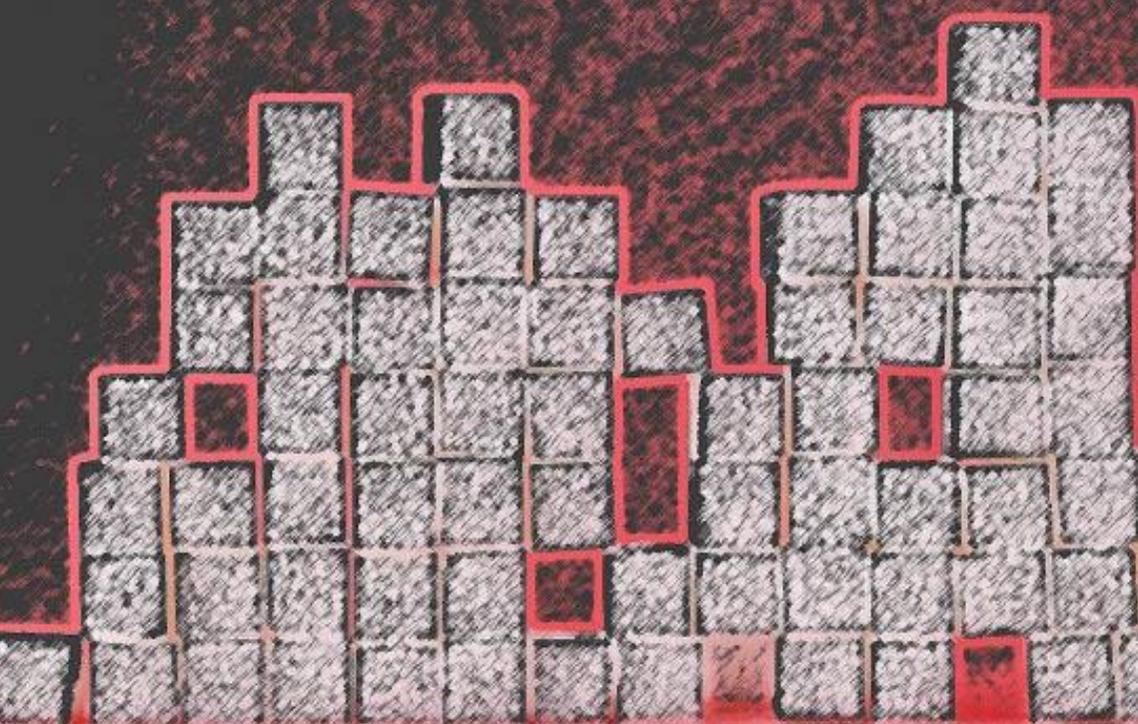


Saccharine Poetry

Volume Two

Autumn 2020



Saccharine Poetry

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Submissions: We are always delighted to receive submissions.

Our submission criteria can be found on our website:

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Introduction

Our second volume is loosely themed around the idea of, 'Together and Apart'. While we don't intend to have a theme for every volume of Saccharine the events of the past 8 months needed marking in some way. Covid-19 has pulled at the seams of so many aspects of society that can easily be taken for granted. Interdependence and relationality have in many ways been stripped back and new ways of interacting and supporting each other have had to be found. Many of the poems in this volume create space to explore this liminality.

When we were heading towards the deadline for submissions for Volume One we were aware that it felt like a close run thing whether the journal would make it off the ground.

As we approached the deadline for submissions for Volume Two we were overwhelmed by the submissions. Volume

One had come along with less submissions but such high quality work. Volume Two came around with such high quality work and so many submissions.

As the process of gathering, responding, editing continued we began to see some of the problems in our processes emerge. Any start-up faces challenges and this little voluntary venture is no different.

Going through the submissions for Volume two was a revelatory experience. So many established and emerging writers have caught the vision for SP – it's hard not to be excited to be involved in the publishing of the words that follow.

You, dear reader are in for a treat. Thank you for your continued support.

SP

Somatics

Margaret Anne Ernst

I wanted to make you a poem
about how and who and what
I will touch when this is all over.

About how I will hold your hand
with such grace you'll feel
like you've fallen into a cloud

How when we float flat palms
towards fingertips an energy
field will arise, gold-filled

How I'll bring the perfect gift

to every dinner party:
aloe vera, ribbon-tied tea

How when I break bread
on the altar I will build a bridge
through the cosmos with crumbs

How I'll offer to heal the wounds
you didn't know were there,
accumulated ache of centuries

How I'll hold babies with soft
gravity like the mother of God,
how I'll keen beside coffins

How I'll have such depth of insight
about consent it will allow us
to taste desire and freedom in one

But I will tell you the truth
that my embrace will likely
be pretty much what it was before

That my feet will still buzz
when I enter a hall and am
reminded of my own dislocation

That I'll forget to put the cookies
in the oven on time, and come
to your stoop empty-handed

That I may hug you too tight
or say the wrong thing, jumble
even the best of what I bring

At most I will feel the wind blow
differently between us, knowing
we are connected, invisibly

Never forgetting
The miracle that is
Breathing the same air,

The breath with which we're both made.
If it is simply this I bring you when

our hands again touch, I'll let it grow.

If I can lock eyes with you:

Tell you I love you when

saying goodbye, and not blink

I'll know it's in humble stretches

and revelations that history is made,

blending us, hopeful, raw, into one.

