

**ACTA
VICTORIANA**

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Acta Victoriana, est. 1878, is the literary journal of Victoria College at the University of Toronto.

Acta Victoriana is produced and published on the traditional lands of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit, as well as other Nations that have been, and continue to be, subject to historical erasure. As members of the literary community on campus, we recognize the need to be part of the collective conversation required for the ongoing processes of decolonization and reconciliation.

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Letter from the Editors

Amid 147 years of history, it can be overwhelming to situate ourselves as individuals in a publication that has contributed so significantly not only to life at Victoria College, but also to literary communities in Toronto and across Canada. Being just two of over 100 students to serve as Editors-in-Chief, Acta's history is a looming and honouring presence that propels us forward. Inching closer to our 150th issue, we've taken on revisiting and refreshing our archives at the E. J. Pratt Library, allowing reflections of issues past to echo in the present. Soon, we hope this supplement will join them.

The pieces of 149.1 beautifully encapsulate the experience of time passing—in the warmth of themes like nostalgia and the preservation of memory, but also in the discomfort of repeated cycles and reliving trauma. This paradox challenges us to embrace lessons of the past without remaining there, encouraging us to find comfort in creativity as we approach an uncertain future.

Literature and artwork is continually inspired both by those who find themselves compelled to create and share their work, and by those who read and cherish it; we're grateful that Acta Victoriana can be a part of that legacy of human connection through art. Embedded in these pages is an appreciation for the timeless persistence and diligence of creators and readers alike in forging a literary community.

With love,

Jeanne & Di
Jeanne Polochansky & Diana Vink
Editors-in-Chief



Repainting the Balcony Railing

Kerry Trautman

Rain held off as long as it wanted. I keep painting
till mist starts to blow in. This won't be anything

near perfect. The still squirrel clings to mulberry
branches like hope. So many dead layers here—

flaked paint to scrape, holes to patch, Virginia
Creepers Vines to rip from what they gulp. Wind

knocks a stick from the huge maple down to the
caved-in metal garage roof, startling me with a *clunk*.

The squirrel slips her grip, falls to a lower branch—
still better-off than her friend she sees smashed

on the street below, the body biked- and driven-
past in rain like Pepsi cans and mulberry stains.

It's ok here above the city street and the neighbor's
yard full of thistles and dog shit. Even the muck river

down beyond the scrubby bank has a dead-ish glory,
like a 19th century cemetery—too long ago to be

sad anymore. No one has parked anything but junk
in that old garage for 50 years—its roof a sink-

hole, a portal from maple leaves and sky down to a
land of scrap metal and poison ivy. I hope the



squirrel and whatever I painted this morning stay
dry. I wish I had the wherewithal and cash to make

things closer to perfect for someone. Each time
something falls and *clunks* I jump, and I know I

can't stop it from happening again—all these little
increments of failure. The squirrel is used to it.

The Limbo

Zach Keali'i Murphy

The cicadas are extremely loud this summer and so are my mother's outfits. The leopard print high-heels, the oversized sunglasses, and the hat with the pink floral arrangement on its brim are some of the more understated pieces in her wardrobe.

"You don't hear about the sun when it's behind the clouds," she once told me as she put her beet-red lipstick on in the mirror.

My mother always looks so beautiful, even when she's sad. Every time she comes back from the Friday night Limbo parties at the bar down the block, her frown has dipped a little lower than it was before. It's amazing how spending time in the company of other people can make you feel more lonely.

A "Welcome Home" streamer for my father has been strung across our house's front window for an entire year now. It collects more dirt with each wind gust and its shiny colors have faded. I wonder why my mom has decided to leave it up for so long. She keeps saying it's a pain to take down. But it's also a pain to leave it up. Maybe a tiny part of her is holding onto hope. A thin, dangling shred of hope.

When my father went overseas for his job as an underwater welder for cargo ships—whatever that means—my mother and I became a lot closer. She taught me how to cut my own hair and she taught me how to play softball. After my father didn't come home when he said he was going to, she taught me that you can't trust people even when they look you in the eyes and she taught me that promises are often shattered and stomped over like broken glass.

"If he was dead, we would have found out about it," she once said. "If he's alive, he's making a choice to not come back." Somehow that felt worse than a death.

Sometimes I create imaginary scenarios in my head about why my father hasn't come home.

Maybe he got roped into a plot to save the world. Or maybe the work has just taken longer than anticipated. Or maybe he told us it would be three years instead of three months and we just didn't remember. After a while, I run out of explanations.

My mother was never one to sugarcoat things. She didn't even put frosting on my birthday cake this year. "Frosting isn't good for you," she says as she lights a cigarette from one of the candles. I blow out all thirteen of them and we hear a rumbling car pull up on the street in front of our house. We get up to go look. An old man that neither of us recognizes gets out of the car and walks over to deliver a package to the neighbor across the street, gets back into the car, and leaves. My mother takes a drag from her cigarette and stares through the screen door. The sounds of the cicadas intensify.



Sago Pudding

Charlotte Lai

Mixing tapioca pearls in boiling water, I catch glimpses of home:
Dribbles of almond milk on the countertop, dried blueberries, fragrant.
80s synthpop and echoes of opera.
Hand drifting off the wooden spoon, I reach for the agave syrup, fingers slipping
across the sticky counter, holding biting silence.

A can of coconut milk and a whiff of reminiscence later, I am on the subway.
I am on an escalator.
I am waiting in a lobby,
standing in a motionless elevator,
waiting in a lobby, lying and smiling,
stolen syrup-coated, stale cookies tucked in pockets.

Dinner dissipates to a whisper; blueberry wine drained, bodies left to waste upon
the couch.
Tasting sand, I break off another piece of cake icing, grainy, granulated sugar
sharp against the tongue. Let it soften, pressed to cheek and palate.
Conversation forms eddies and pools in the corner of the room.
The room hums with laughter, sour notes emanating into the neon night.
So close to the moon, the apartment sways in her pull. Tucking into the empty
elevator, I wait for the motion sickness to pass.



bona fide

Yuhuan (Albert) Xie



When we were girls, last

Klark Janowski

Do you remember
how it felt to near graduation,
on a swing set

after dark? Our womanhood
coming quick,
like we could collect it
before our girl-forms gave way

to falling, and our feet
swung down, carving
pillars of creation
into cold sand?

I do.

I remembered when
I last sat on a swing, nauseous

from the motion of rising
and falling

or of having forgotten
at all.



