

ARC

Journal

of Art & Literature



Autumn 2020

Dedicated to those who inspire us to create

Editors' Note

An artist fills many roles throughout their life, but among the greatest is to peer into the shadows we are afraid to see, and to come out the other side bearing joy. An artist is someone who is bold enough to face the pain and darkness that we want to turn away from, and to hold a light to it. They reveal it, and in their embracing it, make it beautiful.

Or at least, that is how I feel looking through the works contained here.

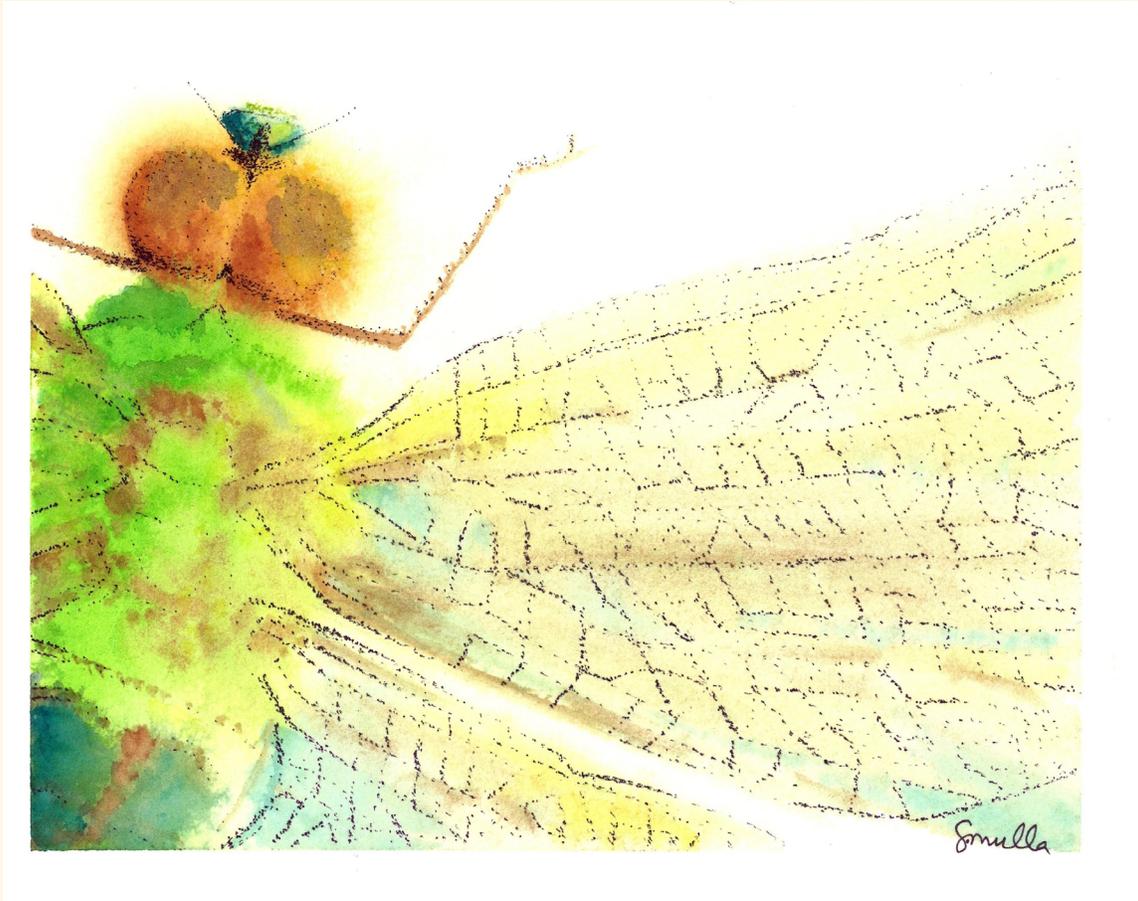
The world seems full of so many shadows. We face fear, prejudice, isolation, and loss each more poignantly than the next. And, through each one, we share our stories with one another, following the first and greatest human impulse. Artists and storytellers are transformed into prophets who have the courage to not look away, and translate what they see into the gifts they give to us.

