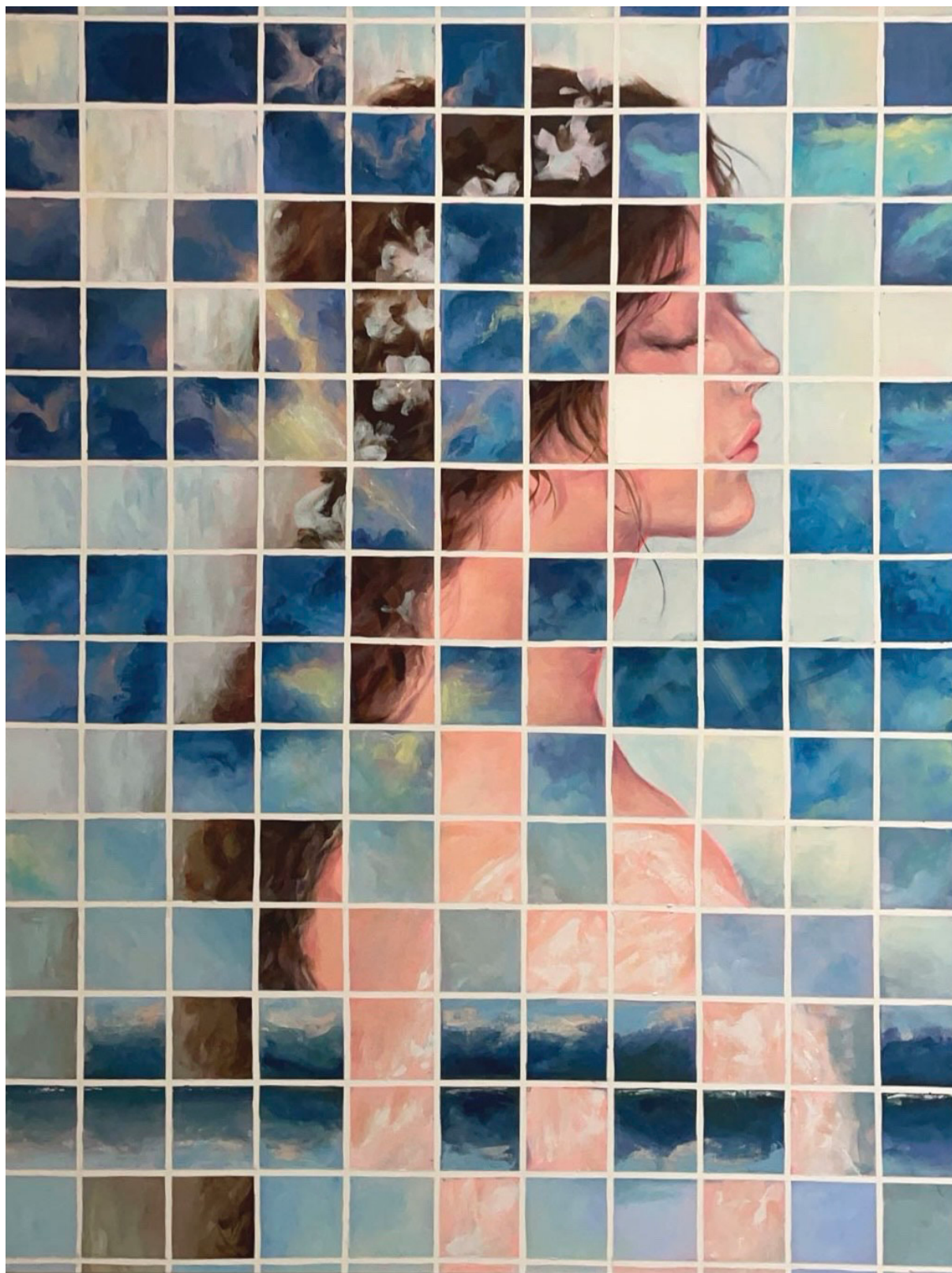
He lived for a while in a miner's hut and gave away his clothes,
money and bed to feed the poor at Borinage, Belgium.

But he could not harness his violent passions for art and books.

I want to be 110% Van Gogh
walking in the streets at night,
with the eye on the button hook and the old saggy clothes,

and night, substantial, covering me with its warm blessings.

