

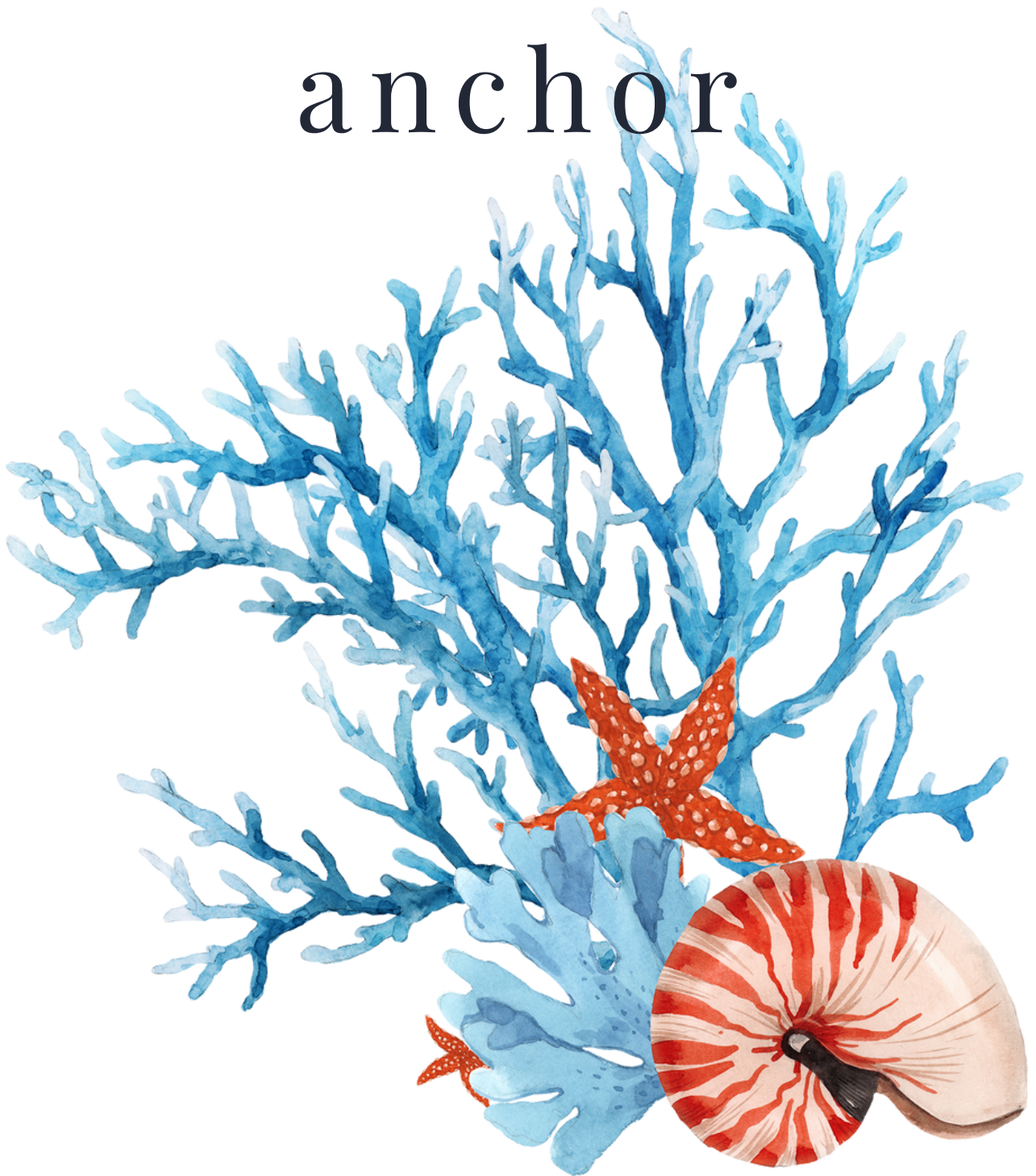
Anchor



FREE VERSE REVOLUTION

Issue IX

anchor



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Note from the Editors

Issue IX: anchor is an issue of firsts for us at Free Verse Revolution: it's the first issue of 2023, the first issue our co-editor Nicholas James has worked on, and it is the first issue since our transformation into a literary magazine that isn't grounded in the story of a mythological figure.

We hope this sets the tone for 2023 and establishes the path we hope to walk this year through our quarterly magazine issues. This year's themes will prompt creators from all mediums to reflect, evaluate and capture the environment (natural and man-made), identity and how we communicate with and relate to those around us.

Issue IX begins this journey with posing the question of what grounds you, what keeps you tethered to Earth? In these pages you will walk through nature with stunning pastoral poetry, you will consider your relationships to others and read a fantastic interview focusing on motherhood with Eve Croskery, and you'll be led into the deeper depths of the self and how our insular experiences and the everyday secure us.

As always, enjoy and thank you.
Kristiana & Nicholas

Pulmankjärvi

Cherine El-Bash

Which way is east? The sun doesn't set. It doesn't rise.
The ocean carries me out to sea. Do you pray? Do you have
a God? I breathe in with the rain. The sky sprouted flowers
from the tips of my fingers and I asked permission
to paint a garden. The heathers shine on the ragged edges
of cliffs that embrace me, dropping lilac blooms
into the corners of my eyes.
I can feel how my heart beats in water
and the heavy ripples trace the memory of
her fingers twirling *ring around the rosies*
on my palm. A wave carries me. Or buries me.
The sound is the same. They crash. Build. Crash.
Build. The rain, sweet, mixes into the sea
in me. Which way is east?

a rub of the green

Emily Tee

it's the colour of growth, renewal
spring rebirth after the winter
dappled light through new leaves
growing again on the hawthorn,
the shoots of returning snowdrops,
daffodils, bluebells and leaf buds

whenever I need a break from
the muddy brown sludge of life,
the grey grind of existence,
or its glaring yellow intensity
there's always a green space
to wander, a path along hedgerows
and grassy parkland's open spaces,
there's the memory of the sizzle and
smell of ozone from summer rain
falling on leafy woodland canopies

the bay leaf I keep in my pocket
the sprig of spruce on my desk

whenever I need a touch of luck
there's always a rub of the green

[first published in The Grapevine (Worcestershire) in
Issue 117, Late Summer 2022]

In Woods

Arnab Chatterjee

They left and I walked by the tracks diverged in woods,
followed the blue iris startling the dolent heart

under the shadow wings, free from that canine prison,
the meadow guzzled the tracks and also my feet.

Let the century's growth spill from the rising cup
and elate in the joy of obliviousness.

There lies a land hidden from the lofty eyes -
It is fit to sing the cantos for the stream

for the retinue of crickets marching to and fro.
Hérons stained the bright blue, crimson dragonflies

found the thousand year jewel in ancient trees
cloaked in vines, the scurry of grey baboons played on

flourished nutmeg, the wandering traveller reached home -
in the gentle nodding of the scarlet wheat,

in the sweet and faint smell of humid jute
in the plinking dew of fresh harvest

in the solace of rest under the Amaltas
covered by the glistening feathers of Knas.

I could not wish to turn away, try. as I might,
and split my spirit raw in the hearth of purple blooms.

Time traveling through Muir Woods on my way home Lisa Criswell

I inhale these trees and they carry me
home to woods that used to know my name.

They taste like ten years old, feel close as my best
friend's palm on my cheek. Somehow here I drift

back to blunt bangs, torn Keds, blue shine,
all coursing blood and singing heart rushing

to blaze the trail– so ready to claim some earth
as my own, to steal a heartbeat alone with Something

that would hear me. Here, now, I pass a family: small
girl wailing and mom will not hold her. Tears rise

as I walk on, pleading silently *please, pick her up.*
Won't someone pick her

up. I'm certain the trees hear her too.
I am a child again, sun graced, still running

out of the weight of familiar wounds.
I inhabit a lone strand of web catching light

instead of prey– press silken hands
to unfurling redwood skin– and I hear them

sounding a chorus of *peace.* I echo back a quiet
thank you. I've run straight through my youth

but in the forest I feel the good years
left in these bones.

I heard the small kingdoms breathing

Emily Tee

after "Sleeping in the forest" by Mary Oliver

from deep within I was drawn into their midst
across the fields and into the wooded hills -
the scattered flocks of chattering finches,
early morning crows calling out their caws,
the rasping sound of beetles, scratching.
I thought I could even hear the tunnelling
of earthworms, ever diligent, industrious,
turning over soil, improving it in their own way
as I listened, hunkered down on the forest floor.
Above, clouds streamed in under sun and moon
while the earth turned slowly, steadfast on its path
and all the small creatures of this forest world
inhaled and exhaled, anchored in their domain,
and I stayed, silent, till I felt I was one of them.

**in which i walk into the woods
and briefly consider my return**
Monica Robinson

in the mirrored ponds i see,
screaming, myself;
surrounded by
overgrown earth. a tree
takes root, grows rapidly through
the wooden planks set sturdy
in your own hand, envelops
us together, crystalized
in pine sap as fossils
of another age.