Bill's Passing Year

Lachlan Haddow

When Bill got sick the medicine made his head swell.
Top-heavy, in his loneliest air,
He sheltered indifferently with a shifting glance.
No more would his bass boom over fairway green,
The weary old bull —ascetic, dull, patriarchal—
Now sunk in the dried-blood-brown of a cracked leather recliner
As if he was to be folded into an oak
By the many silvery-pink hands of his daughters.
All of whom appeared not much younger than mum,
Her hand lingering at my back in those years,
I approached. His eyes whispered out like the lake's mooned edge
But seemed to have drunk the fluorescence of my advancing world
And prepared before me in the tepid blue of rec centre pools.
His sudden humour was my embarrassment. I shuddered like a school bell
To later think it was his fear that needed my innocence.

This was only my tenth summer
And camps were the tyranny of teenage lovers.
Those chlorine clean waters dried my skin something wild.
The whole ride home, beyond the winged hiss of bike & rod,
It was as if the setting sun, delighted in some weakness,
With a thousand winks, a thousands itches,
Along the Miami orange of its throbbing surface,
Eye in eye before we fell into the crowding dark.

November leaning into the wheeze of mum's jacket.
Her kissed golf ball tossed into Lake Ontario
With 'Love of my life' and the no tears that followed
Like the sound that very night
Of the silence that feeds,
Dumber than a dog's whine,
Forever retreating

▲

In the infinitesimal ecstasy.

I waited awhile in the dawn motionless
‘Till ridiculous worry grew unshakeable
Then knocked at mum’s door,

‘Come in bud, I’m up.’
Last night’s tea on the nightstand stood untouched & puce.
A pillow pushed away, indented with her breasts, rose
With the bed frame’s tick-tocking as she propped herself on one arm.
Her morning voice dried from the dream’s wraith, the unwilling vampire,
Fought back to me through the flow of ritual kindness— ‘are you hungry?’
Always was to be the answer and I said nothing
While a lace curtain filtered the rapturous gold
Fanning, at my movement to the window,
A murmurous pattern between her bedposts.



Scribbles

Veda Jane



Mirch

Mekyle Ali Qadir

I offered without
remorse and without
warning, just to see
how my guest takes it.
See, I want it to
frolic in his mouth
so he understands
the futility
of all his words.
I want to watch him
jump. I want tears and
mouthy breathing to
disintegrate, to
shatter, to replace
his droning syntax.

I want it to end words.

“What is it made from?”
Like that’ll save you,
sir. But since you ask:
it’s made from stories,
from paisleys, nylon,
and bursting ichor
spilled on desert soil.
It’s made from yoga,
from partition,
the hum of rail tracks,
Himalayan salts
and fatal hailstorms,
from cotton threads seen
through ripped denim,
from the sharpened edge
of an elder butcher’s
blade, *Bismillah’d* and
kissing the jugular,
from sugarcane, from



bhangra and beatboxes,
from oral histories
that waken my past
and scare you into
extermination.
It’s made from borders,
and it does so well
in keeping you out.



Gibsons, June

Nina Mercuri

I wouldn't usually, but
here I will

there are glasses after all, long stem
you've put chips in my sandwich
and for that alone I love you

Inner Fires plays

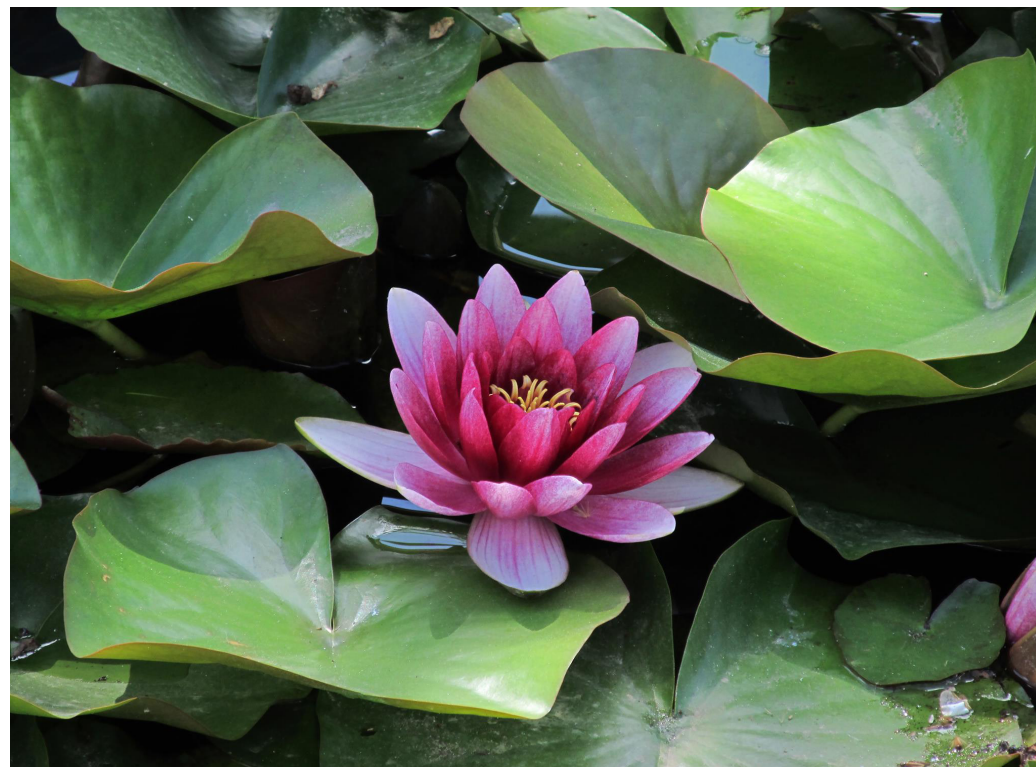
I dance for the mirror, the dog
dances too and I am most myself
but I tell you I am most myself in
strung beads

—as if such a thing
could make a person who they are

through the window
is blue is a
painting is so
different from our inland house

a mistake to leave

but for now
(likely always)
long weekends here will have to do



Nymphaea 'Red Blaze'