In the year of the Aswan, in the decade of the ghost,
I want to be walking down an avenue of elms
on a dark wet road filled with 110% Van Gogh happiness.



Ophelia Piasentin
Acrylic painting

To Draw You

Kate Elizabeth

What is it about the childlike urge
To pick up a pen
and draw?

When you begin to love something so much
that only immortalizing it in art seems to suffice?

I can't draw,
but I feel compelled to
map your freckles
and trace the curve of your nose.

You make me want
To be an artist.

I can't draw—
barely sufficient in words—
but, for you, I will try.

As I create art from the thought of you,
do you become my muse?

I can't draw;
perhaps your art is only to be seen
in its truest form
with no replica thereafter.

bind

Maya Roumie

she binds.
she binds her chest in tight tops.
she binds her fingers with steel rings.
she binds her secrets in piles of books.
she makes secret her binds.
she tightens.
she stitches perfume poems into cotton.
tucked in teddy bear tummy.
she hides.
overlooked in the open.
star of her own cabaret show.
handkerchief tucked in back pocket.
costumed in code.
she waits for the spotlight.
she twists the steps.
she steps on the twist.
she claws. she howls.
sliced hair.
throat raw. eyes wet.
she chokes out breath.
she coughs out her chest.
phlegm.
purple spittle.
pink puddle.
yellow-white brittle.
she paints.

Beauty in a Lie

Ray Dalai

Captivating beauty—
captures the blind
in a tower of lies
on which humanity is built.

A right to live.
A right to lie.
A right to die.

This beautiful lie
comes to an end.
The tower reached a high
in its captivating beauty—
Humanity is blind.

Starving Artist

Caprice Strgar

i could be called a starving artist
because i would let my bones turn frail
just to write another moment.
i would let my face sink swallow just to speak another word that has,
from
my
tongue,
fallen.

i could be called a starving artist.
i would let the layers of my eye be penetrated by blue light and the dim warm
haze soaking the room in the early hours of the late night morning.
i could be called a starving artist
because i would rather my bones snap like a broken doll
cracked
then live a day without this craft.
but don't call me a starving artist,
because my words flow through my bloodstream and nourish me entirely.
the passion of my prose beams through the red blood cells that travel through my
bones.
the purity i feel after depravity leeches into marrow.
they will never call me a starving artist
because i could consume calorie after calorie of fine sustenance
and it would only ever be
insignificant.
but i could never breathe without my poetry
i could not be called a starving artist
because as an artist, i will never starve.

hay cielos

de Nina G

donde tazas de café hablan entre ellas, donde los frascos de perfume cantan baladas, un lugar donde el corazón nunca se rompe. Fui a un cielo, donde los árboles santifican los matrimonios, donde los espíritus de los ciervos eran un signo de suerte, y fantasmas tan reales como los seres humanos. Cielos con ciudades grandes y una canción para cada hito de la vida. Cielos, donde incluso los demonios buscan la paz, y se acuestan de espaldas en playas bonitas con cócteles resplandecientes. He creado cielos donde cada palabra de cariño aparece como un emoji sobre mi cabeza, donde mi cerebro es el próximo avance tecnológico. Un lugar donde soy adorada y amada tanto como amo y adoro todo lo que me rodea: todos los reinos de hongos, camas de pastel de queso, meseros erizos, y cartas parlantes aladas. Hay cielos que he quemado, estrellado, y destruido. Cielos de los que me he enamorado, y que tanto extraño. Cielos que todavía estoy esperando ver cada vez que cierro los ojos.

there are heavens

by Nina G

where coffee cups speak amongst themselves, where perfume bottles sing ballads, a place where one's heart never breaks. I went to a heaven, where trees sanctify marriages, where deer spirits were a sign of luck, and ghosts: as real as humans. Heavens with large cities and a song for each milestone in life. Heavens, where even demons seek peace, and lie on their backs on pretty beaches with glowing cocktails. I have created heavens where each caring word appears like an emoji over my head, where my brain is the next technological advancement. A place where I am adored and loved just as much as I love and adore everything around me: all of the mushroom kingdoms, cheesecake beds, hedgehog waiters, and winged talking cards. There are heavens that I have burned, crashed and destroyed. Heavens that I have loved, and really miss. Heavens that I am still waiting to see every time I close my eyes.