Quarantine

Riley Bounds

Left in a rush,
like there was some
great fire
behind them.
I mistake the wind
for carrying talk
between the buildings,
but it's just us.

They've kept me here
to work the grounds
while this lasts
like an undertaker
they won't trust
with a shovel.
A refrigerator lies

on the apartment lawn
like a relic
in bermuda grass;
a dead goldfish
in a bowl
outside a dorm,
scales and guts
to foam;
a rusted car,
brick-tired,
under the structure
like a warning.

I lean on the rail
and look out
for smoke
past the amphitheater,
but there is none.
I wonder if spring

feels the change,
if it feels
pity
for us,
empathy;
or maybe scorn,
mocking us
and our failed
experiment.
I wonder if God
speaks as quietly
as this chaos.

* * *

There is no fire
on the hill,
no bloodcurdling
scream.

The plumber gets up
at 5,

the sun also rises.

The family rug
is well kept
and swept under.

The old man
shouts down
generations.

We join
paper mâché
hands.

All these years
we've watched
time
lumber in the field
at such a distance
it hasn't noticed us.

We've just looked it
in the eye
now
for the first
time.

Rhetorical Question

Paula Bonnell

What was it about your hand on my thigh
as we sat in the backseat of the taxi?
From the side, we might almost have been a Victorian pair:
Two cut-paper people, he tall and she small,
sitting to divide the backseat into three parts:
the space between the window and her,
the space between her and him,
the space between him and the window.
Equipoise: each space the same size.
A Victorian pair: heat from the throne
to the crowns of our heads.
But expressed over the center space
casual as the swing of the Golden Gate Bridge
was your arm and the shapely lengths of your
fingers lightly resting on my thigh.

Come Back

Jessica Frelow

Where have you been? *Come, sit with me.*

i've waited for those words in the distance,
trailing behind morbidities and anxious calls—dead lines.
strength riddled between your teeth, it scared me
sent tingles of fear down morphed curves of my spine,
courted me in malicious ways— i did not need,
challenged faithful designation.

I want it now. need it now.

my feet are subdued in the dirt of reality,
longing for you to fill the base of my thoughts,
control my chaos.

it's time.

Night Vision

Gale Acuff

When my parents tell me they're divorcing

I think that no one loves me anymore
except for my dog, and he's just a mutt,
and then there's God, Who will take care of me

if He really exists, that is, and if
He won't then he doesn't and I'll bear it.
I guess I'll stay home to live with Mother

and Father will visit me on weekends
or maybe once a month. Every two
weeks would be alright with me. He'll roll up

the driveway as always, but not to stay,
and maybe he won't get out of his Olds

at all, just honk the horn, not too loudly

--Mother hates loud noises--and I'll run out
and open what used to be Mother's door
instead of getting in the back seat, where

I'll think I still belong, and then we're off,
maybe to the drug store for a milkshake,
or to a baseball game, or out to eat,

or over to his place to spend the night.
We'll watch TV, maybe pop some popcorn,
and he'll smoke Kents one after the other

until I start coughing, when he'll suggest
I open a window, which I will, but
forget to take my chair again because

I'm looking at the past out there somewhere.

Ah. He and Mother and I eat ice cream
that we made ourselves, for dessert, and I
squeeze extra chocolate syrup over mine,

and Mother asks me if I'd like some more
and Father says *Yes, yes - have seconds, boy-*
and I do. It's Saturday night and they

go to bed earlier than usual,
I'm not sure why but I'll darned sure find out,
so they leave me before the TV and

I watch a few minutes of *Gunsmoke*
until I make my move, tiptoe to their
bedroom, and peer through the keyhole and see

one big pile all rising and falling in
their bed and hear their breathing and giggling

and calling *Baby* but they don't mean me,

but then again I feel a bit unborn,
which is probably close to being dead,
and my life in between is what I am

now. There's a pretty good view from this window.

Then they groan and sigh and call and I feel
sorry for their pain, though it just ended
suddenly, like President JFK

getting nailed in the back of the head and
if you look real close at the footage you
can see the little pieces of his brain

go flying out of the black limousine,
so that if you ran the tape in reverse,

which I've never done, you'd see it come back

together again. *You're missing the show,*
Father says. *I thought you liked Matt Dillon.*

Oh, I say. If I jumped out the window,

it's at least thirty floors, I wonder if
I'd die before I splattered on the sidewalk.
But I can't do it, I'm such a coward.

So there's nothing left for me but to live.
I sit back down during the commercial
for Bolton's Used Cars. Buy a used car and

they throw in a pony and if you don't
want the pony you can have a hi fi.
I want to ask Father, What were you two

doing that Saturday night? but I won't
betray myself and betray them, too--I

shouldn't have been spying anyway and

they'll probably never do it again,

but one day when I'm married I might, our
child looking through the keyhole to catch us

in the act, whatever it is. I'm not
sure but I think it's how married folks pray.

If they said *Amen* I didn't hear it.

Maybe when I said it I drowned them out.

Caught in the gap between what was and what shall be

Andy Campbell

They whisper,
The things we miss.
Haunting us from every shadowed thought
Echoes of the assumed greet us each step
Down the strangely empty main road
And the bus stop
reverberates loneliness.

And yet
We each remain connected
To a community stretching beyond distance
electronic embraces sent and received, each one known
Each one understood and held where they are
With a promise that one day

Not long from now

We return.

Hymn to Black Mountain

Chris Collins

Rapture of awakening when the mountain opens slow
eyelids, filled with gold tears.