Kingfisher

Emily Tee

Weak, wintry sunshine breaks through clouds to let late afternoon light brighten our river walk, the water levels just below flooding. Birds - redwing, the winter visitor, and year-round robin streak through the low scrub bushes, magpies chatter a constant rat-tat-tat of guttural cries. They line the path as we walk, offering companionship of a sort with their swoops and calls. Then vermilion catches our eye, a darting flash. A kingfisher on the taut chain fence has been startled, and the low light turns his orange chest red, his back green rather than familiar turquoise. Behind him tree wood shimmers ghostly grey as twilight falls, blurring lines. The kingfisher sits, smaller than I'd thought, and seems to look back at us, warily, as if ready the second he spots movement to fly. High river's mist and murk adds to gloaming's gathering gloom along the path. We move off, leaving our prize, the joy of the sighting remaining with us. This river sometimes offers a cormorant, a heron - each fix of rare nature an antidote to winter blues. Today its bounty is a kingfisher. Tomorrow may hold purple and orange sunset skies, the kind birds are lost in but still they'll gather, in trees, on telephone lines, geese grazing threadbare park grass, amid flocks of pigeons and gulls. The common birds are always a reminder of the value of the rare. More than a woman's hand in a man's, his arm draped around her, a shawl, comforting, there's sharing the memory of a kingfisher on that low chain, we'll take this memory, tuck it with the lazy slow flow of the swollen river, onward, square our shoulders.

The birds sang today

Satya Bosman

You died 20 years ago
but also yesterday.

The birds sang today,
it snowed too.

Both of us woven,
like a dusty old carpet

Sat in the same spot
made a home in me.

No-one else is invited.
Maybe just love, not requited.

It's my birthday party you see.

peace comes dropping slow

Emily Tee

Inspired by WB Yeats' The Lake Isle of Innisfree

I will arise and go now, and travel north to the coast,
his small house sits there waiting, empty this last half year;
in land of fine green rolling hills nowhere else can boast,
to my mind's eye it's ever clear.

The evening calls of roving gulls, a distant sound of sea,
the peaceful fall of twilight's pall, summer's long gloaming,
a short warm velvet nighttime still brings a kind of release
for a wandering soul forever homing.

I've travelled many thousand miles in years living away
yet there's a small mystical isle of rock and sandy shore
a solid yet ephemeral place to go but never stay
it calls me in my deep heart's core.

Strata

Donna Childress

An elderly woman told me of the mining ruin one foggy morning, as we passed on a rocky trail. Her trekking poles clicked against the rocks rhythmically as she hiked, an oracle on her quest to find wildflowers.

Days later, when I first saw the ruin, a slice of white moon hung above it in bright blue sky. Below the moon rose a gentle rounded mountaintop. Below that, the bones of a tall wooden head frame stood upright, the four supporting posts leaning to the south like the bow of a ship eager to ferry its cargo across the sea.

A small bird, also pointed south, perched on the bow's cross-beam, like a simple bird drawing with its beak and head in profile, round belly, long tail, and stick legs. It rested in perfect composition with the moon, the slope, and the ruin. I breathed peace.

The bird flew.

Around the ruin lay abandoned equipment. Three huge rusted wheels that once dragged rocks from their burrows. Coiled snakes of corroded cables. The promised shaft hid in the ship's galley, several feet deep, and the bottom held a cold scab of dirty snow.

The mine draws me back again and again. Each time, I flick my eyes up high. I search for the graceful, flitting bird, for the wandering moon.

They are gone, their artful arrangement a moment in time that I was lucky enough to glimpse. What remains? Wildflowers popping near the cables and willows growing to tangle the wheels.

The Oak

Satya Bosman

A bird's nest lays on the ground, at least a week's work,
a life measured in hours.

Above it, an old oak, that stands tall in the centre
of the farm.

The harvest was good this year, and the sun took its time
to set each evening,

its warm orange light spilling over onto the fields.
Inside the main house a half-read book and a pair

of reading glasses wait for somebody to return.
People come and go but all is still.

Willow Seat

Suzanna Fitzpatrick

I am cupped in a teardrop of boughs,
wattle curving overhead
to an apex of starburst leaves.

The seat is oak, weathered silver
by winds from the lake. It is broad,
will take two at a pinch; or one, hiding.

Swaddled in fronds, I close my eyes
to the water, its skin of lilies,
and lean back, trust to craftsmanship –

it holds me, living hammock,
and we sway together, flesh and wood,
our joints creaking.

The fixed point

Benjamin Parker

The sunken pockets of night
filled to vacate the morning;
the hour to which all others fall short.

Miniature steps,
sweet laughter and the early light.
A gentle gaze still adjusting,
pondering which car to wheel first.

The stain of doubt erodes
in the echoes of morning.
The glimmers of kindness
forever lining my wallet.

Memories anchored in time
to soften the waiting hours.
Smiles that lighten the weight
of each dawn that passes.

Anti-prayer

Emma Jayne Willson

It is enough, the rolling sea,
the winter sunlight in the trees,
without needing to invent
a guiding hand. Why,
when I see how beautiful
you are, would I need a God
to have created you?
Why spoil the moment
with questions, with a book
full of rules? The free birds
will not fall mid-flight
if we do not imagine them
dangling from puppet strings.
It is enough that you exist,
that we are part of this world
together. If you were gone,
it would not comfort me
to pretend an infallible God
had taken you away, yet somehow
still allowed the sun to rise;
who could ever believe
such a thing.

Practice of Interbeing

Aaron Lelito



In Accord

Carole Greenfield

You were once my lifeline; what connects us now is just as real
As the stretchy cord that spun me out and wound me back
Stepping over and around it, you prepared the evening meal
Kept our home together, our family life on track

As the stretchy cord spun me out and wound me back
We tried to keep from getting in the other's way
Kept our home together, our family life on track
Listening to my calls was how you learned about my day

We tried to keep from getting in the other's way
The cord stretched taut between us, gentle tug, a little twist
Listening to my calls was how you learned about my day
I moved about the kitchen, cord wrapped tightly round my wrist

The cord stretched taut between us, gentle tug, a little twist
Attached to the wall as I was once attached to you
I moved about the kitchen, cord wrapped tightly round my wrist
And then I had to break it. It's what our daughters do.

Attached to the wall as I was once attached to you
The cord between us cut but not unbroken
And then I had to break it. It's what our daughters do.
The love between us sometimes went unspoken.

The cord between us cut but not unbroken
Stepping over and around it, you prepared the evening meal
The love between us sometimes went unspoken
You were once my lifeline; what connects us now is just as real.

[this poem first appeared in Carole Greenfield's poetry collection,
Weathering Agents]

Early Voices

Dani De Luca

I've drawn the same scene since I could draw:
open sky, wide ocean, random island, single palm
and lots of low-flying birds.

As a child I sat with my grandmother
trying to paint as she did. But when she

asked me to imagine a scene, what came
was that one. Had she asked me to write one,
I would've set a girl like me or you atop baked earth,

beneath a sleek waxing moon. All of us given away
by God to the starred ancestry of sky. I would've written

the depth of that gift. The curated permanence suspended there.
Held in molasses-dripped night beyond the curves and crises below,
being once borne of night's blade, not belly. Sliced to Beauty's hollow

and the gold found there in hair and skin and breast.
Not waxing, but full. So full of open sky, wide ocean,
random island, single palm, low-flying birds

and early, early voices.

For Posterity

Emma Foley

I traced my family tree. It was the year my Dad died – I wanted new family stories, maybe to soothe me in my knowledge that there would be no new stories from one side. I am the story now, I suppose, and my sons.

Maybe I'm a well-thumbed paperback, predictable and safe. No real peril, thankfully – but some characters you'd really root for, and a happily ever after. My sons though, they're in draft. Maybe we're in the origin story at the moment – the prequel. Most of it wouldn't make the cut ; too long-winded, doesn't move the story along. Filler – but that's life, isn't it? In between the main plot points. Maybe it'll all just be a montage, before they move into the real story. I hope it's got a happy song behind it.

I craved these storylines from my family tree. That filler, those moments, those lives in between the headlines – but none of it was recorded for posterity. I got dates, deciphered from scans of barely legible certificates. Births and deaths. Marriages, sometimes, and then a new line of dates. Whole lives condensed into dates. All I knew of these people is that they existed. But then, I already knew that. My own birth is conclusive evidence that I had a 10x great grandfather. All I gained was dates.

I couldn't feel a connection to someone with only dates to go on. It's hard to imagine that these people – my ancestors – were three-dimensional, complex humans who felt as deeply as we do. That notion was convenient sometimes, when the dates told of tragedy. A child, dead before their fifth birthday. It wasn't the same back then, I reassured myself. Mortality rates were higher – it was expected, wasn't it? It's not the same as if that happened to one of ours. Except, of course it was.

Of course it was.

We are divided by centuries, no overlap of our lifetimes to get to know each other. Their stories are lost. No photographs, no marvelling at my nose on their face, or my son's eyes looking back at me in sepia. But they were always there, echoes. As my son was placed on my chest, what hubris to assume that feeling was anything new! And that feeling, multiplied by generations – ten, one hundred, a thousand – links me to these people; the lives within those dates.

I am tethered. I *exist* as a link in this chain – penultimate for now, but fated to rust as the chain stretches further still.

Adoptee

Christian Ward

*Mary Banks Smith was aged 76 years 96 days
when she was officially adopted*

Until the age of 76, I never knew what family meant.
Wind chimes of gulf fritillary chrysalises in an elm tree,
a reminder that sometimes we are not born alone.

Watching nesting great blue herons near Galveston,
the scimitars of their necks entwined like two S's, made
me hunger after the word, savour it like unlikely snow.

Coupling eastern pondhawks in a stream I visited
after school for their light shows of electric blue
grounded me with its voltage. I cherished fallen
house finches, mourning doves and Carolina chickadees -
a ready made family like store bought apple pies.

Motherhood, that uneasy ritual, reminded me of the dark
continents of wasps on leftover fruit in a Dallas park
molassing the light, each insect guided by a singular queen,
even those unhatched in a papier-mâché skull.

Lord knows I needed that common bond, that common language,
like the murmuration of starlings conjoined as one, something
to anchor me to family, no matter what or whom they'd be.