Thank you to each one of you who has shared your story, and to each one who has listened. We share our story, and we are reminded that we are not alone.

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Shagufta Mulla, DVM



Shagufta Mulla, DVM (she/her) is a wildlife painter, Oregon Master Naturalist in training, and an emerging poet and writer. Her art features individual animals as a representation of claiming autonomy and individuality on the road to emotional healing from a childhood emotional trauma. She lives in Independence, OR with a lemon fern named Sideshow Bob. Her work can be found at www.etsy.com/shop/mouseandmonocle.



Bubbles is about living in the present while simultaneously keeping your dreams alive.

Winged Gem is a celebration of nature's beauty.

Autonomy is about coming out from oppressive east Indian culture and claiming ownership of my life.

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The deeper story on Autonomy is rabbits are my first love. I had a few traumatic experiences pertaining to rabbits (both stuffed animals and real) as a kid. My upbringing also involved a lot of denial of choice and denial of individuality. As an adult, rabbits came to symbolize reclaiming my dreams, my authentic self, and the broken pieces of my heart. The facial expression of the rabbit in the painting is one of self assuredness. She celebrates being her.



Matthew Porubsky

from Stand in Old Light

Watch the way
 existence continues.
Sky and stream
ripple the same blue.

Sprigs fold from
limbs to tremble
sun and wind.

Smoke in the air
 reminds that it's time to burn,
time for ash to rise.

What kind of arrows
fly through the immovable?
What is it that holds us
 waiting?

I tap my foot,
begin to chart
 the length of brevity -
how it disregards
 miles of creation,
how it flattens
 a cloudless sky

Brandy Bennett



Red Rum- String Theory

Her name is Red Rum and she brings the murderous intentions left behind, within the stains of time.

My name is Brandy though I call myself Gypsy. Just as my roots, so my life is ever changing.

I am an artist of creation, and without the beautiful minds within us all we could not do so.

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Everyday is Halloween

Beyond the walls of the cemetery gates we only get to play but one time a year in the light of day. But please do come visit, we really love it here. We can forever dance and be seen...because, inside these walls everyday is Halloween.

Porcelain Pain

She is made of porcelain... old and cracked. No longer ones treasured doll, but left to be alone in the black. Within the eternal fade... she will stay here as empty as the day she was made.



Dr. Wesley R. Bishop

Midwest Somewhere

The Trump billboards tower over cornfields, empowered by “In Power We Trust” and we fear it must always be this way. A soybean republic, white and bland, ever thrusting “great again, great again,” great in this loosened belt of rust always and forever. Public repeats, public retreats, retro public entreats. Menued options in disarray, as we support our troops, support our police, support freezing ice at the polls as the planet melts. Planned, never random. All by design. ‘Cause God cannot play dice. America tried to teach God once, but no matter what, the guy would not learn. So we burn by intent, and we see those towering “GREAT ALWAYS” signs and we slap our asses to applaud. I counted six billboards tonight... all billing we would be great again... and stay great... and isn’t it always great, in a land stolen and occupied, colonized and depopulated, so soybeans could grow undulated, and we could proclaim we were, again.

Respiration Nation

And nowhere in America could people breath, at ease in easements, our lungs labored double time like pistons pounding to endless rhymes which then gasped in arrhythmic patterns. Matters not, I supposed, as front porch empires close and go out of business with sales that are out of this world! I wonder, can anyone see us now? Engulfed in flames, boxed in by walls, strangled, and coughing COVID laced spittle that projects at a velocity incapable of escaping? Escaping, escaping the gravitational pull of national narratives.

Wesley R. Bishop is a poet, historian, and editor living in northern Indianapolis. He is the founding and managing editor of “The North Meridian Review: A Journal of Culture and Scholarship.” He is a forthcoming contributor with Bronzeville publishing.