Shadows pool in black wells in its gentle palms and elbow
crooks and crevices

As it stretches out, before spilling down in streams; black
droplets shaken off by sunrise.

The green gathered gums are shot holy by royal silks
In red and gold and purple as the flower of the sky blooms

–

Swimming in an ever-changing aurora, celebrated
By the white flags of flocking birds. Auspices of peace.

And every morning I meditate in that prism of colour
And offer my prayer to the mountain.

Bible in a Charity Shop

Andrew Velzian

Did you lead a fruitful life
in the Eden of your making?

Were you blessed by the dew drops falling
from Spring's first bud so virginal?

Were you released from life, like sparrows feet
casting off from the branch so kind?

And does the question take root, by those left behind
is the afterlife as sweet, as promised?

Altar Prayer at Petertide

Adey Grummet

God,
gather again my breathed-on bones.
Re-string my sinews
and bless, once more, my soft, loved flesh.

May eyes grow wide and clear.
May hands recall the touch of oil.
May voice find depth and ring.

Come down.
Breathe through.
Blow flame into ready, thin kindling.
Set the beacon again on the brow of the hill.
Tend the roar of change and consuming
and the showering of sparks,
till, white with light

and blind with glory,
I may hear once more
the singing coolness of the still, small voice

All elements,
all firmaments,
all time and timelessness is yours.
Alleluia!

Fall Back

Vicky Allen

fall back
back into the night
arms wide
as receiving angels

fall back
into constellations
of billion-year-old
storied stars

fall back
back beyond today's brittle twists
into flitting wings
across moon-hazed clouds

and falling

be found
found by silver light
and shadow
hollow wind
owl hoot
moth brush

and falling
be found
wrapped in midnight velvet
soft, safe
a child cradled
in the warm and waiting
arms of home

Paradise Lost

Aylin Graves

My mother lives au pays du jasmin
with mirabilis, honeysuckle
Smyrna figs and lavender
in a cathedral of smells.

The nave is a steamy kitchen:
onions turning, bread burning
my mother fuming aubergines
with nicotine-flavoured incense.

Each shelf is a prayer, a small wonder.
The coffee tin, a relic
for witnessing and worship.
Miracles on other shelves
in bottles bathed in light:
za'atar, sumac, basil, cumin.

Eyes closed and waiting
for the next hypnosis,
I open a cupboard door
to a pungent kiss:
cooking gas in a blue cylinder.

At night the congregation gathers in the garden:
family, friends, pilgrims and stray cats.
The table, an altar to peppery scents:
mint, thyme, rosemary,
aniseed in a slender glass.
Chin chin!

And jasmine,
sluggish and sweet,
sways in the breeze
as the night air whispers:
le jasmin est la fleur de ta mère.

Later we recede to the bedrooms
our temples with candles in alcoves
which, when blown out
leave trails on the walls.

My long hair, a flame of faith
a baptismal mark on pillows
in the rose-windowed house
under the southern cross.

But now, summer is gone, paradise is lost.

In this lightless wintery world,
cold and away from my mother,
I close my eyes and remember:
the mint, the coffee, the cumin
the dinners, the believers
and jasmin jasmin jasmin.

Midnight Psalm

Siam Hatzaw

To my God who hears me
in silent moments of defeat,
when carrying the weight of waters
brings me to fevered sleep.

And Morning's call to prayer
alights on heavy hearted dreamers:
waken to a haze of song, half-finished
waken to a haze of not quite there
waken to a moment of not wanting to waken.

I have a choice:

To see myself as shadow and in so doing, live
To see myself opaque and face the other side

So teach me to be both.

*Somewhere, far from here
I'm bathing in the light of it all,
and in the dampened stillness
I lie waiting for the pull.*

To a God who hears me, call me.
I am scared of my own voice.
Show me to myself, I miss her dearly.
Losing traces of this wholeness,
dust by dying dust
and to this dust we should return—
but not this mourning.

This morning is for birdsong,
sunwash the air of my first breath.
Liquid light flow through me, over me,
drown me in all this living

and to be loved in return.

To the god of here, me.

I give myself to you.

Bliss and bliss and peace

forever and ever amen.

Thankful I Find Her Anyway

Colette Tennant

Maybe it's because she majored in philosophy,
I don't know, but I have a hard time
following the directions my daughter gives me.

When we plan to meet at a new place for dinner,
she'll say something like,

"Take the first road toward the setting sun and turn left
when you see a crow on the bridge."

or

"Stay straight until you come to that old tree –
you know, the one with an odd branch
that looks like Charlemagne's mother.
Turn right and park as soon as you can."

I want to tell her I've never been that good
at reading Derrida or Foucault, but she explains,

"When you see three stray cats and an extravagant moon,
look for me just inside the yellow door."

When I noticed you near

Vicky Allen

- Yesterday, video call and a gathering of hearts beating, unified
- This morning, on sorry hands and knees clearing up broken glass, quieting
- Two years and three months ago, holding her hand, whispering an old blessing, saying goodbye
- Last summer, the chaos and joy of watching him flourishing and he spoke to us all like a mountain
- In the autumn, drowsy at fireside, on retreat, at rest
- Last June, barefoot on salt marsh, warm and soft between my grateful toes, eternal rise of skylarks

- Now, remembering, a moment between moments to recollect, whether the day is filled with light - or not.