Paper Cranes

Eve Croskery

When I wake, disoriented,
they tell me;
sixteen eggs harvested
from my ovaries.
I am a machine.
I hobble to the car,
protectively curled over my belly,
bruised in brilliant shades of
blue and purple.
Safely cocooned at home, I wait,
wait for the phone call to come.
Nine embryos, they tell me.
Nine chances at the impossible.
I fold origami cranes,
the paper thin under my fingertips,
yet it does not tear.
The vibrant colours remind me
of a different life,
of carefree travels in Japan, of joy.
The methodical folding gives me
something to do with my hands,
calms my trembling heart.
It feels good to make something
when my womb can not.
Nine swans fly from bamboo
branches in a vase.
Each morning I walk past them,
sometimes swaying in the breeze,
or soaked in sunlight,
and pray that one will come home to me
one day.

Deciphering You

Eve Croskery

Coiled on my heart,
a tiny koru, newly unfurling,

new life folded into me,
still tethered, mouth to breast,

milk flows like rain as I listen
to the sigh of your breath

and hold mine just for a moment,
for you have cracked me open,

eyes heavy and weary,
yours, wide and unwavering,

trusting that I can fill
the deep pool of your need.

I am still deciphering you,
the spiral of your cry,

your longing for my warmth
to envelope you like rich soil

holds a tiny seed in the dark.

Hold Hope

Eve Croskery

Drink in this world, my love. When the sunlight spills onto your face, the grass brushes your toes, birdsong hangs in the air, the wind makes leaves twirl before your eyes. When dirt trickles like magic through your small hands, collects in crescents under your nails. When you feel the sea hum in the ocean of your wild heart. Wonder lives in your fingertips, in your wide-eyed gaze, in the bud of your lips. Your curiosity is a living, breathing thing. The smooth curve of a stone awakens your skin. A snail sliding along the path intently watched and loved, as I intently watch and love you. I thought I was your teacher, but now I see—you learn from the garden, the seasons, the glory of cool rain tingling your cheeks. The canopy of the forest, your second home, as you breathe the earth deep into your tiny lungs. These trees hold hope in their branches, as you hold it in your heart. You toddle, wobble, coo with joy at the beauty of being somewhere so alive.

When Grandparents Come to Visit

Eve Croskery

And for the first time this summer
I have the chance to swim, swim free,
submerge my entire body, dive and drift,
no child clinging to my arms.
Responsibility sheds from my skin.
I'd forgotten how to breathe.

Back on the shore, they play together,
digging moats, hands big and small,
pressing sand into fairytale castles.

I watch on, as if gazing
at a picture in sepia tones.
I drowned within our four walls,
memories blurred while
I slowly sank.
Now—I come up for air,
kick towards the mottled light,
water glints like broken glass.
I rise and fall with the receding tide.

Their laughter floats on the air
while I float on my back,
close eyes, unclench jaw,
feel the lapping in my ears,
the sun's hopeful warmth on my cheeks.
The water wraps itself around my weary bones.
I am weightless as worries wash off me
into the lukewarm salty sea,
for now at least.

Interview with Eve Croskery



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

I've always found joy in writing, and used to love writing short stories as a child. Sadly this process of writing for enjoyment got lost somewhere along the way during high school and university. It wasn't until I was teaching poetry to middle school students that it occurred to me that I was no longer writing for myself and I should really do something about that!

I rediscovered writing while dealing with infertility, at the suggestion of my counsellor. Getting my thoughts and feelings down onto paper was so powerful for me, but I never thought I'd be sharing any of these words with others. It wasn't until later on that I took my jumbled words and shaped them into poems.

Where do your inspirations come from? Are they musical, literary, ekphrastic or all three?

My inspiration most often comes when I'm deeply immersed in an experience. I'll sometimes write a poem in my head during the moment, and later dash to get the key thoughts down on paper (or on my phone). I remember floating in the water, writing 'When Grandparents Come to Visit' in my mind, and then chanting the phrases to myself on repeat as I swam to shore in an attempt not to lose them.

Mary Oliver is a significant literary inspiration to me, both to my writing and to how I try to live my life. Particularly in parenthood, I often come back to her words and her notion that "attention is the beginning of wonder." So whether it's when writing a poem, or while observing my toddler engrossed in exploring a puddle, I remind myself to really, truly pay attention, to find the beauty and magic even in the mundane, and to never lose my sense of wonder in the busyness of life. It would be so easy to sleepwalk through these years, but there is so much to be mesmerised by in this life if I am able to simply slow down and breathe it in.

How would you describe your writing process?

Sporadic! I don't have a whole lot of time to write these days with a two-year-old and four-year-old keeping me on my toes. Previously I spent many hours writing with a newborn curled on my chest, but those days have now passed. I write a lot in my head, and then pray desperately that I won't lose the words before I have a chance to write them down. The notes app on my phone is filled with words and phrases that come to me in the moment, and I later go back and polish them into poems, and revisit them later whenever I find a rare spare moment of time. I used to worry that motherhood would hinder my creativity, but if anything I think that motherhood has been such a gateway to connecting with my creative self.

With regards to this issue, what does the theme of ‘anchor’ mean to you? In life, how do you choose to stay grounded?

The title of ‘anchor’ really spoke to me and I trawled through my poems looking for those that would best fit the theme. When I put the four poems I’d selected together for submission, I realised they told the unfolding story of my journey into motherhood. Throughout this journey, the concept of being anchored has been an invisible, connecting thread. And I see that for me, feeling anchored comes with a feeling of connection – to myself, to others and to the earth.

‘Paper Cranes’ was written about a time where I was lost and adrift. I was going through IVF, an all-consuming process that felt completely out of my control and perilous. I felt like I had nothing to hold on to, and created these paper cranes as – I see now – a way to anchor myself to something real and true. ‘Deciphering You’ was one written with a tiny newborn on my chest, and speaks of the emotional anchor that I am for my baby, but also which she is for me. That sacred space where we both feel safe and nurtured. There is such a juxtaposition between this and the previous poem, and they were written in such different times. It’s been a powerful process for me pulling them together for Free Verse Revolution and reflecting on this shift.

“Hold Hope” reflects on the power effects of nature to anchor and ground us. Nature has always had this incredible power to calm and invigorate me, and it’s been magical to watch it have the same effect on my children. Drawing back on Mary Oliver’s work, I wrote this one as I observed the way my toddler lives in a constant state of being, rather than doing, in awe of all that surrounds her. I can anchor myself both in nature, and also in this state of mindfulness and presence.

Finally, ‘When Grandparents Come To Visit’ was written after a long stint of pandemic restrictions, locked down at home with my new baby and toddler. It speaks about the need for me to reconnect with myself and how a constant state of giving to others and neglecting my own needs can leave me unravelling.

The sequence of poems published in this issue chart a journey from trying for a baby to the respite provided by grandparents visiting. If you are comfortable, could you share what this journey of motherhood has revealed to you?

I’m still reflecting on this and trying to make sense of it all. I love that poetry allows me to do this. Looking back on this sequence of my poems, I see my evolving needs as I move through different seasons of life, the way that what grounds me, what keeps me steady and secure, changes over time. This is true of my children too. That intense closeness they needed in the first year of their lives has morphed into something new. They are exploring the pull of the world and leaving their comfort zone, safe in the knowledge that they can return to their anchor (me), whenever they need.

You mention in your first Instagram post that it took courage to finally begin an account to share your writing, in particular your work on motherhood, what advice would you give for anyone else unsure of putting themselves and their work in the public domain?

It absolutely did. I posted anonymously online for a long time, and only found the courage to put my face and name to my words as I connected with others who were doing so through getting involved in 'The Mum Poet Club'. Seeing the way that others could resonate with my words was incredible and spurred me to become more visible in this space. I would encourage others to just start - the online poetry community is so supportive. However I really try to make sure that first and foremost I'm writing for myself, rather than an audience. For me, that's when the words just flow.

Last year, you were nominated by Capsule Stories for the 2022 Pushcart Prize (congratulations!), what does recognition like this mean to you?

I was really blown away by this and honoured that Capsule Stories would choose my poem amongst six to be nominated from their catalogue last year. I have always written for myself, rather than with the intent to share or publish my words. I have massive imposter syndrome (a work in progress!), so the idea that others would see merit in my writing seemed quite incredible to me. So while I don't write for recognition, it was quite affirming to realise that other people out there see something in my work, that it makes them feel something.

Finally, what are your writing goals for the immediate future? Do you see yourself looking at publishing a chapbook or collection?

Currently, just attempting to carve out some space to think and write each week seems like my biggest accomplishment. But one day I'd love to publish my work and get it out to a wider audience. Each piece of supportive feedback on my work, each poem that gets accepted for publication, gives me more confidence to write and put my words out there for others to read.



Co-Parent Love

Elaine Westnott-O'Brien

We always love each other more
In a bathroom with tiny soaps,
One with a sparkling sink
That we don't have to clean.

A tub with tiny bottles of
Sweet-scented suds
That are not no-tears
Yet manage not to make me cry.

We always love each other more
In a room with sachets of instant coffee
A kettle -
No kitchen.

A bed with fresh linen
That did not require us
To fuss with pegs or washing lines
Mattresses or pillow slips.

We are always so together
In a room that smells of money
Sounds like silence,
Tastes of tiny chocolate mints

Still
We are never more in tune
Then when the dishes are piled high
The bath toys squeak
There are no-tears bubbles
And tearful toddlers.

It's good to get away;
Better to go home.

An exchange between a mother and daughter becomes poetry

Sarah Bellum Mental

Do you like people-watching?