Lotus Wine

Hannah Montello

Did the ancients ache as I do?
As they drank their lotus wine,
was it your soul woven into their
visions? Your heart and your mind and
your eyes? No other word fit to describe
other than divine;
nothing short of star born collisions
or moon paved shrines;
where faeries dance and feast and dine.
An inner eye can see all.
To grieve is to love yet to love is to always lose.
Did the ancients ache as I do?

The Wet Corners of my Veins

Ancestor Poem ~ March 5, 2024

Denis Robilard

I think of my ancestors who rest their heads in seaside cemeteries
where they lie recycled on agglomerated reptilian stones
pulling at vines for blankets in their sinuous sleep.
Today I wear the blue cloak of a hallucinated childhood
wishing to catch again the water's shimmering ring
and listen to the endless murmur of lost rivers—
all that sweet water singing between the stones
reaching all the wet corners of my veins to tell their story.



Miriam Dokotliver

Silent Movie

Rakele Harvey

Through the mazes of giants and skyscraper trees;

Along thoughts
along time,
along tides of dreams cast aside.

Past generations
past memories,
past lives of shifting trajectories.

In the middle of it all;
balancing on breaking branches
there was Luci and Eve
waiting to hitch a ride towards NYC.

Skinny angel, soon to decay,
freaking out on the interstate.

Will heavenly powers restore?

Add some botanical nonsense
from Genesis to Apocalypses,
in the heat of all of her disturbances.

A love equal to 40,000 fraternal bonds.
Will your spectre appear?

Timeless are the chords of the plot;
tossed in a river which leads to the sea—

it was the most virgin dress she could have worn,
innocent, fragile, and yesterday born.

Lungs overflowing with seaweed and foam...

Swollen face and vacant eyes;
theatres and galleries, all jam packed.
scarlet hair still intact, it will always distract.

Your lips are always depicted slightly ajar, *Ophelia*.
With no air to carry words;
what would you like to say?

Infinite Pages

Lindsey White

You said this would be a bookmark in my life,
how fitting
that it would become quite possibly the most
pivotal story I've ever read.

I'm drinking every word like they could
crack open the nectar of life,
turning the pages as if the next one
might crumble my world,
might build it again from the inside out.

I'm not ready to bookmark these pages,
so whenever you see me,
I hope you find me reading.

Gently Mad Authors and Artists

Bethany Zondag

Bethany Zondag is an aspiring writer from Holland Landing, Ontario. She has loved writing for as long as she can remember, starting with a little “book” made of stapled sticky notes. Her work focuses on friendships, family ties, and personal reflections, though she also loves fantasy and dreams of creating an intricate fictional universe. The Gently Mad Literary Magazine is her first publication.

Caitlyn Pinto

My name is Caitlyn Pinto and I am writing from Hamilton, Ontario. One interesting fact about me is that I recently graduated from McMaster University, and I initially wrote this reflection to be included in my roommate’s final class assignment. She advised me to write a reflection on any topic and this was the first idea that came to mind. I am not a writer by any means- this is the first piece I’ve written that will be seen by others. I’m very excited to have been given the opportunity to showcase my work in this magazine and my hope is that others will read this and relate to it in some way.

Caprice Strgar

Currently an Ontario-based writer, Caprice Strgar believes that her work centralises around the power of experience, interweaving various themes in an exploration of their complexities. Caprice has been published in Poetry In Voice (PIV)’s 2024 Voices/Voixjournal, Gently Mad Literary Magazine, and worked as an editorial intern for Cherry Venus Magazine. Her work was recently featured—selected from an international call for submissions—at a UNESCO Cities of Literature event hosted and published by Pigeon Publishing in Heidelberg. As a FutureVerse alumni and PIV ambassador, she runs poetry workshops for middle and high school students, inspiring her community through creative expression.

Daniella Papia

Hi, my name is Daniella Papia! I am creating my works from Windsor, Ontario. This is my first time being published, and it’s been a dream of mine for so long. I take a lot of inspiration for my pieces from nature. All my works are deeply personal to me and I hope you enjoy them.