One Heart

Jemelia Moseley

One heart

Divided

Two paths

Now apart

All love

Sunshine and rain, equal rainbows at the start

Now we have thunderstorms and shattered cars

So hard, even

Pavements are cracked

Everyone's wearing winter hats

Umbrellas up

Sheltering from the storm

Tears from above

Us, no more love, nor trust

At home, wood fire, huddled on the sofa drowning in my
own tears, trying to keep warm

Knowing you and I again... will never be our norm

So Alike (But Not The Same)

J. Archer Avary

you and me
are SO alike
but you are not
like me

we may share
certain characteristics
but I am not like you
even though
you and me
are SO alike

I refuse to be bundled
nor trundled or kowtowed
definitionally derelict in my
untraditional traditions

just like everybody else

I am not unique
people like me exist
but a certain percentage
of people like me
are not like me
not at all

I refuse to identify
with or be identified as
an active participant unless
you actively refuse to
participate with me

we are SO alike
you are not unique
neither am I
but you and me

are not the same

A Pilgrim's Transgress

Matthew J. Andrews

Pages made for tiny hands,
vivid colors mesmerize;
crimson reds and royal blues
seem like fruit in child's eyes.

Lines so thick and cleanly drawn,
they give color shape and form;
simple tracings on the page
cause the story to transform.

The hero: a bearded man,
light aglow around his face;
many children gather round,
snugly wrapped in his embrace.

Turn the pages, you will see:

ancient en'my lurks around;
dark black shading in the frame
everywhere he can be found.

A stark study in contrast
that young eyes cannot avoid:
a man dressed in robes so white,
a beast in the blackest void.

On pages where the light shines,
the man sits upon his throne.
Obey him! Follow his code!
Then you shall never be alone.

But if from him you do stray,
into darkness you will fall,
while the beast feeds on your sins
and on your doubts most of all.

Book is closed, a kiss goodnight,
prayers are said, turn out the light.

2

Floor is swept, the blinds are clean,
the trash is in front of the home.
You lay down for wordless sleep
and wait for the sun to come.

Breakfast table, hands clasped tight,
mom says grace in reverent tone,
but your eyes stare at the floor
until holy speech is done.

Books (no pictures) in your bag,
walk to school in frozen wind.
Left foot, right foot, then repeat;
other students walk in kind.

Education: universe,
mathematics, and the slow
march of fish out of dark seas
to become what we are now.

Nighttime walk: the stars are out,
hanging there at such great height,
while your bones cry out in pain
under existential weight.

Sunday mornings, tie on straight;
mass of strangers, smiles abound.
You sit, you rise, bow, and pray,
that no one else sees the wound.

Father says to go in love,
but your legs refuse to move.

As words fall like rain
on a prophet's tongue,
so you receive their ghosts:

silence that echoes like eagle
calls in a canyon, like bear
growls in a wooded place

silence that rumbles like trains
passing by, shaking the house
and knocking books of shelves

silence that pounds like faucets
leaking at night, like floorboards
creaking as you creep

silence that whistles like tea kettles,

like a man summoning his dog
on a walk through a garden

silence that blares like car
horns, that lurches and rolls,
that squeaks like spinning tires

silence that murmurs like growing
children, that grates like platitudes
from the mouths of loved ones

silence that smacks like lips
of lovers, that moans in passion,
that calls out devoted names

silence like books read aloud,
like speeches echoing in chambers,
like private words from caring friends

silence that breathes heavy
on your neck and whispers words
into the chasm of your ear

silence like a gale waving the grass
sitting peacefully above a grave

4

The sun is up and with its dim light shining through closed blinds you are rummaging through cupboards rifling through drawers tearing open boxes and sorting their contents removing light fixtures ripping up tiles and carpet fighting cobwebs in attics and rat shit in basements kicking holes in walls slashing couch cushions until the noise wakes up the family and you start to tidy the place up but you don't see the point and you kiss your wife and kids but are not sure what for and you walk and walk and walk and wonder why can't you spend your days on your knees

taking handfuls of dust and sifting it through your fingers
until it settles back where it came from why can't you wade
in pools of dirty water and soak it into your open pores why
can't you dance when the ground is quaking and splitting
like torn curtains you wonder and you walk and you walk
and you wonder until you arrive back home and begin to
search other rooms

5

There is a campfire burning, and smoke
wafts into the evening sky, rising
like a spire toward the stars, into
a yearning gaseous expanse
filled with – what? Tiny atoms,
loose and free, but each one dense
with words we can't see or know.

The smoke can teach, and its lesson

57

is that you who reach for rock
grasp only sand that slips through
your fingers, that you are a mouse
who understands the hawk only because
it lingers near the floor when it chooses,
and even then, the clasp of talons
arouses only fear. But if only you
could see it soar in the air
and hear its shriek shake the trees.

What you wish to see is invisible,
hidden in the crease where endless sky
scrapes the tops of trees, and in its shade
you'll find peace in jagged lines,
dull colors, uneasy contrasts, and
stories that follow like a shadow.

Refuge

Paula Bonnell

The path is picked clean of kindling.
Winds open the tops of pines.
Sunday, gathering wood in Concord.
I am urging logs out of the big pile,
turning them so the damp will be sunned
from their undersides.
Meanwhile the breeze heels over;
the river ruffles.

A spot of light sits in the cat's eye.
Each thing quivers its breath.