A mother asks her young daughter and isn't
it astounding to eavesdrop on conversations
not our own and pretend we aren't listening

when really we are. I don't hear the daughters
reply but replay this exchange
over and over again what a delight
and I am with my mother in a coffee shop

we share a white chocolate mocha
between the two of us
same cup. It's too much to ask
in Midwest dialect for two cups

shared between one person. We don't
mind the sharing, and so we bring
stacks of horse magazines at Borders
and I am transported back

to the moment, with this
mother and daughter
at a park in Houston
and how she says

there you go, and I think
my heart moth flutters

in flight with wings too
translucent to stay

in my chest or burn up
by the fire of my love
of this moment
I'm witnessing

but no one knows
I'm listening
and breathing, so still
I want to hear every word.

I want to remember this
conversation, and I still
taste the coffee mixed
with white chocolate shavings and how

I'd vacuum-clean the whipped
cream off the hot beverage
and I think of all these little
moments between mothers

and daughters, we think
are so secret and too mundane
to make a difference, but you never
know who is listening.

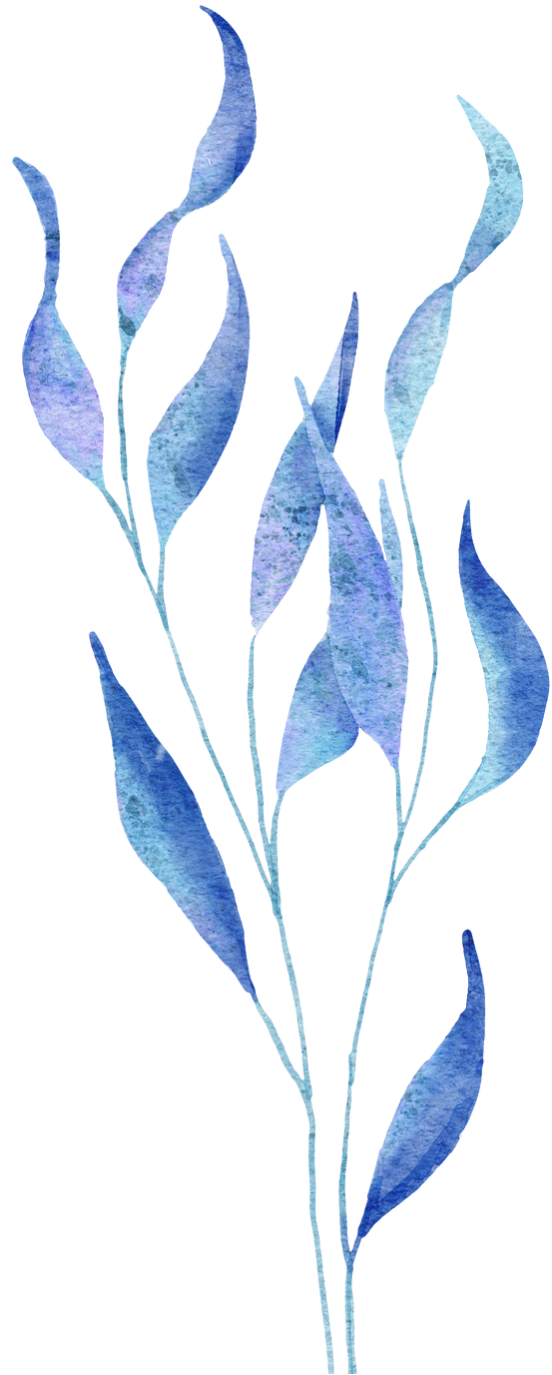
Affection

Rob Lowe

He's barb-proof and resistant to light feelings,
A Harris Tweed sort of man, with leathered elbows,
At home in moors, in bogs, but not in town;
And she, the wife, she billows round his frown,
Swirling long panoplies of cloth.
As bullfighters do: her dresses are persuasion, and
She floats and rides and sinks,
(On each occasion like a flock of birds)
On his sharp words, and on their wind.
They are a single landscape: when she sees
A storm of breakers in his eyes,
She beautifies herself, and, beached, she waits,
Till his decision wrecks itself
(A tree blown down)
In the currents of everyday life.

She is always on hand.
At night, they harbour each other with songs,
And you hear the rustle of their soul-strings
In acts that turn and bob and creak.
Preoccupied with petty things,
They make sea-patterns of the week.
Their moorland fronts the shore;
They shingle agreement.
In bed, when both strain
At the link of anchor-chain,
That holds them at the limit of their touch,
They wallpaper their narrow world with song,
Articulate the wider space around:

In mingling melodies, they haul the long
Collaborative day like tugboats with their sound, quietly
Over the horizon into sleep.
Their consciousness is huge.
An hour rides at anchor,
And the spasms of a muscle
(As a last flagged cloud catching the light,
And letting it go) in their faces will betray
How tensely the old house falls.
Is it night? Their roof rubs the stars,
Like the hull of a boat on jetty walls.
Though it is late, they know why they were wed,
Still...captain and mate will go down together.



This Table

Jan Ball

This sturdy silky oak table that we bought at an antique store on Australia's Gold Coast, all the jade jars and Victorian plates displayed on it for sale, but we wanted the table underneath so argued for our interpretation of the sign, "*Everything for Sale*".

This table with no chairs back north in Brisbane, where our antique dealer friends sell us a set: four oak straight back chairs and two end chairs with arms, when their matching table is pushed off their delivery truck by a playful angel.

This table in the dining room of our Queensland style house built up on stilts in 1905, walls of VJ pine without plaster supporting pressed copper ceilings, floors eight inch wide Kauri Pine, we find out when we have the house restored.

This table that we set bare, without placemats, to serve *cocido madrilen*o: chicken, smoked butt, cabbage, carrots, chick peas and potatoes cooked in a cauldron on our 19th Century Australian wood-burning stove in the kitchen for dinner parties.

This table that the new owners ask to be included with the house when we move to Sydney and peruse Ikea for our new furniture.

We Wild Things

Dani De Luca

My sister tied wild things
to her belt loops. Dragged
them through the kitchen
the classroom the rectory
at church. I tied rocks to
mine. Sat in the pond
on Cranbrook and waited.
For what. I don't know.
I didn't want to be her
but more like her was
fine. Maybe that's why
I wore Fido Dido without
asking and spritzed myself
with Rapture. Always trying
to clothe and scent myself
with an air of being I didn't
possess. We're different now.
3 boys and two men between us.
Her life east coast. Mine shy of
Deep South. Funny. Our insides
are still child sized. I can still smell
my grandmother's Dove soap and
feel the tack of her linoleum beneath
my feet. My sister and I watching
A League of Their Own. Crying.
We've carried a box of sadness
since. Sisters. Sisters are wild things.
I know that now. Mine has sculpted
a her that's a little like me. Sitting
in that pond again. Now knowing why.

Sister Song

Eleanore Christine

Divided and doubled
one became two in cellular sorcery
twin sister, twin spirit
bonded from birth, since the genesis
of our embryonic existence
separated only by the minutes
it took them to pull her
out of our mother's womb after me.

This empyreal creature, spun from stardust
and I think we must be like constellations
the divine Dioscuri, Gemini-signed
or perhaps the bears, major and minor
she, shining like Polaris
the beacon I can always find
even in the deepest night.

I think I must be so lucky
to experience the universe with her.

She is holy, holy, holy
angel wing and saint's protection
grace and blessing, hymn and prayer
hallelujah and amen
eternal love, sins and all.

She is temple and sanctuary
safe space, place of peace
harbor, a shelter from the storms of life
home within a pair of arms, enveloped.

She is prophet of a thousand inside jokes
seer to each feeling I cannot name
diviner of every confession and hidden truth.

She is secret language and shared memories.

She is the beginning and the now
and what hasn't yet been sung.

She is half and together we are whole.

Eismeer

Paul atten Ash

after Caspar David Friedrich

I see your face, brother, under the clock-ice
and a black frost creeps over my skin,
dark veins silted with sorrow's grit.

This is the palette of drowning—
I paint in unanchored blues & greys,
the white knife-edge light of guilt.