Denis Robillard

Denis Robillard is a 58 year old poet and educator born in Northern, Ontario. He now resides with his wife and children in Windsor, Ontario. He retired as a teacher in 2023. Robillard was first published in 1986 and has had over 500 poems published in Canada, USA and Europe. Recent publications include Ristau (Kentucky), Rampike (CAN), Ekphrastic Review (CAN), Windsor Review, LUMMOX (Calif) and The Nashwaak Review (2020). He is the past winner of the Ted Plantos Poetry Award in 2015 and the Cranberry Tree Press Award for his book, THE HISTORY OF WATER. His poetry book, ASK THE RIVER was published by Black Moss Press in 2018. His most recent book is called DEEP FRIED KODAK. He is also an avid photographer.

1. I have been published more than 500 times.
2. I have been published in every province in Canada except for Nunavut and NWT.
3. I once had a photo on a Jones cola bottle that was circulated 20,000 times.
4. I was once a bodyguard for Michael Damion of the Young and Restless soap opera in the 1980s.

Grace Calabria

Grace is an American poet from the suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. Previously based in Indianapolis, Indiana, Grace started her career as an educator, teaching 8th grade English Language Arts. Now getting her Master's in Creative Writing with a concentration in poetry, Grace's writing reflects her day-to-day practice of balancing the serious with the silly. Brimming with linguistic energy and nostalgia, her poetry centers around themes of inevitability, love, guilt, and childhood— regularly featuring the natural world, her long term horseback riding habit, and clashes with mortality.

Hannah Montello

Hannah Montello is currently working to receive her undergraduate degree in English at the University of Windsor. She has a poem published in the second issue of Arrival Literary and Art Magazine as well as the upcoming issue of Generations Magazine. She spends her days working on her gothic fantasy novel and working at a metaphysical shop selling crystals, candles and tarot cards. Her biggest passion has always been writing and she hopes to one day be featured on the New York Times Bestseller list.

Harleen

My name is Harleen, and I'm in my last couple of months on exchange in Windsor, Canada, 3500 miles away from my home in Birmingham. I'll be back in England before you finish reading this magazine. I study Neuroscience, but my mind has always been occupied by innovation for my next piece of art. This is my first publication, 'You Caught My Eye.' My inspiration is to transform sayings into meaningful pieces. My favourite story is how I got lost in New York, with no data, no battery, but only the direction of the wind. Somehow I ended up at the Met. My life really does revolve around art.

Holly Castleton

Holly Castleton is a master's student at the University of Edinburgh studying Creative Writing in Scotland. She has a masters in Religion and Literature, half of a law degree, and is headed to Texas for a PhD in English Literature starting September 2025. She enjoys singing loudly, Ashtanga yoga, cooking and eating elaborate meals for her friends, and obsessively watching TV shows from the 90's (currently: The Wire). She grew up all over the United States but claims Arizona as home. Her poetry has appeared in Rue Scribe by Underwood Press and is forthcoming in Inscape Magazine and From Arthur's Seat.

Jordan Cobb

Jordan Cobb is a queer American poet raised across the south & Midwest. Previously an oncology nurse, she is currently working on her MSc in Creative Writing at the University of Edinburgh. Her work can be found in Outcrop Poetry's fourth issue & is forthcoming in Lugarzine & the 2024-2025 edition of the anthology series From Arthur's Seat. She can be found wearing all black outfits & red lipstick anywhere iced americanos or chilled wine are served. She is, unfortunately, allergic to chocolate.

Jacob Piche

My name is Jacob Piche, I am living and writing in Windsor Ontario. This is my first publication! My work is inspired by eavesdropped conversations, thoughts in my car on lunch break, the people I meet, or the people I've known for a lifetime. My relationship with writing has been a rocky one - I've realized that the fleeting creative inspiration, inherent in everybody, can be found in the things you see when you're fresh off of dissociation, or the incredible patterning of leaves on the front lawn. I thank Jovan Stefanov and Nick Hildenbrand for their support.

Kate Elizabeth

Hi, I'm Kate Elizabeth, also known as Cherry to my friends. I'm a final year English and Creative Writing student at the University of Strathclyde in Scotland. I was inspired to start writing poetry relatively recently, though I have always been a lover of literature and writing. It's hard to pick a favourite novel but I think I must mention *My Policeman* by Bethan Roberts; it's such a beautifully tragic love story. Those are the best kind.