In every fire we will burn some wood of each size
to help get us through the winter
with just this lot.
The fire spurts; you look through recipes for dinner.
Rachel reads between the lines of her book.
At the door the yellow kitten yowls to be let in.
It joins the cat presiding at the hearth.

Together they utter spattering purrs.

**2004 (In memory of my late sister,
Bukola)**

Korede Kakaaki

at the hospital room,

this way, my body is a hamlet under siege. the way the sun
rummages the dark sky for a hint of blue. but the light is a
far-fetched answer to a body marred with turbulence. &
home is a lying lover & i never embrace it with open arms.
i meant i know what it means to be a feeble boy & a man
overnight,
i meant i know what it means to break into shards & step
over the pieces till it cuts keen into your marrow.

i have learnt the anguish of my mother, how she bends
like slanted raindrops hitting louvres
& sing lullaby into the body of my sister, a body numb
with absence/while we watch Jesus make a fool of himself
/ since prayers are not enough to hold a body already held
in mirage.

after the minutes silence,
this way, i carry her memories with me like my mobile
phone/because my kind of grief is hard to come by
nowadays & i try to picture her face in my sleep but
remembrance is such a damn bully & i have no claim over
it. maybe if i could, i would have trace the lines of her face
& maybe i would have get answer to my quandaries,
maybe this family wouldn't have been a collection of
fragment held by a fragile clasp, maybe i would have still
been the last born
& have the unified warmth of my parents

but here i am trapped in the belly
of a warfront
& this family is the land of the palestine, god has place
a spell over us

September Moon

Colette Tennant

My birth mother surrendered me. I was
her tiny white flag, her wordless peace.

What confession remained of her ribs, her thighs?
Were her hands quiet as roots at midnight,

insistent as an easterly river, a dark river
flowing back to what she most loved?

Did she linger by the altar,
strew sand in the baptistery?

Did she call every September moon a toddler moon?
Did all the stars remind her of baby teeth?

I do know that first hour

we traced one street together,

milk-hard breasts taut with requiem,

her mouth.

Fire Squirrels

Pam Watts

Have you seen a fire squirrel?
They come in young and wizened too
And sleep beside the fire wrapped
In quilts and bedtime blessings.

When they sleep, light from the stove
Comes out to flicker on their toes.
It twirls and jingles on their noses,
A pretty little waltz.

But they don't stir their sleep,
Their minds content to play in dreams.
And when I watch, to me it seems
I see their hearts above them rising
Like smoky dancers in the night.
I watch them smile and hear their breathing,

Funny little squirrel friends,
And can't help hoping when
I lay down by the fire next to them
That two makes three,
My friends beside me,
there beside the warm woodstove:
When I am sleeping, resting with them,
I am a fire squirrel, too.

Stay

Robin McNamara

Stay a few more minutes
and sing to me your troubles:
Now your phone is down
and the social media is quiet.

Look across at me now
and remember the first glance,
a time of Nokia phones
and no-pause TV.

Come to the nearby park
and walk amongst living things
a simpler life pre- iPhones
Look at me again. I'm here.

Watch the storm rage strong

and let's light candles inside.
The TV is off and my voice is on.
Remember us now, before we forget.

Birth's Order

Stella Hayes

You

came into being
in an instant

open & alone

fluttering
into my open arms

a girl with almond-shaped eyes

arriving fluent in arts
music & ancient parable

having learned it
from a shade on

the inside

you decide to discard the knowledge

of the womb

for the spirit

a moth returning to the mouth

I

am dividing

Let me chant

my planned liturgies

accept me into

your sphere of spheres

I like sitting with you

chin against chin

in love

the wind making a circle for us

moving us in

to settle

into life

falling through

from your origin

one by one

in birth's

order

in death's order

unnoticed in the curve

of the fall

Sunday morning

May 2020

Anna Jensen

May.

For you -

spring fully sprung

wildflower palette daubed 'cross winter's canvas

summer's night-long days

beckon champagne-strawberry kiss.

May.

For me -

lift of summer's cloying heat

fresh winds, cool nights

glimpse of winter's diffused, dusty light

wrapp'd in regal gowns of autumn's red and gold.

May.

For us -

was to celebrate eighty
two parts made whole
reconnected, conjoined.

Cake and laughs.

A party.

Became instead -

a disappointed cancellation.

Grounded

Seats surrendered to an airborne enemy
circling the globe.

But God created us creative

gave life to fully live

the party moved to plasma screens

honour bestowed on-line.

A hundred different glasses raised

in homes both north and south

Tributes, memories, anecdotes

collective intertwining of a long-forgotten fragrance
friendship, kinship
family.

Aromatic incense of distance-ending love.

538 Pens

Rachel Harner

Before Mom died,
But after the move to the nursing home
Following the third or fourth fall,
I cleaned out the house
She lived in for over six decades
And where she raised two strong women
Without a man

In every room, I found pens
Under beds, tucked by the dozens
In the backs of dusty drawers
There were five in the medicine cabinet
In the downstairs guest bathroom

I gathered them all on the kitchen table
A roadside scrapbook in plastic tubes

The matchbook collection of an earlier era
But just barely, one generation removed
538 pens

One morning, I sat down
With a cup of coffee and an old yellow legal pad
I found in a desk drawer beneath the deed to the house
The judge gave Mom after the second divorce
When he wouldn't pay child support and fled to Antigua
(At least that's what she told us)
I uncapped each one and drew a line
Or a scribble, or sometimes a word, like *geography*
Something with lots of loops, to let the ink breathe
And give each one a fighting chance

In 1992, we went to Vegas to celebrate Katie's first
marriage
To a realtor she met in line at an amusement park
Mom bought a knockoff purse on Fremont Street

Then never used it again

Inside was the pen from the room at the Flamingo

The type where you could walk right out to the pool

It still worked

“11:30 pm, Nearly Midnight”

Gurdeep Mattu

Yacuum is reading a short
Text unpacking Corinthians 11:31,
Judge yourself, then you shall
Not be judged. The structures of
Law fall away in front of mirrors.
But he clutches a book in his
Sweaty hands. Sad eyes scan
A room full of smashed tiles,
Broken bottles but the smile
Remains across his lips.