Viviana De Cecco



Woodies

DS Maolalai

the air smells of thyme, coriander, perennials,
annuals, other dull flowers. I am holding
two lengths of machine-sawn pine board
and a cheap plastic towershape toilet
roll holder, a plastic resealable box. beside me
some garden sheds are pencilled with figures
which raise by five hundred euro apiece.
the air here is lousy with oxygen,
thick with perfume as chinese dumpling soup.
sadness. garden centres and warehouse-type hardware shops

make me feel like a child, bored silly and full of potential
over what can be done by the right plastic bath mat. it makes me so fucking
despondent seeing people decide. a woman picks at pots
like a seagull at garbage, pinching and testing
their weight. the house has the shape
we were aiming for now – walls painted, just detail
left; an inflatable castle filling up with pumped air
and carefully personal touches. the dog is asleep
on the sofa there now. I don't care for plants
but my wife does—looking at labels and choosing
only those which can live without very much light.
she isn't that woman, but she might as well be.

the last time I chose it was wildflowers.
the overhead netting is torn in sections
but it's late in the day and the starlings have settled
on the eaves of some building behind which the sun
drops gold with the annual flowers,
half-price in september and wilting,
colour draining like a paintbrush in a bucket
underneath a slow-running hose.

Lessons in Solitude

Ty Li

Chang'e is the goddess of the Moon and wife of Hou Yi, the great archer, in Chinese mythology. Her myth is attributed as the origin of the Mid-Autumn Festival.

I.

Boy holds his hands like a weapon.
Boy is nothing more than a shard of glass
fragmented, little fissures
hissing through lupine teeth.
Boy moves through the wind as if
he can conquer it,
too.
Limbs no longer sheathed.
Lithe & beautiful & uncaring.
Boy says, so sure of himself,
make one sun know
death
and the others will follow.
Boy is not a sun,
though he is trying to be,
but more an explosion.
He blazes brighter,
hotter,
as if golden fury can defeat
sooty night.

But [here],
the beginnings of frost gleam
from the golden branches of the persimmon tree.
But [here],
the moon, head lowered,
hanging plump & ready to be plucked.
But [here],
a rickety structure as a dining table.
A leak in the dusty roof.



There are two geese in the barren yard
and one will be dead in the morning.
We will eat it over a week.
Let the feathers graze the floor.

You do not have to be great,
I am telling boy,
You do not have to be anything
other than the skin you are in.
Boy sits catastrophizing on the porch steps. My terrible supernova.

& I splinter
at the thought of you.

II.

The night, earnest in its forgiveness,
is telling me of all that I
have forgotten.
Clear skies. Intimacy. Rice fields, overflowing.
An hour of rest, where I am not
begging for it.
A day, peacefully exhaled.
Temptation circles its way around my neck
& slides down my back like a bead of sweat,
please,
collar me to something softer.

Drunken blossoms sing,
I will give you everything
if you can give up everything.
I can teach you
how light filters true through silk screens, how it
matures into pliancy, curves misshapen edges, finds
its way



Tapioca smooth.
Like how the river runs
through your veins,
sleepless and indebted to the sky.

Dear, do not speak to me so gently. I fold
into myself, paper crane
fingers fluttering.
In the depth of this haze, desire simmers
unrelenting.

White rabbit on the edge
of tomorrow, and the days after tomorrow,
Tell me what to do with this yearning.
Dream a dream for me, one I can keep for myself.
Let the lotus flowers

bloom

without fear of
ink-blot dark.

III.

i touch the side of her cheek
and she comes back to me

she comes back to me
brighter stronger

moon tell me the world
and i will weave it for you
moon tell me []
and i will forge it for you



she gives it all to me
soft shadowed midnight kisses

a palace built from
paper lanterns capable of flight

little cakes cut into even pieces
yolk christened [].

i hold its beating heart next to
mine silent

on the doorstep plucked flowers
but not []
just billowy clouds trying
to imitate what they do not
know and i cannot

waive this immortal affair
without consequence

the story goes
i emerged from the heavens more

of myself i swallowed every synonym
for whole and willed it
into existence

still hear something breaking
in the quiet night

like the bending of willows
chopping of bamboo

what to do when



home rejects my []
i stretch myself across universes
collecting boundless
baby bunnies and

tea leaf bouquets to
make up for it

i know i am not

worthy of anything but
i want to be []

i am untouchable.
i am pure light condensed into power.
but i will never
contemplate the moonlight again

not from a window
not from the foot of a bed
not in the arms of another

& wishing is worse than living
when i have
no master in life

but [] still
command me turn me
into little puddles of want
as i sleep

and i unravel

and i unravel

and i



The Towering Images

Olivia Zhang

SEW UP THE SEAMS

Jane R. Snyder

after Louie
left for America
War broke out
and kept his letters
at a distance
Rachel picked up
needle and thread
to feed her children
hid his pocket watch
and her wedding ring
inside an old shoe
the Cossacks kicked aside
and waited for the
needle and thread being
raised across the ocean
to sew up the seams
he had left behind



BACK AND FORTH

Jane R. Snyder

Nana spent countless
summer afternoons
sitting with the *girls*
around a wooden
card table in the heat
at the Castle Hill Pool
each in a bathing suit
straps slipping down off
plump tanned shoulders
pushing smooth Mahjong
tiles *BAM! CRACK!*
back and forth while
pressing cans of
iced Coca-Cola to the
back of her neck



LUCKY SILVER DOLLAR

Jane R. Snyder

Grandpa Louie
always sat on the
toilet spinning his
lucky silver dollar
on the glazed floor tiles
right beneath his feet
what was he thinking
what was he wishing for
he had never had a
throne like that before
coming to America



Extinguisher

Chris Clemens

After the graduation party, a whole world winds down within our campfire.
Empires of flame fall. Bright ember cities inevitably fade away. We shiver closer
while entire continental logs, once sizzling and crackling with fiery life, crumble
to ash.

Is God like us: too lazy to fetch more wood?

It's after midnight. The last smouldering settlements hold out bravely
against the wind, but that jerk Rodrigo pours lukewarm beer over the fizzing
world, laughing as we scream, NO!

Then he stands and pees on the steaming expanse like Armageddon's
nastiest demon. Rodrigo will be a terrifying police officer next year.



call to adventure

Larry Li

dreaming: an
unalienable right of
the young. starry eyes,
freshly baked, like a
hummingbird's wingbeats,
masquerade as confidence's
younger brother.

tomorrow: rejection, like a
brick wall, chips a tooth. shuffles
the deck, draws a fresh hand,
sets sail to India. but,

for now: rejoice,
o king of the blind.
each tiny star in the
vast night sky
waits
to be held in
your hands
awhile.