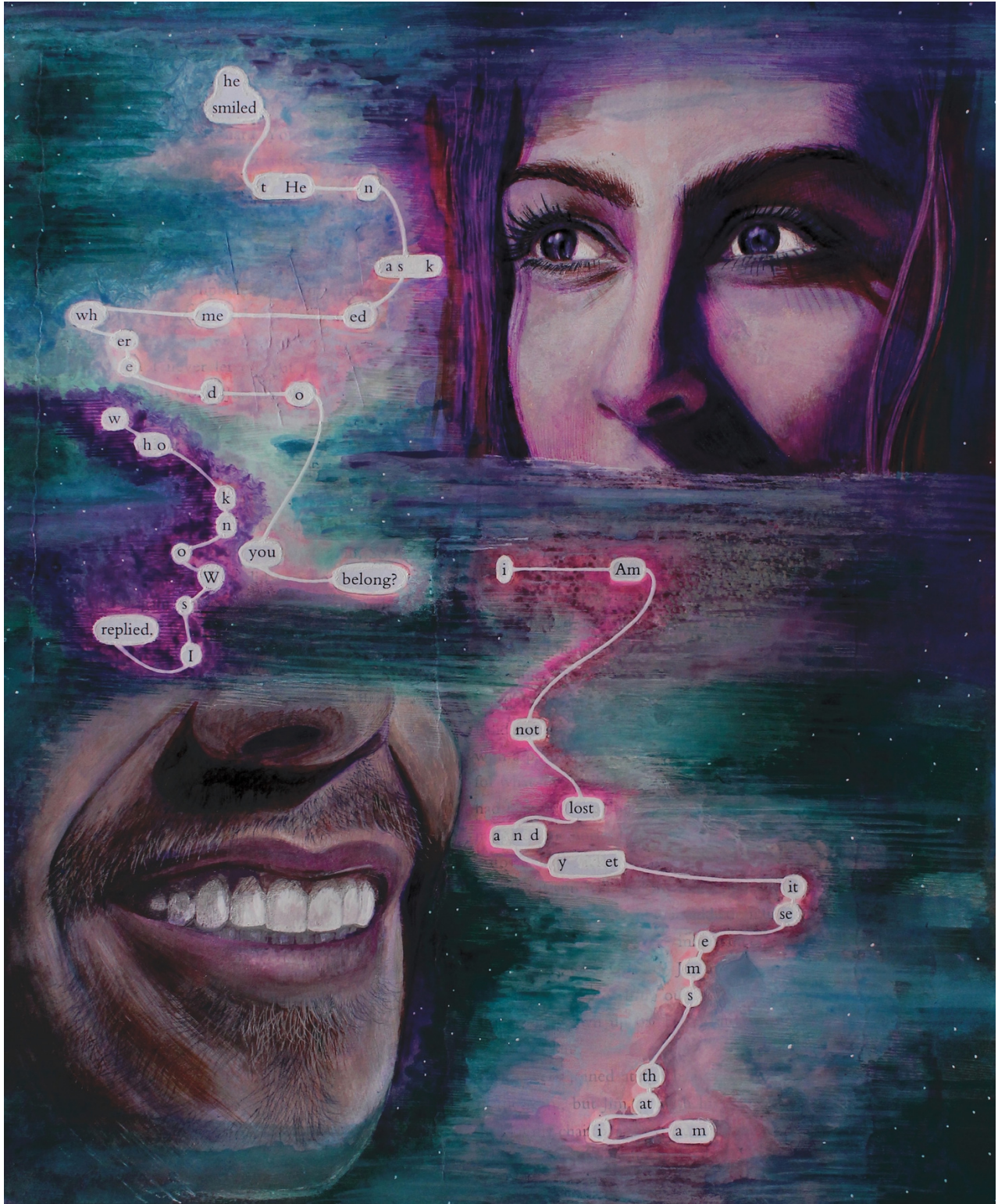
Shards of memory splinter the skim
and over a floundering ship's death repose
the glacial creep cathedrals greedily.

And under the floes, unknown creatures
look up coolly at nature's hand
in moments like these belittling man.

The crack and crease of this canvas can
break faith like an eggshell and, in its wake,
witness how fragile we are.

Unmoored

Nina Nazir



(watercolour & gel pen on paper)

'STOP THE BOATS'

Paul atten Ash

Two tiny ghosts
migrant boy and girl
washed up on English sand.

Before the flood
their last words a purl
of pure fear: *Hold my hand.*

Foaming mouths
fomenting the nation
to 'STOP THE BOATS'.

All that is human
pared back to negation:
the unmooring of hope.

How soon do we
forget our Pilgrims' passage
to New Plimoth shores.

All reason's aweigh,
God bless HMS *Damaged*,
throw love overboard.

Andromeda

Erica Leslie Weidner

I didn't have my sea legs when I first boarded this ship. Now I can stand strong and firm against the waves, but I was helpless once. That's what he reminds me every time I try to use the sextant or trim the sails or take the wheel. "Listen, Andromeda," he says, "I made you who you are." I pretend to listen, but at night, while he sleeps in the captain's quarters, I sneak into the supply closet where he keeps a book of Greek myths. I listen to him during the day, but each night I remember that my namesake was bound in chains. "You are my anchor, Andromeda," he tells me. I do not have the heart to remind him that anchors sink.

**Two Ships Passing on a
Lonesome Night**
Nina Nazir



(ink & gel pen on paper, 2022)

Gifts of Emptiness

Carole Greenfield

Two empty glass honey jars on my kitchen sill, second wedding gift from the woman who guided and inspired, arranged my bridal blessings shower, left our world too soon. Her last words to me, “Dreaming of spring and your exuberant gardens!” I look at her jars as gifts of emptiness and abundance, gathering air, intangible fragile strings of nothing from which to weave a tapestry of loving. I look at my echinacea and false indigo, wind anemone, bleeding heart, butterfly bush, larkspur, tell myself she's coming back, she's somewhere to be found, an unfinished lyric or line of song, the notes are there, just beyond the page, just past my fingers. I can hear her voice, I can feel his touch, I can smell the perfume my mother wore, the tobacco my father smoked, I can see the woman I used to be, if I hold the empty jars and close my eyes.

[this poem first appeared in Eunoia Review, June 2022 and in Carole Greenfield's poetry collection, Weathering Agents]

Catherine

Rachel Macaulay

She left her ring for me
A little of herself, left behind for me
I had loved, as a child, her Russian wedding ring
Its rainbow of golds: yellow, white, rose
I'd never seen rose gold before
And she left it for me
After the cancer came back
And though gold doesn't suit me
And I don't like the feel of rings on my fingers
And she's been dead for thirty years
I wear it and remember
That there was someone who loved me
And wanted me to have something that I loved
To remember her by

The Robot and The Sea

Jay Douglas

Steel yourself,
As in make yourself steel,
No more a natural human with all that emotion unwanted,
But metal-make yourself in mind and heart alone,
Keep that cochlear soft that you might hear this news I'm forced to give,
He's fallen and will never rise again.
If you have memory left in that leaden lump
Think back to the last time you were together,
Four generations hunched into a thin screen,
And there's a funny thing,
Is it the photo or the moment you remember?
And is that what matters or is the point remembrance alone?
I hear a voice saying heyo boyo,
It can only be that gentle man,
And how sad I had to lose his influence in order to accept his loss.
I mark my joints with rivets and they cut deep into innocent flesh,
No more so,
I am rusted with what I lost,
My great North Sea
Beach perched to await my arrival with giant arms,
Sweeping me up in waves of adoration and love
A boat of pliable wood.
If he were here his hands would know to sand and extract in
refurbishment,
But in his absence I will visit his home,
Take stock of his tools, his steady notes, to learn his loving trade,
Living again, keeping him alive.

The Robot and The Sea is about the death of Douglas' grandad, Les, during Covid. He lived in Kinghorn, Scotland right on the beach and worked on boats after he retired from the Navy and Foreign Office. He was a big peaceful man who seemed to automatically know how to do things in a way Douglas never has.

Month's Mind

Elaine Westnott-O'Brien

The crowds have waned:
A smaller congregation
A slight affair

No coffin glowing
No eulogy echoing

Just the loyal ones
The close ones
Those who loved and
Were beloved

The love remains
The empty space is solid
Tangible
Not huggable
But memorable

Life goes on
A day
A week
A year

We'll still be here.

Eulogy for a bookstore

Erin Clark

These are the dreams in which
the novelists dwelt:

the anchorweight of a rucksack
and two bulging panniers
whilst cycling up

Highgate Hill;

the dizzying effect of anything

houndstooth;

the sweet yet avoidable isolation of

pushing a pram;

mice with lives and voices like lions
leaving paw prints (thin kind rodent fingers
with no claws) in a house's
undusted corners;

the candle-softened misericords
of midwinter;

architectural minutiae
in stone, holy calligraphy, upending
the pending

apotheosis.