Try and examine, ourselves,
By faith and fervour,
Feeling the truth out through
Frantic confession in to a
Bastard reflection.

Philosophy! (and vain deceit)

Is the tradition of Man

You nasty Brute

But rejoice, for the way is clear:

Just by passing through here,

It's nearly midnight.

New Haunts

Neil David Mitchell

Ghost gone churches-
Still pain creaks in stoic joists,
Spirit standing at the door

Knocking down.

Somehow some forgot their place,
In time they
Lost and sold the plot.

But they will rise:
A carpet warehouse,
Indian restaurant,
New theatre of dreams,
The perfect home
Among the graves:

A place to lay a weary head.

Unsuspecting souls sip

This new communion,

Music, laughter,

Spirit in the chatter

Generations mingling the ether,

Cabling their trapped jammed psalms through

Brickwork,

Spoken blessings over-looping

Shoppers, diners, leisure lovers,

In these gifted buildings,

Sent to the wind,

Ready to be

Transformed

Again.

Mirrored Gardens

Paula Bonnell

Now I went from my mother, in marriage,
to Texas, hot, at the bottom of the map.
This was after she tried to bring me back
from the living hell I entered when men
did I-know-not-what to me, and she sent me
back to the place she had always wanted
to go, college, a place I wanted to flee.
Yet once I escaped, she, too, went off
on her own flight with my father when,
the nest empty, they lived in London
and Spain and Greece and Mexico. We each
had our own lives; we lived apart; we met
sometimes. We were separate. "He is
my life," she explained to me, once, when
they were visiting my house. I had, by
then, returned from the south, come back

to seasons. In Houston there was only perpetual rain; in the summer, with heat, in the winter with gray skies. Fifty inches a year, a dank Hades. And no hills, hardly any trees (one redbud that I visited every spring, to see her toss her magenta shawl on the ground as she danced in her festively blossoming gown). There I remembered the flowers at home that she'd brought in from the yard to enliven the mantel, the piano with their extravagance of colors:

forsythia's graceful
arms, the tulips' sturdy cups, the faces
of pansies, the rich fragrances of lilacs,
of lilies of the valley, of peonies.

Then came

the third part. I encouraged her to tell her story; in it appeared someone

who died before I was born, her mother.
"I don't know how you did it," she said
to me, "you made my parents come
alive again." "I didn't do that," I replied.
"You did." More than that, in the story
was the seventeen-year-old girl
who lived inside my mother, who
"spun around, first on one foot,
then the other." "How can you remember
all that?" I asked. She said,
rather shyly, "You did that."
"Oh." She gave me her mother;
she gave me herself (and me) as a girl;
I gave her belief in herself
which yielded these mothers and
daughters. We were back in the fertile
place; with my help she made it bloom.

The Wanderer

Robert Boucheron

Afoot before the break of day,
I wander long and late,
And dare not pause to ask the way,
Because I would not wait.

The first to leave and last to know,
I wander late and long,
Which way the fickle gust may blow
The burden of my song.

Without provision, pack, or guide,
I wander long and late,
Yet some day I will surely stride

Through that cloud-castle gate.

I don't live in this body anymore

Korede Kakaaki

what does it mean to journey through
a body surviving wars?
how do you learn to carry fire & water on
the same skin
when you are somewhere far, somewhere
unknown to your body?

do you cling to shadows, to absence, to
straws of hope
when faith has gone to greet its inlaws?

how do you learn to give wings to your
grief & watch it turn into a firefly that pluck
stars off the sky

when the night lend your body & tuck it in
the wallet of depression?

i think my body is a cliché, a common
knowledge, a bibliography of dust
other nights, my body is an impromptu, a
reference to death
& i squeeze myself into the pages of a suspense
novel
because this body is not mine anymore, it is a
manuscript authored by another person.

The Quiet (from John 20:19-23)

Vicky Allen

the quiet held fear as
we hid behind bolted doors
whispered secrets of
what we longed to be true

low light and candle flicker
the scrape and clink
of emptied cups, sullied dishes
too loud in the too-quiet

glimpses of a guilty face
introspective agonies
and memory
made devils of us all

we submitted to it, each part

fear, isolation, loss, doubt
yet still, in the dark disquiet
there came rumours

of light

Widow in a Beer Garden

Andrew Velzian

Alone with beer, thoughts, company not her
she's gone a year.

At home you have one sided conversations
make one side of the lonely bed
and only lay cutlery for one.

At night you stretch
into the gaping mouth of the couch
hoping to rest
For a moment or two.

The Voice

Jon Doble

Sometimes it seems distant,
sometimes quiet,
sometimes silent,
once loud, but
too often muffled
to the whisper
of sotto voce,
flattened by the
selfish tones
of others need.