Cattle Herder

Sadiq Mustapha

Kennings

Diego Calle

Hawk-road; whale-road; snail-road.
—Susurrus of waves, of pinions.

God-road; star-road; shade-road— . . . marred
with wine; crushed asphodel on

the black stone. Me-road; you-road. —A he-,
a she-road. We wend lone—lone

through blank air. (*Forwards; backwards. . . . Ever towards
our Rome.*)



Synesthesia Synth 80s

Ingrid Cui

when I look at you—
I am not sure if
it is a mirror in flesh
or a deep pool of piranhas
that stares back, lighting
America in the light of
gasoline, glistening cinematics
on saturated screens,
& me
diagnosed pity-seeking
addict.

I say,
“but I disagree,
Mr. President, I
am Lucien, runner of the lines,
and you are newspaper boy
who is not real,
and only plays violin for
the euthanasia enthusiasts.”
You tell me to stop romanticizing
LSD; I tell you the Chinese
never learned how to spell.

It’s 3am and I’ve become convinced
that the shell of the universe lies in the prognosis
of a two minute song, intersection of
rock & blues, melancholy worship
of piano I can’t play—

and I am Rochefoucauld in hotel rooms
unable to finish before I start;
unable to decide if the sparks falling
from your mouth speak gospel
or truth—



the nerves of a spine
collapsing inward
and rewinding

idle chatter on a tape of LPC
I rebuild Taliesen
but still it is not enough;

as Matanzas burned
on the white chapel rocks
on the sandy beaches
of mistaken India,
so I too flick my laugh
over your shoulder
and die sober in the morning,
free again.

On the interstate 47
turn spotify up & car windows
down & together we coast
along the ocean a rainy day
no traffic just ocean &
we are the light we are
the light we are the light



When the birds are silent

Irina Tall

Dream journal, 26 August

H. R. Link

I had a baby with the
Devil. She was super cute.
You came to me, eyes unspooling,
Said,

If you are not that child's mother
then we are not asleep.

My baby dozed in my dream arms. The
Devil sat, smoking from his mouth and ears,
Below us on a lower step. The staircase led
Infinitely into Earth.

I brushed my daughter's hair back;
Her eyes opened, opaque as tinted glass
In direct sun. Otherwise,
She was like a human infant.

I said,

Claiming her feels like
extracting my entrails one by one
while med students watch, distracted
with some other urgent task.
I can't remember a time
when I wasn't dissected by
her slightest cry.

Good,

You said.

The longest loves are
surgical - miraculous, amnesiac,
excruciating, uninteresting.
You're learning the banality
of vivisection.



Apples

Jack D. Harvey

Apples. Bark apples,
block apples, tea apples,
cart apples, apples also
apples: singing harp apples,
Helen's apples, little green
apples. Not apples: treacle,
guns, horses, pears, peas,
cannibals. I'll trade my
puppy for one good black
pip. Redblueyellow
apples in neon signs,
dead black apples
in the fire,
apples big as
lion hearts, bounding
sounding blue apples,
like bells in temples.

Only apples
have no keepsakes.
The core is
dour, sour.



Sometimes you just need to dream

Irina Tall

▲

O god of mixed results

Lisa Bellamy

O god of wasps, of no-see-ums, of monstrous wings;
O god of stingers, seen and unseen;
O god of the stung, O god of havoc and harm, O god of hypervigilance;
O god of oversensitivity & god of tit-for-tat;
 also god of forgiveness, forbearance, good humor.
O god of forever wars, agribusiness, effective altruism's flim-flam; O god of harm
reduction, of Narcan;
O god of promises, god of broken promises;
 god of surprises, i.e., god of dreams come true.
O god of the dumbing-down of awe, god of giving up; wait: O god
of fall-on-my-knees, god of the good overwhelm. O god of us—your
bereft, your befuddled;
 O god of bravery—believe me: we try, god, we try.

▼

Petrichor

Johanna Kiik

Petrichor (/ˈpɛtrɪkɔːr/): the earthy scent produced when rain falls on dry soil
or the stains in the crevices of your
childhood shins
long before mama uses her outside
voice through screen doors
only to power-wash your muddy art
down the sink drain;
the warm washing cold skin stung sharply so,
learning that sense,
your white hot fury pulsed an amateur
fist at wall tile,
which was swept into mama's calloused hand
whose fingers spoke,
'There are bones within these walls, much older
than even you'
and you are so ashamed you burn maroon
right with your knees;
before you knew to spell your given name
there was this:

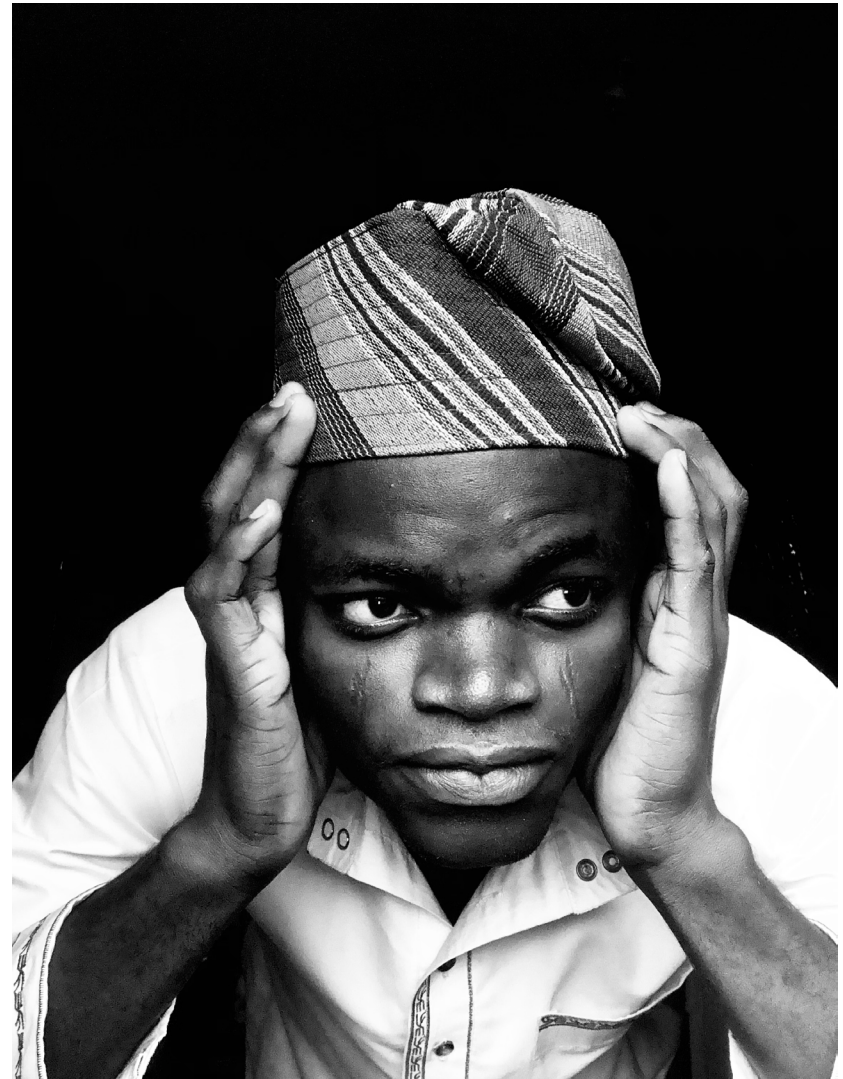
Petrichor (/ˈpɛtrɪkɔːr/): the earthy scent produced when rain falls on dry soil
which mama calls worms for robins but you
insist nonsense;
Robin is no such name for this creature,
you baptize it
Scabby, so your elbows match the feather;
you grow further
from this gangly body you just don't know
is a body
but for your field trip to the kids' farm; you
returned home to
packaged cold meats and mama couldn't stop
incessant wails
which salted steaks 'till nothing but ichor
bled warm beneath,
so the red robin on your porch makes you