Anchal Singh



Just when she thought everything was over, she realised that it was just the beginning of a new phase of her life.



There is beauty in the sunset.

Anchal Singh is a blogger, writer, and poetess who reflects different aspects of life through her writings. She was born and brought up in India in a joint family. She believes that be it anything, either you should give it all, or you shouldn't care at all. There's nothing in between. She says, you cannot change your life, but you can change the way you live, and that will surely change your life. Her motto is to do something for mankind and humanity. In her free time, she likes to cook, make paintings, and mostly find new hobbies and skills to learn. She wants to express her feelings through her words.

Instagram: @iamanchalsinghrajput

Eric Brimhall

A Dying Republic



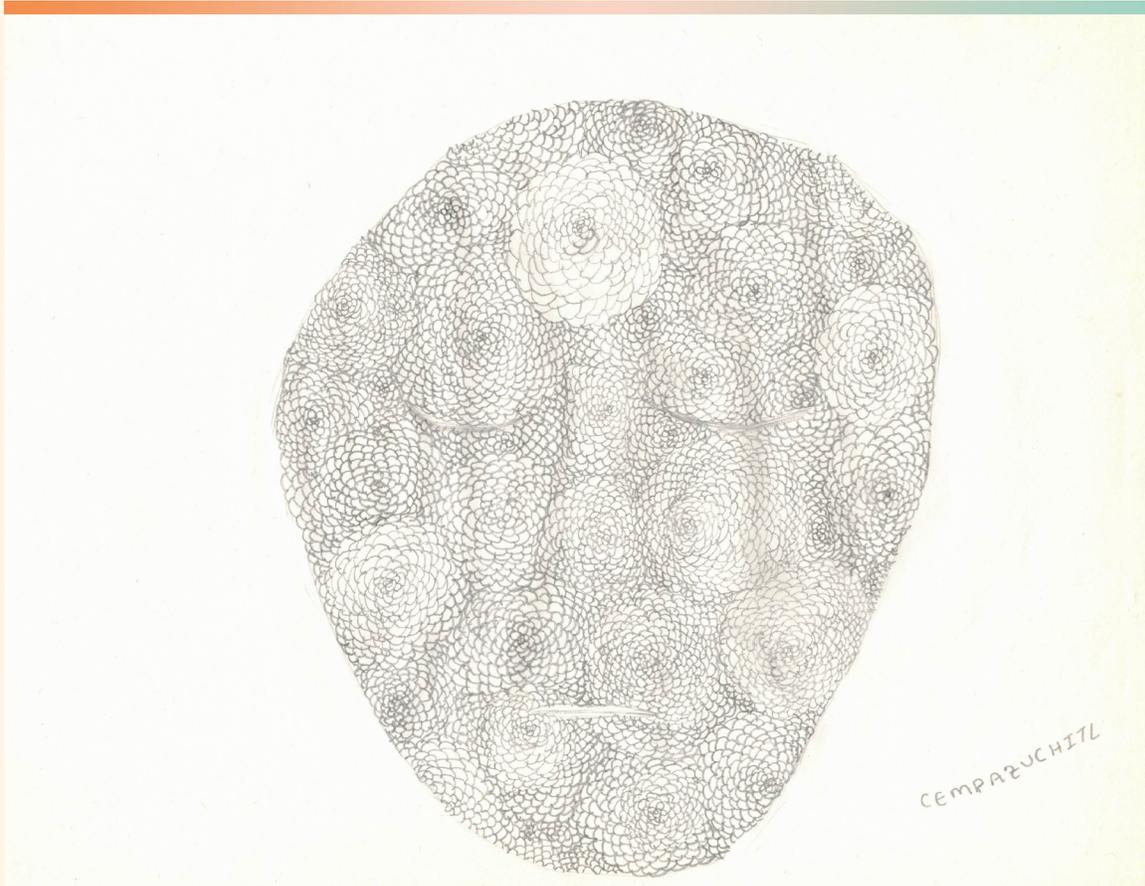
At the end of the world, what else is there to do but clean out the church closets? It isn't the end of the world — not yet anyway — but it sure can feel like that sometimes.