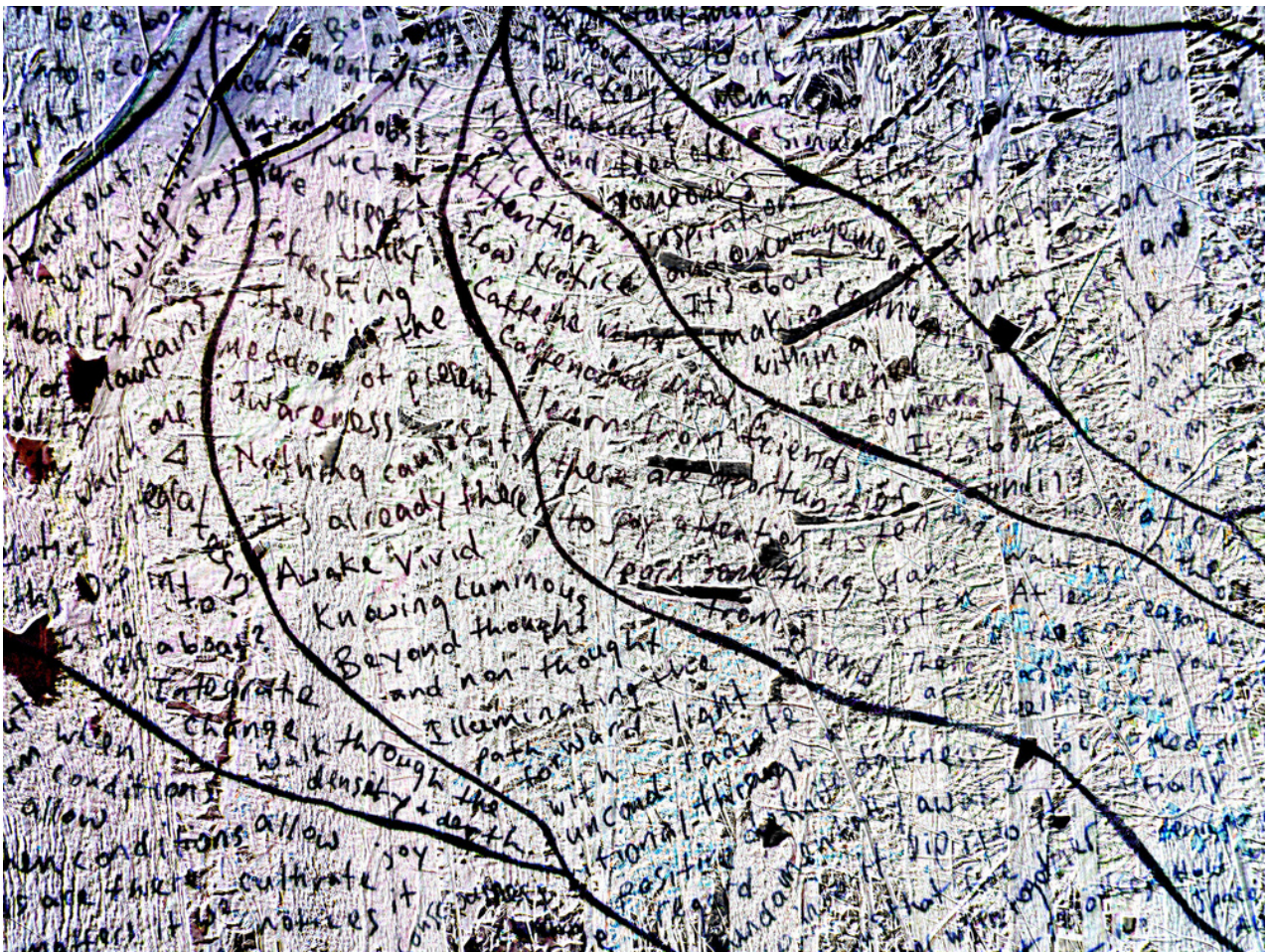
Inventory

Christian Ward

Every day, I'm anchored
to keys curled like seahorses,
an empty wallet accumulating
dust like interest, checkerboards
of handkerchiefs, a water bottle
always half-full, a wheelchair
glaring at me from opposite the bed
and a trident footed walking stick
longing for the sea. None
of these things will matter after
I'm gone. Their copper smell
might linger like a lightbulb
blinking before the quick fade
into black. What matters is the family
anchored to my genes, my blood.

Awake

Aaron Lelito



A Boat Without Water

Richard LeDue

Stuck in one spot on purpose,
perhaps the anchor constructed
of a six figure salary,
yearly prepaid vacations,
losing on the stock market
just enough to believe you're winning,
beers on New Years Eve,
grass mowed on the weekend
to keep the neighbour's gossip
from growing too much,
laughing at your manager's jokes,
ordering a diet coke
because you want to live forever
and then staring long at your soda pop reflection,
only to sleepwalk through lying awake at 4 AM,
haunted by yesterday's
pie graphs.

Untitled

El Smith

Lost in the train of onwards and I forgot about making progress. Lost in the process of motion lacking movement. I am going somewhere but not anywhere, stuck moving into the familiar unknown. I wish I knew my own name. Moving at a tempo I can't keep pace with and I am unfamiliar with this loss. I owned this time and still mourn it and its passing. We are so unknown until we are lost, and then we are beholden to an idea of this. I am not good at letting go, even when I must. If we are untethered then we are lost, and we are found, adrift in a sea of severed connections. Wrap this web around me. Find my edges. Call me whole.

Heat

Pratham i

The car prattles on
about irrigation techniques and
how the weather hasn't been kind this year.
I perch on the edge of a knowing seat,
greens and grays forcing open the eyes and
falling like wishing-well-coins
onto the bubbling floors of the gut.
The waving grass tops thrust their brilliance
into my face, they trample

over the nose and chin and don't give
way to any lighter structures.
I am waiting for the car to slow down,
I am waiting with stiffened words lodged
in my collar threatening to bake me.

Unsteady

Tricia Sankey

In a parallel universe, I hover above the sea, dressed in clouds. My imagination grows a tail and sailors think they see a dragon. They're not wrong.

I used to hang with loose thumbs from the edge of the moon, so I'm accustomed to the swing of wild waves. I anchor myself to passive verbs in boring stories, where I can slice my soul, and release the ancient sludge into chewable pieces to hungry seagulls.

The dark bits dissolve under their tiny tongues, and they lean forward, head down, and produce a horrid choking call. Their eyes turn from warm brown to cool black as they digest the knowledge they were never designed to comprehend.

The grey sea casts its spell and I'm transformed, once again.

What am I now? Just a distant star, praying for oxygen.

Ocean

Megan Cartwright

It's not long dark and the moon is lazy,
Rolling across the horizon fat as a pot-bellied toddler.
Too far out to muster the energy to swim to.

Diving down into the ocean's amniotic embrace I conjure a cave,
Inhabited by a giant squid.

A single intelligent eye projects my reflection, obscuring inky depths.
These are not for me to know.
The coiled creature is a reader of minds, unconcerned with their contents.
Only I am disgusted by my sheer humanness in this alien world.

I kick to the surface. Time has passed, but how much I cannot tell.
I can't stay, he says, and I know it,
But I'd like to claw his flesh for making it real.

Midlife rent inspection

Emma Jayne Willson

The limitless horizon of world
has receded, and its entirety
fits within the walls of a modest rental
in bright suburbia
much too far inland for sea breezes

Fish flop and gasp in my living room
milk-eyed, accusing
beyond saving
my potential is wedged somewhere
down the side of a grubby sofa

Meanwhile, I have become the collector
of multicoloured feathers
and long dark hairs that gather in
dark corners; it is my life's work

Will the tide ever come back
flooding through open windows
in a torrent of freedom
and joyful debris

Or will I wait here for the walls
to creep close as a coffin,
some DNA and feathers
all that is left of a woman
and not a single trace of ocean

Incomplete

Alicia Feizo

Middle tired, body
shrouded in a pallid shield
to deter onlookers from seeing.

She, terrestrial being
breaching borders, beyond
the span of still life.

Acquainted with nymphs,
she breathes in stages too
full they break bottom, they billow
and breathe out.

Seminal span carved—
no, punctured—
under the weight
of delayed impetus.

She clings
to water weeds
until time tips, and she
takes to the sky.

mo(u)rning song

Monica Robinson

day-touch, glow that brings
truth out to bask. fawn,

ice-bird, over your dead garden's
over-ground grave. you huddle

in solitary fear, afraid to leave
our porch's sunlight, deceptive

warmth a winter lie. the cage,
the key, you — *they are all the same.*

Skipping Swimming Lessons to Never Finish a Sonnet

Richard LeDue

If this poem ever had an anchor,
it was only a metaphor
for words stationary on a page,
while those same words floated away
inside a mind full of shallow water,
but believing itself an ocean.

Then there's tomorrow's words
adrift like a leaf in a puddle,
listening to mud remember god
making a mud pie and calling it a man,
even if earthworms have no religion,
surfacing from the soaked ground
religiously, just to find beaked shaped hell
beneath a sun,
too slow to save them, yet inspiring
this poem, splashing instead of plopping,
before an inevitable sinking.

God in the Eyes

Alicia Feizo

In giving life
to my eternal self
lingering labour pains bleed
through my fright-gripped
face stretched tight across
its sharpest peaks.

Habitually I / try to live
in the moment, even if the moment is
falling hard apart, machinations grinding
slowly, breaking down, bit by bit, my last spare
inch in the shadow of my once
undivided attention.

Eyes set,
I see GOD in the eyes
of a stranger / and I remember
we are not what is said about us.

Rivers and stones speak
to the weight I hold over my bones.
Even the most solid stone breathes
in its sleep, even if barely
perceptibly.

I am still wary of seeing myself
in the face of another, but I'm beginning to
recognize myself in the mirror
in between far away
moments.

A Yearning Yacht

Jahra Tasfia Reza



Acrylic on canvas

Etymology

Eleanore Christine

Juliet muses to Romeo, *“What’s in a name?”*

My own, chosen just for me
an inheritance of identity bestowed at my birth
anointing my arrival in ink
penned on a piece of paper
that says I am called something
I am someone
I am.

Eleanore, of old French origin
as in old-fashioned, as in ancient —
weren’t there medieval maidens
of Aragon, Brittany, Castille, Provence
and a twelfth-century queen of Aquitaine?

This name, too big for one so little, so young
shortened and simplified in childhood
Ellie or Elle would do fine
small enough to fit in, to go unnoticed.

Later, I would grow into each letter and syllable
my parents gifted me
learned to write and say them
like a spell, a word of power
let the fullness unfurl on my tongue
reclaiming what I had diminished.

Eleanore, its meaning, “shining light”
but I could tell you it also means
one who loves books
always takes her coffee with cream
who rises early and likes autumn best
who still believes in magic.

Its meaning, I am called something
I am someone
I am.

The Home that James Built

Isabelle B.L

“There, now you look like a boy.” The hairdresser prunes James’ curls. James strokes his neck. Tiny hairs tickle where his locks used to dangle. He jumps from his chair and lands in a puddle of wavy ripples. “I don’t want a haircut anymore.”



James gets a home-baking set complete with cookbook and cookie cutters, a bookstore voucher, and a subscription to *National Geographic*. James does not get an answer to his question, what does sissy mean?



Father, mother, sit opposite sister, brother. James enters swinging his hips to Too Funky in a one-piece red-polka-dotted-on-white dress. Father walks out of the lounge room and into his shed, Mother searches high and low for her Marlboros, sister runs upstairs two at a time, and brother fidgets and swipes.



James stabs the blood sausages. He enjoys the soft combination of pork and liver spill from the sides while he practices his speech: Born a boy. Am a girl. Red splatters on his new white linen dress. He slips into a red piece this time—a safe bet as he has prepared raspberry coulis to pour over lemon cheesecake. His mother’s favorite. The only one of the four—better than none—who accepted his invitation to his housewarming party. House. Home. Finally steady, settled and strong. He walks out onto his porch and waits for the woman that gave him life. His long, curly hair billowing in the wind.