▲

dizzily sick;
before you knew to spell your mindless ache
there was this:

Petrichor (/ˈpɛtrɪkɔːr/): the earthy scent produced when rain falls on dry soil
or taking a shower, windows open
so you aren't lone
with the shoddy disposable razor
who cuts jagged,
leaves a mean-streak patch of fur down your leg
you cannot see
beneath the hairline cuts, fractures of skin
and you wonder
how often does the drain swirl red warm blood?
Wine-like, maybe
tiles like the taste or that liquid soft
because, face it,
they must be tired of cold hard water
clogging the drain,
wet moldy pipes when it gets too warm, and

Petrichor (/ˈpɛtrɪkɔːr/) is the earthy scent produced when rain falls on dry soil
You hope for humidity to make excuse
to stay inside.
After all, you are much too old for mud.



Predestined
Imran Abiola Sulola



Ode to the Plateau

Sophia (Sophi) Pandit

My grandmother warned me I'd end up
like her cousin with under-eye ravines,
youth eroded by tears.

*(And still I cried for you, because
the presence of life is marked by the presence of water.)*

The body is an oil field on a fault
line. When the nearby birds can't preen the residue
out of their feathers, remind them that they're
stained in commodity.

*(And still they refuse to be sold, because
home is on the banks of a well-caressed back.)*

The cautionary tale lives on in my
grandmother now, who no longer dyes
her hair. Those few white threads break
when I forget to call her.

*(And still she combs through the knots, because
a long night precedes the easy morning.)*

Form equals function—best not to
defy intelligent design.

*(And still your palm kisses are stigmata, a martyrdom
that I permitted and God didn't.)*



At Breakfast One Summer in Marfa

Jenny Maaketo

Traveling should not
oblige the traveler to
order overpriced coffee
and oatmeal with three
meek and measly blue
berries placed more for
the eyes than the tongue.
A blue ellipsis embedded
in the bowl is surely not
to nourish the traveler's
belly. Flavor is an after-
thought to embellish fine
cuisine in a fine hotel in
Marfa. An odd modern dot
of pop Donald Judd made
in the likeness of fine art
and even finer patrons
who travel here to tour
The Chinati & The Judd
Estates as modern art's
one grand time capsule.
Here, with tumbleweed
and flat cracked land,
the only harvest is from
the elements: sun, wind,
and art. Here, the blocks
are silent as the galleries
on Main. Here, even a
bowl of oats is seen as
another art installation
to aliment the refined
masses. Over five for
a sip, over ten for a
bite, and yet we do.
And yet, we do enjoy
the art of passing through.



Reminiscence
Sofia Lebovics

Before the Storm Breaks

Daniel Barry

a cat sits up on her haunches. John puts on his pants. the table splits in two. the table splits in four. the AC hums as if it doesn't know. the tea is poured and you can feel it in your bones. Margaret opens the book to page three hundred and forty-eight, the final page. the storm comes like it's got an invitation. it rolls up its sleeves and combs its hair in the mirror like a preening ballroom dancer. young men sleep in. young men go outside and film themselves climbing to heaven. an old man inhales the clouds that irritate the horizon. he swallows and the storm ends.



The Tower
Yaocheng

Practice

Gemma Cooper-Novack

no one but me remembers the nights I
sang to you after your wail crackled the monitor before rehearsal
was over and I rocked you like the lake waves while we waited
for your parents to come home. I smoothed your syllables into
my mother's melodies remembered and after two years two blocks
away you knew my name and made it yours: "Dem-ba's
my friend." it was my name in your apartment, the way
your mother called me, and she trusted me and I was yours. not that I
imagined I was your parent, but creature too fragile for
my arms, colicky banshee, playground whirlwind, you would always
be twenty-three years younger than I was and even though I went
to rehearsals too I left no one behind yet and someday I'd offer
a girl who was an adult right now really my rocking chair and free
pick of Lean Cuisines after bedtime, a tour of the changing
table and charge of someone precious I'd created with someone
who loved me who I loved while we went out to keep creating. I put
my hand on your back in the crib, fingers striping flannel, til
your breathing was even and I maneuvered sticky door
shut and wandered another apartment, another life. the tabby
avoided me and the black cat wouldn't
stop complaining and I squeezed my inhaler again, again so
I wouldn't have to give this up, this practice, this yearning. no one else
will know those nights of books I'd memorized and stacking blocks
and whispered song, blueprints for a life I'd never build.

Poem for Hanging On, or, Have You Considered Accupressure for The End of the World

Shana Ross

Fingers pinch / the tissue thin / hand hard hard / on the web between / thumb &
forefinger / until everything whitens / the flesh squeezed / the tender pads / under the nails
/ of the determined / grip. I should scrub / the dark line tracing / the curve where chitin /
is bound to skin, instead / I pluck small crumbs / off the table after / the release. I believe in
/ pressure points & still / can't find / the purposeful pain.