But being seen
and being known
filters out the background
clamour of old doubts
as lungs draw breath
fuelled with a new song,

the world prepares
for the anticipated echo
of the impending roar.

Pentacle Days

Chris Collins

I like the idea of five women

Hiring a loft for a weekend, hidden away up there.

Nefarious business, they'll say;

What do they do in there, all day?

And never believe in five quiet women writing loud words
for hours.

All weekend in the wooden room, they'll ponder;

And they never came out

While candles flickered red at the roof beams

And the weak winter sunlight ebbed through the glass.

Must be some unholy ritual;

Naked dancing or killing goats

Meditation yoga is just new age witching anyway.

We suppose they're right.

All day spelling and writing

Our sentences calling demons and flawed humans into
being
Ritually drinking whiskey, lost between spaces of spondees
Weaving down the mist and crows behind letters:
Its own kind of witchcraft.
Well, five is the new three
So I suppose it is a bit like that.

Ezra 3 (a time to weep and a time to laugh)

Trey Lyon

they danced to the beat of a rhythm called good as flesh
became cornerstone
wine flowed, communion from a single bottle
out of many, one

on sunday night the bass shakes the ceiling
under sit those who in youth too knew feeling
and for that they weep
not for love or for joy
but for loss
of what was

silent, aged tears rise
meeting electronica in the sky

"and no one could distinguish" jubilation from sorrow
yesterday from tomorrow
what was from what will come

"I don't know what this is" the neighbors said
"But I like it."

12

of the house of the LORD was laid.
But many of the older priests and Levites and
family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud
when they saw the

13

foundation of this temple being laid, while many others
shouted for joy. No one could distinguish the sound of the
shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the
people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far
away."

The image is so thoroughly bittersweet, without resolution--the laughter and the weeping--was indecipherable, and yet heard for miles. If ever there was a picture of "a time to laugh and a time weep" this is it.

Three poems for Julian of Norwich (1)

Sarah Law

not a tomb
but a cradle
the infant soul

held in the curve
she hardly knows –
not a womb

although she's
here to rest
and grow

a plant unfurling
from her bed
to feed on light;

green aureole
seeking a blessing
from the waiting sun –

Three poems for Julian of Norwich (2)

Sarah Law

I think God finds
my soul as I the cat –

dear-worthy, wilful –
given to slip

from my lap
and push her paws

against my prayers –
to swipe and gnaw

my girdle
pounce
at her own tail's shadow –

knowing I am warm, a source
of nourishment and more –

knowing I
cannot do other
than delight in her.

Three poems for Julian of Norwich (3)

Sarah Law

Let it be sweeter today:
the sun's dawn song

lilts through the veil
of my street-side window

to touch the silence
in my throat: a moment's

luminous utterance. I
am wafer-thin, nothing

more than a single ray
amidst doubt's fog –

the slip of a kiss, a eucharist

of sudden honey.

You

Jemelia Moseley

As I kneel from where I stand
I place my world, my whole life in your hands
Hopes, dreams and wishes
My fears, wins and all my misses
When I'm surrounded
When I'm alone
I feel you in my heart like the spirits that shine down from
the stars
They watch over me
They're never far
They glisten in the sky
Like my eyes when you show me that you listen, by
granting all your blessings
I'm grateful for what you've done thus far
Tranquility and peace,
And your direction

Is all I need, to proceed, in this life full of trouble and strife

You are my love, you are my guide

You are my peace of mind

Whether we are together or apart

Psalm 137

Whitney Hansen

May my hand forge
onward

May my tongue
my mouth
forget you

my highest joy

happy according to us

happy is the wars

survived;
 the perils
of the sole victor,
absent queen

we sat
and wept
when we remembered.

If I forget you,
your tongue will not be an exile
anywhere.

Wishful Thinking

Mukund Gnanadesikan

Let us pretend
and close for now our mournful eyes

Say to me
there is no pestilence

no crimson trails
staining memory of cobblestones

no screams men left
lying motionless beneath a truncheon

Let us imagine cherubim
chanting on gauzy clouds

Bright fantasy of what would be
in story life that should exist

This panoramic view;
The future in an out-stretched palm

comforts me as I lie
next to your peaceful body.

Now is the time
for unwilling eyes to open.

So slow, our breaths
So deep, our daily troubles

Sunday Morning

Stella Hayes

On this winter morning
black birds do not lullaby with a song
they do not fly south to sever

their wings from a black world
their cooling bodies recoiling
in flight like dying angels

on this morning
we are attuned to the deaf rustle
of the outstretched sheet

the bed a box
pillows two shapely squares
the mattress releasing its coil like a lung

it's not a difficult morning
the room is not cold
the walls are not hospital white

the toast coated in butter and jam
offers nutrition
the smell of coffee just bloomed

lapping up the porcelain cup
there's no talk of theology
no game of chess set

no commitment made to a morning service
the two children at breakfast
eating French toast sunk in butter and syrup

it is not a difficult morning
the soul stands up to being made extinct
it's not a difficult morning

it's not without hope

the newspaper turned to a particular page

it's not a difficult morning

it's not without hope the coffee pot

turned off the pan cooling

the kitchen halted to a stop.

And So Be It

Adey Grummet

Just beyond the edge of my eye.
Not breathing but shimmering
just beyond the edge of my eye,
a moment that halts
in all of time,
all natural law suspended.