Queer Creature Becomes Hunter

Sarah Bellum Mental

A peacock jumping spider becomes a poem
crown of colors, intricate dance
how can this world not be wonderful

when such things exist? I am spider
at times, fly others, moth yet other
times when I am drawn to the starlight

try to fly into the heavens
freeze wings and crash
into the earth to know

I am earthbound, even if
my skin wants to not
be of this earth.

What is more queer than a peacock spider
more queer than a luna moth
how she lives for only so long

gathers all the food to survive
as only a caterpillar, it's been
proven caterpillars remember

the history of their beginning
despite metamorphosis
turning them into a more beautiful

thing but still hated in comparison
to a butterfly. I am a nocturnal
animal, never a morning riser

maybe this is because
the night will hide
who I am, so I'm never

hunted again but predators
just adapt to their prey
and hunt another day yet again.

Sometimes I think of my other heart

Meghan Feuk

I was told one
would have to be
transplanted
for me to keep living

as it turns out
when they finally
saw inside me
that story changed

So

I hope they didn't die
yet
either

they skip
a frog drinking tea
with their friends

dance salsa on their birthday
spin under phosphorus lights
with good champagne

drive fast to heavy bass
put their feet in the ocean
at midnight

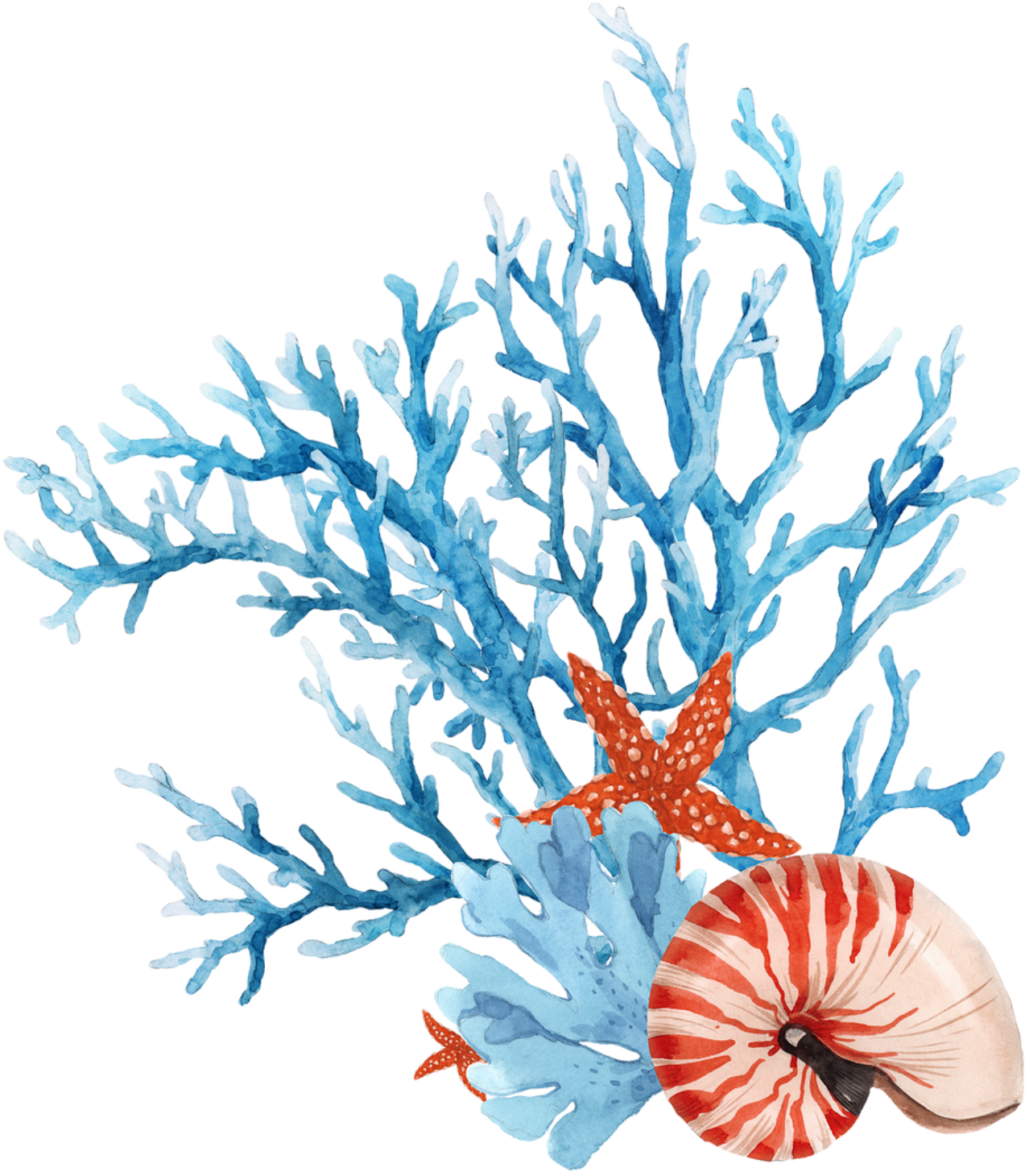
sparks and orgasms
tongue and heat
that rhythm

alive
alive
alive

Past Self

Elyse Welles

At the back of the closet that has been my life
Under the bed I have slept in for decades
In each dusty box of stale heirlooms
On the pages of yellowed books
In the smirks of old photos
Is the same realization:
I'm not ready
To leave



Meet the Contributors

Aaron Lelito is a visual artist and writer from Buffalo, NY. In his photographic work, he is primarily drawn to the patterns and imagery of nature. His images have been published as cover art in Red Rock Review, Peatsmoke Journal, and The Scriblerus. His work has also appeared in Barzakh Magazine, Novus Literary Arts Journal, Humana Obscura, EcoTheo Review, and SPECTRA Poets. He is editor in chief of the art & literature website Wild Roof Journal.

Alicia Feizo is a Canadian writer and poet from Ottawa, Ontario, land which is unceded Algonquin Anishinaabe Territory. Her work often focuses on the themes of complex and intergenerational trauma, the holistic nature of life, and what it means to be a human being in relation to diverse ecosystems. She finds inspiration in everyday life, drawing from the well of her rich inner experience and the connections that nurture her soul. Her work is inspired by poets such as Bianca Stone, Emily Dickinson, Ada Limón, and Sophie Strand, to name a few.

Arnab Chatterjee is an avid collector of selves. He lives in a town called Berhampore while portraying his writings with the sublime aesthetics of pastoral Bengal, and the voices lost in Modernity. He hopes to publish all his writings, if he can stop reading others' works more. He took up many hobbies which are constantly getting tarnished by academics, but he still tries to keep up with everything while hoping to find himself.

Benjamin Parker is a poet based in North Wales, currently working on his first collection. Benjamin is an English Literature and Creative Writing student with the Open University, about to graduate and move on to a Masters in English Literature. In 2022 Benjamin contributed a poem for Poetizer's 'Poems for Ukraine campaign', which was displayed publicly in Prague.

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/benparkerpoetry/>

Carole Greenfield grew up in Colombia and lives in New England, where she teaches multilingual learners. Her work has appeared in The Plenitudes, Dodging the Rain, Sky Island Journal and Amethyst Review, among others. Her first collection of poems is forthcoming this summer.

Cherine El-Bash is a UK based Finnish-Arab writer, who specialises in multilingual poetry. Cherine has performed her pieces internationally, and is currently active in the West Midlands. In her ongoing studies in Creative Writing and English Literature at University of Worcester, Cherine is focusing on the concept of otherness, and queer ecology.

Meet the Contributors

Christian Ward is a UK-based writer who has recently appeared in *The Dewdrop*, *Dodging the Rain*, *Blue Unicorn*, *The Seventh Quarry*, *Bluepepper*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *The Amazine* and *Rye Whiskey Review*. In 2023, he released two poetry e-books, *Intermission* and *Fox Fires*, on Amazon.

Dani De Luca is a teacher and writer. She holds a BA in Portuguese Language and an MA in TESOL. She resides outside Nashville with her husband and son. Her work has been published or is forthcoming with Bent Key Press, *Gypsophila Magazine* and *Querencia Press*. Find her @danidelucawriter.

Donna Childress lives in the Colorado mountains and writes about experiencing the great outdoors. She especially loves visiting local historic mining sites to get to know the land in a different way. Instagram: @peakcalm

El Smith is a 22-year-old queer Latinx writer in Chicago. Her work focuses on the experience of relationships and conceptualization of self within a post modern capitalist dystopia. To read more from her, visit @lacroixlines on Instagram.

Elaine Westnott-O'Brien is a writer and teacher of English language and literature. She writes in all forms, and her work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Wild Word* and *Forget Me Not Press*. She has poems forthcoming in several journals, including *Papeachu Review* and *The Uncoiled*. She lives with her wife and two children in Tramore, Ireland. Find her @elainewob_words on Instagram.

Eleanore Christine (she/her) is a Chicago-based poet. Her work has appeared in *Free Verse Revolution*, *Gypsophila Magazine*, *Querencia Press*, and *The Wee Sparrow Poetry Press*, and is forthcoming in anthologies from *The Aunt Flo Project* and *The Sad B*tch Chronicles*. Her debut poetry chapbook *I Don't Have The Words For This* was published in March 2023 by *Dark Thirty Poetry Publishing*. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, traveling, and sipping a good chai latte. You can find Eleanore on Instagram at @eleanorechristine.

Emily Tee writes poetry and flash fiction. Originally from Northern Ireland she now lives in the Midlands in England. She's had recent pieces published online in *The Ekphrastic Review* and *Visual Verse*, and in print with *Poetry Scotland* and some publications from *Dreich*. Emily was a contributor to Issue VIII of *Free Verse Revolution Lit*. She's on Instagram @emteepoetry.