Tune into the details / like a music
box. I turn / & turn & sound / each pinpoint happening / in turn, one bristle / disturbed
while / some other hand / cranks the infinite song / on bumps of metal drum. / I shred
time of my own volition. / I eat it as confetti & / I am never full but / all told I grow fat /
off the constancy / of the swallowing.

If I ever save death's daughter / I will ask for / a modest
reward / of one single second / doubled each day / until it bankrupts / the universe. I
would / hire an astrophysicist & / a banker to understand / my wealth, immediately / take
some time in / a small pocket universe / to nap without an alarm / set. I carry tension / in
my jaw but / where it calcifies / is my neck, just below / the ear, where I am / turning to
stone, growing / a time shaped teratoma / with teeth & matted hair.

That's all a rhino
does / to distinguish / itself, a hair horn / for defense & sex / appeal. When I tire / of
holding my own / hand to bruising / I rub the impervious / hoard, hoping

something will yield.

▲

On the flat roof of my apartment (desperately wishing for a strong gale)

Leyelle

I cease to pretend to understand my body
How yesterday there was no blood and today all of it
How yesterday there was no pain ...



We Moon

Amuri Morris



For a few rented days

Terence Hawes

For a few rented days, we could forget, she says.
Our apartment, a lease transferred. Broken-down
boxes put together again. That year we decided to
separate, the summer was like any other; leaves
refused to turn. News of the city's housing crisis
poured through various devices. Children danced
in sprinklers. People rode the bus to work. Sometimes,
thinking back to those days, I can't remember the
arguments—how we would always make up, until
we didn't. Only the nights I spent out of the apartment,
waiting until she was asleep. Under stars, streetlights,
kept from being seen, I would walk to a bar and watch
reel after reel of the past year's sports highlights on a
muted television. When the trees finally succumbed
to fall and red and green tents began to appear under
overpasses, in rail yards among rusted-out car frames
still drowning in the earth, we agreed that there was no
shame in going home—each of us back to places we
grew up and first recognized love in the hands that delivered
us. We filled and taped shut boxes marked with each other's
names. Slept on the bed we were leaving for the tenants
our landlord had found to replace us. One of those mornings,
the city waking to a false sun, the river dappled with shadows
of gridded bridge spires. That's when she said that we could
forget it all for a while. A house on the shore. The sea, a deep
blue, sure to go on forever. She and I together again for a few
more rented days. Running up the beach on our last, to the parking
lot, to the long drive back to the city we will call home no longer.
Making sure to take a last look at the sea, the wind moving waves
gently, over the footprints we left behind there, for a time, in the sand.



Truce

Thomas Mixon

comes from fidelity, comes from a father in an interstitial time
period between Middle and Old English refusing to kill Danes
during the massacre that took place on Saint Brice's Day,

comes from a mother on the coast of the North Sea carving
Old Frisian onto a piece of driftwood, which she remembered
from a coin a stranger gave her when she needed it most,

comes from several Cimbri children more than two thousand
years ago, extending their fingers through gaps in a fence
to touch the friends that they were suddenly forbidden from,

comes from a Proto-Indo-Iranian speaking engineer before that,
who was executed for not fixing the wheel of a war chariot,
whose last words were not recorded but which we sense

each time we stay true to peace, and work against violence,
like the musician in the Hara forests on the Khuran Strait,
who invented the lute more than seven millennia ago,

comes from the music of that instrument's four strings,
the body taken from mulberry wood, which was scratched,
so many decades before, by a pair of Neanderthal lovers,

who came at the same time, who took their sharpest blades
to a tree and then felt bad about it, and threw the tools
into the sea, where they rest now, hopefully forever.



Intoxication
Jasper Glen

what if we kissed at the tom verlaine book sale

C. M. Gigliotti

and I were all softness
between your covers
even though you dmed me
that you don't read
the way I do

that's ok watch me bend my rules
just the way I think you'd bend
my spine if you held me in your hands

and this is a text
you'll never run out of
though I'm no fine print

is it funny?

how a meme
sums things up so brutally
how the yellow idle crescent
replaces moonlight and my thoughts
chafe at the edges

meet me in our hemisphere
we'll get back to the roots
and bring screen names to life
in a room over washington square...



oh well
when the record collection opens up

Contributors

Abubakar Sadiq Mustapha is a multimedia storyteller whose works focus on climate change, displacement, identity, and culture. He believes in the power of photography and how it can be used for mental health and development. His work has appeared in the *Ebedi Review*, *Ake Review*, *Lolwe*, *Panorama: the Journal of Travel, Place, Nature*, *the Nigeria Review*, *the Shallow Tales Review*, *Libretto Magazine*, *Salamander Ink Magazine*, and elsewhere. He is a fellow of the Bada Murya Fellowship and a 2023 fellow of the Imodoye Writers Residency. He is one of the finalists for the Africa Soft Power Climate Change Photo Essay Prize and was selected as one of the overall best for the Wiki Loves Africa 2023 Photography Contest in Nigeria.

Amuri Morris is an artist based in Richmond, VA. She recently graduated from painting and printmaking at Virginia Commonwealth University. Throughout the years she has acquired several artistic accolades, such as a Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Fellowship. She aims to promote diversity in art canon, specifically focusing on the black experience. You can find more of her work at www.murisart.com.

Charlotte Lai (she/her) is an artist from Vancouver, Canada. She likes windy days and shark smiles. Find more of her work, published and forthcoming, in *Mnerva*, *Goose Journal*, and *The Hart House Review*.

Chris Clemens lives and teaches in Toronto, surrounded by raccoons. Nominated for Best Microfiction and Best Small Fictions, his writing appears in *Invisible City*, *JAKE*, *The Dribble Drabble Review*, *Apex Magazine*, and elsewhere.

C. M. Gigliotti is a multi-hyphenate artist with degrees from Central Connecticut State University and the Writers Institute at Susquehanna University. Her work has appeared in *CommuterLit*, *The Twin Bill*, *MEMEZINE*, *Scraps*, *Prose Poems*, and elsewhere. She lives in Germany.

Daniel Barry recently finished a year of service volunteering as a teacher on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Children gravitate towards him, because he knows how to play like one. He keeps a dream journal and has an unreasonable love for fava beans and figs. He's currently loving his work as a public safety officer at Ursinus University.