Keegan Oke

I am a part-time writer, full-time forklift operator from Windsor, Ontario. When I'm not slacking off and doing donuts with my jitney, I love to write all sorts of speculative fiction and poetry. This is my first official publication with any sort of magazine, and I am excited to be a part of this delightful group! Here's a fun little fact; the ring finger on my right hand is crooked, to the point that it almost looks broken. Of course, this gave me the opportunity to trick many people into thinking it's actually broken by faking various falls and slams, often resulting in dry-heaves and being called insults.

Laura Muetzelfeldt

Laura has been published nationally and internationally in journals such as *The International Literary Quarterly* and *New Writing Scotland*. After completing an MLitt in Creative Writing at the University of Glasgow, she worked as an English Teacher for seven years. She graduated with a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of St Andrews in 2024 and is currently working on her debut novel. Laura lives in Glasgow with her two sons, a demanding cat and a chilled-out snake.

Leilani

Lilani is a Haitian-American writer, living in Edinburgh. Having resided in the UK for the past 21 years, she has a deep sense of diverse cultures and lifestyles. Currently an MLitt student and Alexander Dixon Scholar in the University of Glasgow's Creative Writing programme, she writes pieces in a variety of genres that give insight on the art of migration communities, regeneration of Afro-Caribbean archives, and narrative voice in Diasporic literature. She previously gained a master's degree in international relations, trained in project management as part of her bachelor's degree in commerce and worked for 10 years in Management Consulting. She also holds a postgraduate diploma in Early Childhood Education, worked as a teacher for 12 years, and as a language tutor of Haitian Kreyol throughout her life.

Lindsey White

Lindsey White was born in 2001. She graduated from Trevecca Nazarene University with a degree specializing in film, dramatic arts, and journalism. She regularly reads her poems at open mic nights and has been previously published in the online journal, Synchronized Chaos. She currently lives in South Korea as an English teacher, where she runs an English poetry night. Fun fact: she's been pooped on by a bird twice in her life. This either means birds have a grudge against her, or she's the luckiest person alive. She's sticking with the luck theory...

Lorelle Benson

Lorelle Benson lives under the southern cross in tropical north Queensland. She works as a Clinical Social Worker specialising in intergenerational trauma and uses a range of expressive and creative therapy modalities within her work including poetry and storytelling as a part of the healing journey. Lorelle also utilises writing as a part of her own self-care and as a means of processing the world around her. When not reading, writing or working, Lorelle loves travelling and exploring her lost family tree. Lorelle is currently in her final year of the MLitt program at University of Glasgow, Scotland.

Lucia Cascioli

Lucia Cascioli is an award-winning Canadian writer. Her work has been anthologized and her poetry and short stories have been published in several magazines. Prone to going down rabbit holes on topics that interest her, she is a voracious reader with an ever-growing reading pile. Lucia is currently pursuing her doctorate in Creative Writing at the University of Glasgow and working on a new novel. She is a proud member of the Writers' Union of Canada. Luciacascioli.com

Maya Rourmie

Maya Rourmie is a Lebanese writer and poet residing in Ontario, Canada where she is pursuing her degree in English Literature & Creative Writing. Her writing explores the subjects of diaspora, intersectionality, identity, desire & femininity. She writes fiction like the coming-of-age stories she grew up on. Maya is also a biweekly writer for Her Campus, where her articles analyze the PR behind politics, culture—pop or otherwise, & entertainment media. Her work has been published in two chapbooks, & Gently Mad Literary is her first magazine publication. She takes her espresso ice shaken & her pages sprinkled with intertext.

Michael Goodman

Born and raised in Glasgow, then moving to London in 1972 aged seventeen, Michael Goodman worked in theatre and television production until 'retiring' to Barbados in 2003. Having previously written numerous press releases, reviews and TV scripts, Michael became Editor of Barbados's 'Fifty Plus' magazine achieving a circulation exceeding 25,000. He wrote newspaper columns and wrote and co-presented the weekly radio programme 'Bajan Living'. Returning to Glasgow in 2019, Michael decided to further explore creative writing by attending courses at Glasgow University. He joined 'Writing Wrongs' creative writers' group and has facilitated memoir writing workshops at the University's Community Hub.