The endless sea of comings and goings,
the tidal sweep of wantings and hatings,
the swinging change of winds and temper
stilled,
all stilled,
all held.

In this equal eternity
where no light forms no shadow,

no sound breaks no silence,
there is everything to tell
and no reason nor need to tell it.

There is only meeting
and departing
in the same single moment
back to life
and back to death.

And so be it.

And so be it.

LOST + FOUND

Alice Rose

a laugh at an inside joke
made to friends and
realising it was between us
the comfiest mattress
my ultimate beer pong teammate
the ability to enjoy those bands
conversations about nothing at 3am
you

a laugh I thought
I'd forgotten how to use
after endless tears over us
colour in my cheeks
movies I don't pretend to like
I actually prefer more make-up
magic in my own voice
me

Beach-Bound

Stella Hayes

Remember how we would look into each other
On the surface and beneath the skin
And just know the temperature of the hand
The gesture closing the stillness

Of the other parts of the body
Riding out the dynamism
Of two bound energies
How small we must look from above

A woman twined to an archetypal man
In the sun keeping warm the beachfront in front
The sand on the skin folding
If I stay on this beach long enough

I might forget the storm that keeps me unsettled

The tumults of the past broken up on the sand
In front of me demanding to be sorted and perhaps
Assembled into a new collage mostly

From sand the new palms stand on their elegant tall
Stalks and speak to me in murmurs
And whispers like my mother used to you are true she
Would utter when I would be lulled

Unaware that she was singing with a weakened voice a
folk
Song learned for a college course taken out of a box for
me
For the sake of language memory sounds of innocence
Brought to us here always taking us enslaved

And liberated from a closed womb to an emergent re-
passing
Of a familial line passing the little root, a rootling breaking

Through layers of dense rock and concrete

A blossom enclosed in itself a whisper

Yacuum

Gurdeep Mattu

We sat in the crunchy cold air for a while,

Talking. As if talk was any good, at this point,

In this world, on this day.

Talk is no good, he says. He shifts on the ground,

A twig crackles under his foot.

Yacuum talks to me and I stare into the sky

Thinking that perhaps if I concentrate

Hard enough

I might just

Disappear.

Contributors

Gale Acuff has had hundreds of poems published in several countries and is the author of three books of poetry. He has taught university English in the US, China, and Palestine.

Vicky Allen lives on the south-east coast of Scotland; the land, story and folklore are influential in her poetry. Her work has been published widely online and in print. Her debut pamphlet "Broken Things and other tales" was published by Hedgehog Poetry Press this year.

Matthew J. Andrews is a private investigator and writer whose poetry has appeared in The Dewdrop, Spirit Fire Review, and Jewish Literary Journal, among others."

J. Archer Avary (he/him) quit journalism to focus on poetry. He left the United States in 2014 and now lives on a tiny island in the English Channel.

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Andy Campbell is a coach and wellness facilitator. He has worked for churches, charities, schools and universities - always doing what he can to help people find their hope.

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Chris Collins is a Morris dancing, shanty singing, narrowboating English teacher who writes. Some of her poetry and stories can be found in Cephalopress, Mooky Chick and Animal Heart Press

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Anna Jensen I am a British ex-pat living in South Africa, where I watch dolphins at play while I write. Christian devotional, 'The Outskirts of His Glory' is my first published book.

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Sarah Law lives in London and is a tutor for the Open University and elsewhere. She edits the online journal Amethyst Review.

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With poems published worldwide His poetry has appeared on Poetry Ireland's media platform and his pandemic poems are archived in UCD's James Joyce Library, Dublin.

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Neil David Mitchell Neil David Mitchell, from Glasgow, Scotland is a High School English teacher who writes poetry, prose and music in his spare time. His writing has featured in various journals and anthologies and he recently published his first collection of poems "Seasonal Lines". Follow his further adventures on Twitter @ndsnigh

Jemelia Moseley is a primary school Teacher, Poet and Spoken Word Artist. She loves all things poetry and spoken word and would love to see her work all over the world in print/word and on stage/TV. Jemelia's poem 'United' will be published in 'The Fly On The Wall'

Magazine in September 2020, her other poems; 'Grandma and Grandad' and 'Protests' will also be published in September in a Journal (Chambers) in Scotland, England. Black, Dying to bloom and Visions of possibilities will be published in The Melbourne Culture Centre (Australia) in September 2020. Yesterday will be published in Morepork Press (New Zealand) in September also. The Daily Drunk Mag (USA) has recently published her work.

Alice Rose (she/her) was shortlisted for the Bath Flash Fiction Award (Feb 2017). Rose has also been published at Prismatic and ReflexFiction. Tweet her @a1ice_r0se

Colette Tennant has had poems included in various journals, including Prairie Schooner, Poetry Ireland Review 2019, and Rattle. Tennant has two poetry books, Eden and After and Commotion of Wings. Her book Religion in The Handmaid's Tale was published September, 2019.

Andrew Velzian has several stories and poems published both online and in print. He currently works as prose editor for Blanket Sea Magazine and contributing editor at Barren Magazine.

Pam Watts I escaped from the Florida foster care system to the San Francisco Bay Area where I scribble subversive stories by day but help the rich get richer by night. I have an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts and I was a 2015 and 2016 Lambda Literary Emerging LGBTQ Fellow. My writing has appeared in two Emerge: Lambda Fellows anthologies, Bust Magazine, and Intrinsic.