Diego Calle is a poet from Toronto, Canada. He is a second-year English and cinema studies major at the University of Toronto. His work has been featured in *The Woodsworth Review* and *Aóthen Magazine*.

DS Maolalai has been described by one editor as “a cosmopolitan poet” and another as “prolific, bordering on incontinent.” His work has been nominated twelve times for BOTN, ten for the Pushcart and once for the Forward Prize, and released in three collections; *Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden* (Encircle Press, 2016), *Sad Havoc Among the Birds* (Turas Press, 2019), and *Noble Rot* (Turas Press, 2022).

Gianna Sannipoli was born in California, U.S.A. She received her Bachelor's degree from Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic, and a Master's in Poetry from Queen's University, Belfast. Her work has been published in *The Cardiff Review*, *London Grip*, *Blackbird*, and elsewhere.

H. R. Link is a Canadian-American poet working and studying in Montréal/Tiohtià:ke. She is a founding editor at Ekphrasis magazine, a platform dedicated to mixed-media art. Her poems have appeared in *The Malahat Review*, *What Are Birds? Journal*, and *Stirring: A Literary Collection*.

Ingrid Cui is a graduate of the University of Toronto whose work has been published in *Acta Victoriana*, *The Trinity Review*, *Ghost City Review*, *Pinhole Poetry*, *Montreal Writes*, *L'Éphémère Review* and *Ricepaper Magazine*. She is currently pursuing an MPhil at Oxford.

Irina Tall (Novikova) is an artist, graphic artist, illustrator. She graduated from the State Academy of Slavic Cultures with a degree in art, and also has a bachelor's degree in design. Her first personal exhibition “My soul is like a wild hawk” (2002) was held in the Museum of Maxim Bagdanovich. In her works, she raises themes of ecology. In 2005 she devoted a series of works to the Chernobyl disaster, drawing on anti-war topics. The first big series she drew was The Red Book, dedicated to rare and endangered species of animals and birds. She writes fairy tales and poems, and illustrates short stories. She draws various fantastic creatures: unicorns, animals with human faces, and she especially likes the image of a human bird – Siren. In 2020, she took part in Poznań Art Week. Her work has been published in magazines: *Gypsophila*, *Harpy Hybrid Review*, *Little Literary Living Room*, and others. In 2022, her short story was included in the collection *The 50 Best Short Stories*, and her poem was published in the collection of poetry *the Wonders of Winter*.

▲

Jack D. Harvey's poetry has appeared in *Scrivener*, *The Comstock Review*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Typishly Literary Magazine*, *The Antioch Review*, *The Piedmont Poetry Journal* and elsewhere. The author has been a Pushcart nominee and over the years has been published in a few anthologies. The author has been writing poetry since he was sixteen and lives in a small town near Albany, New York.

These selections by American poet **Jane R. Snyder** come from an as yet unpublished collection of ancestral poems, "Where do you think I get it from?" Her work has appeared in *TOWER*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *The Reform Jewish Quarterly*, *RESPONSE*, *The New York Quarterly*, and elsewhere in print and online. A graduate of Syracuse University (MFA) and PARSONS School of Design (BFA), Jane studied writing with poets Toby Olson (The New School) and the late William Packard (NYU). Her catalogue of published work includes creative non-fiction, short stories, essays, and songs. CONTACT: janersnyder.com or thisjane.com

Jasper Glen is a poet and collage artist from Vancouver. His work appears or is forthcoming in *Posit*, *The Brooklyn Review*, *A Gathering of the Tribes*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *Word For/ Word*, *MAYDAY*, *Collage.com.ar*, and elsewhere. His poems have been nominated for Best New Poets and the Pushcart Prize. See jasperglen.com.

Jenny Maaketo (she/her) is a neurodivergent writer, psychiatric nurse, and former professional actress from Austin, Texas. She is currently an MFA poetry candidate at the University of Mississippi, as well as the senior poetry editor for *Yalobusha Review*. Jenny was a finalist for the 2024 Tennessee Williams Festival Poetry Contest and the 2023 Michelle Boisseau Poetry Prize, a semifinalist for the 2023 Crab Creek Review Poetry Prize, and the runner-up for the 2022 Patty Friedmann Writing Competition. Recently, she received a C.D. Wright Memorial Scholarship to attend the 2024 Poetry Program at the Community of Writers. Her poems appear or are forthcoming in *The Florida Review*, *Columbia Review*, *Atlanta Review*, and elsewhere. Jenny lives in rural Mississippi with her husband, one-year-old son, four dogs, two cats, and lots of love.

Johanna Kiik is a second-year student at Trinity College, majoring in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and Cell and Molecular Biology, with a minor in English. She loves writing odd short stories and poetry, and grew up around parents who highly valued literature. Her short stories have been featured in *Goose Fiction* and *The Woodsworth Review*. Outside of writing, she adores performing music, learning about wild, edible and medicinal plants, and watching many period dramas.

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Kerry Trautman lives in Ohio, USA. Her work has appeared in numerous journals, including *Slippery Elm*, *Limp Wrist*, *The Lake*, *Thimble*, *Channel Magazine*, *Paper & Ink*, and *Gasconade Review*. Her work has also appeared in anthologies such as *Journey to Crone* (Chuffed Buff Books 2013), *Delirious: A Poetic Celebration of Prince* (NightBallet Press, 2016), *Resurrection of a Sunflower* (Pski's Porch Press, 2017), and *Let Me Say This: A Dolly Parton Poetry Anthology* (Madville Publishing, 2023). Kerry's books are *Things That Come in Boxes* (King Craft Press 2012), *To Have Hoped* (Finishing Line Press 2015), *Artifacts* (NightBallet Press 2017), *To Be Nonchalantly Alive* (Kelsay Books 2020), *Marilyn: Self-Portrait, Oil on Canvas*, (Gutter Snob Books 2022), *Unknowable Things* (Roadside Press 2023), and *Irregulars* (Stanchion Books 2023).

Klark Janowski is a poet. Her work is inspired by Anne Michaels and Carolyn Kizer, among others.

Lachlan Haddow is a student and poet based in Toronto.

Leyelle is a Black-Hispanic author and poet from Maryland, USA, but raised in part in her ancestral home of the Dominican Republic. She's the author of the Turnill prize winning short story "Rain Dance" and the novel *Damsel in the Red Dress*. She's passionate about telling a story, in any form or medium possible, to express the beauty and complexity of life and human emotions.