Miriam

Miriam Dokotliver, artist, working on her PHD. Born in Ukraine lived in Poland, Israel, England and now Scotland. The artwork is a result of cathartic displacement activity when letters were stretched into lines to draw images, mainly with pens Miriam likes real baked cheesecake, not the one with the biscuit as a base. She also likes plants. Miriam has very little patience for political correctness and stupid people.

Nina G

Nina G is an American writer and creative based in Scotland, UK. She is enthralled by the world of folklore and the fantastical, ecopoetics, diaspora, and video games. Her written work has featured in Wet Grain, Syncopation Literary Journal, the Quillkeepers Press Mythos & Lore Anthology (2024), I Am BeYoutiful, and others. As a journalist, Nina has ventured from speaking to Emmy nominated TV & film composers to the creative director behind Best Independent Game of the Year (NYX Game Awards 2023) Bramble: The Mountain King.

Ophelia Piasentin

My name is Ophelia Piasentin, and I am an artist based in Windsor, Ontario. I have always loved to draw and paint ever since I was little. I started with finger paintings in kindergarten to creating paintings bigger than I am using a wide range of mediums. Some of the mediums I work with are acrylic paints, oil, watercolor, gouache, digital, and just a classic pencil. I have always dreamed of hopefully being able to do something with my art for a living, and am continuing to work towards that goal. Currently, I am in school taking my BFA at the University of Windsor which is where some of my submissions come from.

Patricia Negrón Meléndez

Hi! I am Patricia Negrón Meléndez a Puerto Rican architecture student currently writing from Savannah, Georgia. My work explores identity, memory, and the intersections of culture and place. As a member of NOMA and AIAS, I am passionate about design, storytelling, and the ways culture shapes our environments. My poetry seeks to capture both the personal and the collective, weaving together themes of heritage and transformation. When not writing, I am immersed in architectural studies and advocacy for diverse voices in design or dancing. This is my debut poetry publication, and I am excited to share my work with you all.

Peter James Billing

Peter James Billing is a poet, novelist, filmmaker, composer, musician, and playwright, as well as the former production designer for a nationally televised children's show. Billing is the co-author of the YA novel *The Road Hockey Crew* as well as a two-time nominee for the Edgar Allan Poe International Festival's "Saturday Night Visitor" Awards for his poem and short film *The Knocking of the Nails* and his dark radio play *The Dark Side of Benjamin Grime*. He is the founder of *The Faculty of Wonderment*, a collective of literary, music, and filmmaking creatives based in Windsor, Walkerville Ontario, where he resides.

Rakele Harvey

Rakele Harvey is a postgraduate student from Malta, studying in Scotland. She is currently reading for an MLitt in Modern and Contemporary Literature and Culture. An avid reader and writer, Rakele enjoys travelling and learning about anything and everything. She is working on finalising her first manuscript.

Ray Dalai

Hi im Ray! A student from assumption highschool windsor, Ontario, Canada. My poetry Was inspired through my experience and my emotions through life as someone who struggles to stay on top and motivated. I get inspired to write about many painful memories from my past and current events going around the world. One of my biggest achievements is slowly getting better and not letting my depression take over my life! I got motivated to write and try to publish poetry by a close friend of mine and I don't think I could have done it without her! I hope my poetry is inspiring enough for others to write as well!

Salina D'Agostino

Hello! My name is Salina D'Agostino and I'm an English major at the University of Windsor. While I can't say my writing topics come from life-changing experiences, they do come from a variety of thought processes. Most of my writing happens in the late hours of the evening. While some turn to rest, I relish in the silence of the night and pick up my pen and notebook beside my bed. I create work based on interactions, relationships, encounters, and my imagination. I love to write and try to portray a piece of myself, my mind, and my creativity into my work.

Sarah Murphy

My name is Sarah Murphy, and I am writing from Waterloo, Ontario in Canada. My work has been published in Windsor Public Library's Pagination Zine and Waterloo Public Library's Inkling Teen Magazine. I have also received awards for my poetry from The Ultra Best Short Verse Poetry Contest. Many writers can say that they started from a young age, but I may be the only one who can say that when asked what they were doing on the computer at the ripe, young age of six, replied, "I love Microsoft Word." What better beginning to a life of writing?