Meet the Contributors

Selected by Free Verse Revolution to be included in the Best Poetry 2022 Anthology, **Elyse Welles** is a nomadic poet, novelist and non-fiction writer, based between Athens, Greece and Pennsylvania. She is a regular contributor for The Wild Hunt News, Witch Way Magazine, Sunflower Journal, Full Moon Magazine, and the Metaphysical Times, and has been published in Yellow Arrow Journal, Gypsophila Magazine, and Aayo Magazine, among others. Her debut novel, "Witch on the Juniata River", is forthcoming from Running Wild Press, and her essay on Tolkien and neo-paganism is forthcoming in an anthology by Luna Press Publishing. She is a poetry reader for Quagmire Magazine. When she's not writing, she runs Seeking Numina, bringing you to sacred sites and practices from around the world through online workshops and meditations, and in Greece in person through tours and retreats. She also co-hosts the Magick Kitchen Podcast. Read her works and sign up for her newsletter at seekingnumina.com and follow her on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube @seekingnumina.

Emma Foley is a writer and mindfulness teacher, living in the North of England with her husband and two young sons. Find her @emma_foley_writer on Instagram.

Emma Jayne Willson is a single mum and creative writing student from Perth who is interested in writing as a form of activism. She writes poetry at night on her phone when the kids are finally in bed. Her work has been published in Westerly, Independent Australia, Creatrix and Oprelle.

Erica Leslie Weidner is based in New York City. Her work has appeared in *Decoded Pride Anthology* and *Delicate Friend* and is forthcoming in *Divinations Magazine*, *Unlikely Stories*, and *Scrawl Place*. She is currently in school to become a librarian, and she just started her first lit mag, *underscore_magazine*.

Erin Clark is a queer American writer living and working in London. Her poems have appeared in places such as the New Critique, Pilcrow & Dagger, About Place, and The Scores. You can find her online at emclark.co or @e_m_clark.

Eve Croskery is a mother, primary school teacher and writer. She lives in Auckland, New Zealand with her partner and two young children, who are the inspiration for much of her writing. Her work has been published by Minerva Rising; Capsule Stories; Nightingale & Sparrow; and Beyond the Veil Press, amongst others.

Isabelle B.L is a writer and teacher based in France. Her work can be found in the Best Microfiction 2022 anthology, Alternate Route, Typo, Compass Rose Literary Journal, Overheard and elsewhere.

Meet the Contributors

Jahra Tasfia Reza is a citizen of Bangladesh. She has been a painter for 3 years. She participated in a group exhibition at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, National Faculty of Fine Arts. She has taken part in many International Online Exhibitions and has been selected for Offline Exhibitions but couldn't participate as artworks are not allowed to be sent abroad from Bangladesh. Her artworks have been featured in Whimsical Contemporary Art Magazine, the past two Lacuna Festivals, the past three Braintree Community Centre online art exhibitions, and in many more publications.

You can follow her here: <https://www.facebook.com/jahratasfiareza/>. She loves to create art with a view to framing the beautiful sights into reality and spreading peace everywhere.

Jan Ball has published 385 poems in U.S. and international journals like Nimrod, Orbis, England and Parnassus. Finishing Line Press published her three chapbooks and first full length poetry collection. She has been nominated twice for the Pushcart as well as Best of the Net. Besides her poetry, Jan wrote a dissertation at the University of Rochester: Age and Natural Order in Second Language Acquisition (1996) after being a Franciscan nun for seven years then living in Australia for fourteen years with her Aussie husband and two children. Back in the States, Jan taught ESL in Rochester, New York and Loyola and DePaul Universities in Chicago. When not writing, traveling, or gardening at their farm, Jan and her husband like to cook for friends.

Jay Douglas is 35 years old from Medway, Kent. He currently lives in Maidstone with his wife and son.

Lisa Criswell is a psychologist, calligrapher, and writer living in the Pacific Northwest. You'll often find her taking long hikes and melting into cozy evenings with her partner, dog, and cat. She relishes reading and writing poetry about healing, nature, and love. Her poetry has recently been featured in *SamFiftyFour*.

Previously unpublished, **Meghan Feuk** is a water quality analyst that disappointed her English teachers by going into science, and her science teachers for writing poetry in the margins of her lab book. She is also a mom of two boys, a paper-folder and poet, living in Tacoma, Washington.

Megan Cartwright is an Australian college teacher and poet. Her work has appeared in *Arteidolia*, *Authora Australis*, *Blue Bottle Journal*, *Meniscus Journal*, *October Hill Magazine*, and *oddball magazine*. She has poems forthcoming in *Book of Matches*, *Fatal Flaw*, *Mono – DREAM Anthology*, *Swim Meet Lit Mag*, *Tabula Rasa Review* and *Quadrant*.

Meet the Contributors

Monica Robinson (mrobinsonwrites.com) is a queer experimental poet and artist, mixing mediums to create fresh works of exploratory literature. She is eternally haunted by the rural Midwestern landscape in which she grew up, and she has been writing her brand of the weird and the wild ever since. Monica is the author of *Exit Wounds*, *EARTH IS FULL; GO BACK HOME*, *peeling the yellow wallpaper*, and *to rule the desert*, and has been published in Mookychick Mag, Wyrd & Wyse, and Ghost Orchid Press.

Nina Nazir (she/her) is a British Pakistani artist, poet and general creative bod based in Birmingham, UK. She's had work published in various journals, including *Free Verse Revolution*, *Messy Misfits Club*, *Black Flowers Arts Journal*, *Ink Sweat & Tears*, *Unlost Journal*, *Green Ink Poetry*, *Harana Poetry* and *Visual Verse* among others. When she's not teaching, she's making art or making poems. Other than that, she is never not reading. You can find her on Instagram: @nina.s.nazir and Twitter: @NusraNazir. (The text source for Unmoored is *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid, p.80-81, 2023.)

Paul atten Ash is the pen name of Worcester-born poet Paul Nash, who lives in the West Country with his family. His poetry has been published by Boudicca Press, Bristol 24/7, Deep Adaptation Forum, Envoi, Ginkgo Prize, International Library of Poetry (ILP), Luain Press, Oscillations, Poetry School, Raw Edge, Tandem, the6ress, Tiny Seed, Understanding, and Visual Verse. 'Vital Signs' was shortlisted for the Alpine Fellowship Poetry Prize 2023; 'Eryri' was shortlisted in the AONB 'Best Poem of Landscape' category of the Ginkgo Prize 2021, as selected by the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in partnership with Poetry School; and 'Tsunami' won the ILP International Open Amateur Poetry Contest 1999 (Grand Prize Winner). His work has been published in various anthologies, including: Ta DADA (the6ress, 2023), The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Best Poem of Landscape Prize Anthology 2021 (National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 2022); United for Ukraine (Boudicca Press, 2022); Songs of Senses (ILP); and Memories of the Millennium (ILP). Website: <https://campsite.bio/northseanavigator>

Pratham is a queer kid trying very hard indeed to be some sort of perfect . Previous Publication Credits: Querencia Press 2022 Fall Anthology.

Rachel Macaulay is an Edinburgh-based writer of fiction, nonfiction and poetry. She studied screenwriting at Screen Academy Scotland, and has written for the Scottish Feminist Blogging Network. She is interested in pop culture and social justice, and publishes her work at bongbork.substack.com and on [TikTok](https://www.tiktok.com/@rachelmacaulay).

Meet the Contributors

Richard LeDue (he/him) lives in Norway House, Manitoba, Canada. He has been published both online and in print. He is the author of eight books of poetry. His latest book, “Secondhand Salvation,” was released from Alien Buddha Press in February 2023.

Rob Lowe is eighty, a retired social scientist, sharing a home in Milton Keynes (U.K) with a niece who works as an epidemiologist. He now works at his lifelong preoccupation, poetry, and has had sixty or so pieces accepted by editors over the past five years, whilst learning a lot about writing in the process.

Sarah Bellum Mental is the author of two books of poetry focused on what it means to be a survivor and mental health through poetry. She looks to amplify her voice for those who need a voice to speak on tough subjects. Their workshops allow potential and established writers to access creativity in a virtual space together. She is a Finalist for the Write About Now Poetry slam team, May, 2022. Their website is www.sarahbellumental.com.

Satya Bosman is a poet and Editor of the Black Cat Poetry Press. She lives in Kent, England with her dog Rollo. Her poetry has been featured in Dreich Magazine, the Soorploom Press, The Kent and Sussex Poetry Society, Duckhead Journal, The Lake, Paddler Press, The Galway Review, A New Ulster & Southlight amongst others. She is currently working on her debut pamphlet.

Suzanna Fitzpatrick's poetry has been aired on BBC Radio 4 and widely published in magazines and anthologies, including *Writing Motherhood* (Seren), *The Emma Press Anthology of Contemporary Gothic Verse*, *The Emma Press Anthology of Slow Things*, *Furies* (For Books' Sake), and *Birdbook III* (Sidekick Books). She was shortlisted for the 2019 Bridport Prize, longlisted for the 2018 National Poetry Competition, won third prize in the 2023 Shepton Snowdrops Competition, second prize in the 2016 Café Writers and 2010 Buxton Competitions, and won the 2014 Hamish Canham Prize. Her pamphlets are *Fledglings* (2016), and *Crippled* (due 2024) (both Red Squirrel Press).

Tricia Sankey has an MFA in Writing and has published a novella on Amazon: *The Light in the Cave*. She has also had her flash fiction and poems published in various literary journals and print anthologies. She is active on twitter @triciasankey and Instagram @micropoetrybytricia. You can also find her works at www.triciasankey.com.

FREE VERSE REVOLUTION

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

Read previous issues online at
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