Lisa Bellamy studied with Philip Schultz at The Writers Studio. She is the author of "The Northway and Nectar," a chapbook, and has received two Pushcart Prizes and a Fugue Poetry Prize. Her poem "Yoho" appeared in the UN Network on Migration's 2022 climate change exhibition. www.lisabellamypoet.com

Mackenzie Carignan is owner and founder of Creative Vision Lab, a writing and creativity coaching practice in Broomfield, CO. She has a Ph.D. in Creative Writing from University of Illinois at Chicago, and her collection, *a house without a roof is open to the stars*, is available from Black Radish Books, and her chapbook, "someone somewhere is running" is available from Dancing Girl Press. Her work has appeared in *Jet Fuel Review*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Poetry is Currency*, *Dusie*, and many other publications. Editorial credits include editing *Square One* at University of Colorado, *Listenlight* online poetry journal, and other smaller projects, including collaborative performances and productions. She enjoys facilitating experiences and workshops that make space for creativity, rebellion, and authenticity in her clients' lives, work, and family spaces.

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Mekyle is an aspiring poet of Pakistani origin with a Bachelor's degree in English from Carleton University. His inspiration comes from the negotiation of culture and ethnicity he enacts in his life as an immigrant in Canada. He wants his writing to surface and center the nuances of the South Asian voice. He has cultivated his interests from contrasting arenas of his life, but the common thread running through them has been writing and art, culminating in a poetic voice that evokes the personal while echoing diasporic journeys and diverse traditions.

Nina Mercuri is a writer from the Interior of British Columbia.

Olivia Zhang is a grade 12 student who is currently finishing up high school at Haverhill College. In the future, she aspires to launch her own architectural firm after pursuing a career in the field. Over the past year, Olivia has been working on her architecture-based portfolio leading up to university applications. She has also completed two internships at Kohn Pederson Fox Associates and Safdie Architects, where she observed the design and planning process of creating a building. Ultimately, Olivia Zhang has great expectations for herself and envisions herself achieving a lot in life.

Shana Ross is a recent transplant to Edmonton, Alberta and Treaty Six Territory. *Qui transtulit sustinet*. Her work has recently appeared in *Canthius*, *Identity Theory*, *Yolk*, *Ninth Letter*, *Quarter After Eight* and more. She is the winner of the 2022 Anne C. Barnhill prize and the 2021 Bacopa Literary Review poetry competition. She serves as an editor for *Luna Station Quarterly* and a critic for *Pencilhouse*.

Sofia Lebovics is a current Etobicoke School of the Arts student majoring in Contemporary Arts in Toronto. Her artistic practice is an interaction between herself and the materials she uses, dealing with the impact of connections and the facets that shape one's identity. Her work has been featured in the Natural History Museum (Halifax), the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the Art Gallery of Mississauga, the Museum of Contemporary Art (Toronto), Northern Contemporary Gallery, and Gallery1313, among others. In her spare time she enjoys creative writing, reading, and playing the violin.

Sophia (Sophi) Pandit is a second-year Psychology student at the University of Toronto, St. George. Originally from Washington D.C., they began writing poetry as a teenager after years of pursuing other creative outlets. Sophi has won awards at the regional and state levels for her poetry, in addition to being published in Susquehanna University's Apprentice Writer. When not writing, they can be found cuddling with their cats Paprika and Pickle or performing with UofT's Improv Team.

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Sulola Imran Abiola (The Official Sulola) (he/his) is from Oyo state, Nigeria. He is a phone photographer, poet, public servant and a student of the prestigious University of Ibadan, Nigeria, with some of his work published in *The Quills*, *Kalopsia Lit Magazine*, *Lumiere Review*, *Undivided Magazine*, *Wondrous Real Magazine*, *ARTmosterrific*, *Kaedi Africa*, *Best Of Africa*, *Rasa Literary Review*, *Odd Mag*, *Macro Magazine*, *The Roadrunner Review*, *Olney Magazine*, and *Lemonsputting Magazine*, amongst others.

Terence Hawes is a writer from Montreal, Quebec, Canada. While currently studying to be a clinical psychologist at McGill University, he writes in his spare time. Terence is a thirteen-year veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces, serving as a reservist in the infantry.

Thomas Mixon has poems and stories in *EVENT*, *Channel*, *Quarterly West*, and elsewhere. He's trying to write a few books.

Ty Li (she/her) is a first-year Social Sciences student at the University of Toronto with plans to double major in Anthropology and Cognitive Science. When not furiously typing fragments of poems into her notes app, she can be found cafe-hopping around Toronto, romanticizing studying in libraries, or photosynthesizing on a bench somewhere, somehow.

Veda Jane is a 17 year old artist who currently studies contemporary art at Etobicoke School of the Arts. She makes art to connect herself to her surroundings, and her own self. Currently, she's been enjoying Neutral Milk Hotel's album "In the Aeroplane Over the Sea," Charles Bukowski's poem "Let it Enfold You," and Sally Rooney's novel *Normal People*.

Viviana De Cecco is an Italian multi-genre author, writer, translator and visual artist. She works as a content writer and book reviewer for *Tint Journal* and *NewMyths*. As a photographer, she was a winner of Sunlight Press Magazine's 2024 Photography Contest (2nd place). Her photo "Cala Regina's Sea" was published in the same magazine, and two more will be published in the coming months. She writes historical and cultural articles for several American/English and Italian magazines, including the Italian magazine *InStoria* about history and tourism archaeology. Her literary writings and translations have also appeared in *The Polyglot Magazine*, *Aôten Magazine*, *Seaside Gothic*, *Hiraeth Publishing*, *Poets' Choice*, *Yuvoice.org*, *Azonal Translation* and others. Since 2013, she has published more than 50 short stories, poems, and novels of various genres. Her articles and short stories can be found at: <https://vivianadececco.altervista.org/>



Yaocheng is an artist who works with a wide range of mediums and art styles. Her works often incorporate fantastical themes but are always grounded in reality. She depicts real people, real lives, and real places.

Yuhuan (Albert) Xie is decidedly human.

Zach Keali'i Murphy is a Hawaii-born writer with a background in cinema. His stories appear in *The MacGuffin*, *Reed Magazine*, *The Coachella Review*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Raritan Quarterly*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *Little Patuxent Review*, *Flash Frog*, and more. He has published the chapbook "Tiny Universes" (Selcouth Station Press). He lives with his wonderful wife, Kelly, in St. Paul, Minnesota.



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