Sofia Ellenor

Sofia Ellenor is writing from Windsor, Ontario. Her poetry has been accepted in the poetry chapbook, *Generations* (affiliated with the University of Windsor) and the poetry magazine, *Pagination Literary Art Zine*, which are scheduled to be published in the upcoming months. She enjoys reading fantasy, romance and thriller and is reading the *Fourth Wing Series*. She has a cat named Ollie, he is black and white, like a reverse tuxedo. She is working on a set of poems based on various flowers. Sofia is also in the process of working on a small poetry chapbook with one of her good friends.

Terry Brennan

Terry Brennan is a new writer. He was recently shortlisted for the Scottish Association of Writers' Short Story prize. He is currently working on two collections of short stories and a novel. He tells *Gently Mad*, 'I'm making up for lost time.'

Tia Rose

Tia Rose is an aspiring writer based in Wisconsin, currently working on her debut poetry collection titled, "What You Adore". She spends much of her time writing poetry of varying themes, however her heart lies in all types of literature, especially in novels, scripts and even short stories. She is passionate about expression in her writing and loves interpreting deeper meanings behind all stories, on paper and on screen. Tia hopes to one day explore storytelling through film and pursue a career in screenwriting.

Vanessa Shields

Vanessa Shields is the author of one memoir and three collections of poetry: *Laughing Through a Second Pregnancy* (2011, Black Moss Press), *I Am That Woman* (2014, Black Moss Press), *Look At Her* (2016, Black Moss Press), and *Thimbles* (2021, Palimpsest Press). She is the owner of Gertrude's Writing Room, where she teaches creative writing workshops and classes, mentors writers at all stages of their careers, and edits manuscripts (various genres). She is the editor of several poetry and prose anthologies, including *The Alchemy of Tears* (TOPS, 2023). She has been a juror for the Ontario Arts Council, the League of Canadian Poets, Windsor Endowment for the Arts, and the Markham Teen Arts Council, and she is an avid member and judge for Poetry in Voice. Shields graduated from Humber School for Writers Creative Writing - Fiction, Creative Non-Fiction, Poetry program with distinction in 2024, and is currently working on a YA novel. She lives, writes and loves in Windsor, Ontario. www.vanessashields.com

Zeeshan Fatima Rizvi

Zeeshan Fatima Rizvi is a Sydney-based writer born in Australia but raised in Pakistan, where she completed her Honours and MPhil in English Literature. Currently pursuing her second Master's in Creative Writing at Macquarie University,

Gently Mad Editors

Juliana Allan

Editor-in-Chief

Gently Mad Editors

Juliana is an author, artist and researcher with a BFA in Illustration for Publication design from the Savannah College of Art and Design. She has also studied Creative Writing at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, and earned a Roman Art and Archeology certificate from the University of Arizona, and is starting her MA in Creative Publishing and Critical Journalism at The New School in New York next year. She currently works as a Writing tutor, Book Club Coordinator and Student Ambassador at her University. Outside of school, she also works as a freelance writer for art history magazines, having published three articles this year at Polyptych and ArtHer-story magazines.

In her work as an Illustrator and book designer she has worked in two books and the anthology *I Never Wrote Your Name* by Alice Winters.

You can always find her at her favorite coffee shop working on her book, or at the Library doing research. She focuses her work in Historical Fiction and Historical Narrative.

Serafina Piasentin

Editor-in-Chief

Serafina is an author, poet, and journalist from Canada. She holds a BA(H) in English Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Windsor and has studied at Keele University and the University of Edinburgh in the UK.

An intern for three years at Black Moss Press, Canada's oldest publishing company, a TA for grammar courses, and a copyeditor and cover designer through the Editing and Publishing Practicum at UoW, Serafina has vital experience in both editing and publishing. She currently works as a freelance journalist at Windsor Life magazine. A writer at heart, she has poems published in both Canada and England. You can find her work in poetry collection, *Where The Map Begins* as well as journals like *Invention*, and anthologies like *Catch the Whispers Anthology Of Verse - Young Writers of Canada*. When she's not writing, you might find Serafina travelling the world. She is grateful to have visited 40 countries, each of which have inspired poems and stories in turn.

The Gen



Where our
authors and
artists are from
around the
world