A hot wind moves a wall of dirt toward me, and I duck into a classroom for shelter. The churchyard is a wasteland, where bony fingers of dried grass search for water. The water was shut off with the fire nearly two years ago. The trees succumbed to the aridity and heat while the lawn, like an old man, balded and died, leaving native dirt and topsoil in its place. The skeleton fingers, instead of water, find only colorful bits of trash.

I come out again to survey the landscape and realize the whole neighborhood is like the churchyard — broken and without enough money to fix anything. Just beyond the once-suburban neighborhood of low-slung ranch houses lies a jungle of Payday Lenders, fast food chains, smoke shops, bus stops, Dollar Stores, and Llanteras. Neon signs blaze from every street corner at night. The poverty is as palpable as the dusty heat. Another eddy of hot air stirs the loose topsoil and sends me scuttling for shelter again.

I look out the dirty bay window (there is no one to clean them) beyond the property and onto the streets. I think about the politics that created this world of concrete lines and boxes. This part of town is on the front line of a war that, like God, can only be seen in hindsight.

Jerenka



Cempazuchitl are marigolds and are often used on Day of the Dead altars.

Kaleena Madruga

Seasonal Affective Disorder

I hate writing about the weather and talking about the weather and hearing about the weather, but it feels strange to attempt to avoid the weather when you live in the middle of the country. I didn't so much move to the Midwest as I fled, and when I got there I made a silent promise to myself not to complain about anything, especially the weather.

Quietly and slowly I compiled a list of items I believed I'd need for when the temperatures dropped. A coat, warm scarves, gloves, thick socks, boots for rain and snow. I read articles online and paid close attention to what girls in the ads were wearing and what people in close proximity to me were talking about.

Before fall arrived I had created a closet that seemed prepared for the brutal winter I had heard so much about. But truthfully I had never experienced any kind of winter in my life, so I tried to enjoy a world that felt almost annoyingly familiar until the change came.

In Southern California where I'm from people believe that pretty much anything can be cured by sunshine. If you have troubles or fears or doubts or deep dark secrets, they can be washed away by smelling the salty ocean or riding a bike or watching the sun go to sleep. Things like anxiety and depression are not so much conditions but a state of mind, one that occurs when you haven't gone on enough hikes or taken a yoga class in a while.

I watched the grandfatherly trees on my block change color as October bled into winter. I began to pull on my warm socks and throw a scarf around my neck as I made my daily ritual to the train. I was satisfied by the way the wind felt and the way my boots sounded on the concrete.

There is this thing that San Diego does when we set the clocks back. It's an oaky and crisp and burning thing and I know that it is fall. But it's more internal, I can only feel it.

The seasons in Chicago are more than a feeling, they are real. There is the bright sun, then the crunchy leaves, the white snow, and the rain. Bunnies and light blue flowers are Chicago's April, every dream I'd ever had of a snow day is Chicago's winter. Joy is Chicago's summer.

That's what I think about a lot: the ones who travel, uproot, and sacrifice for this

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promise of constant joy. There are so many transplants in the city of San Diego that the ones who were born and bred in the city are often referred to as unicorns—widely discussed but rarely seen. I am a third generation unicorn and likewise know a lot more unicorns which certainly makes them feel less magical, but I know that my experience is a different one.

I grew up watching families who in my mind look so different from my own in a way that I still can't place, as they tumbled out of overpacked vans and scampered to the beach. The sand slapped off their brand new flip flops. I watched people steal photos of the red-orange sun as it disappeared behind the shoreline with this look of amazement like they'd never seen a sunset before in their lives. It always takes me a moment to realize that they haven't.

California doesn't caress your cheek with its warmth. It roughly shakes your shoulders and musses your hair and yells at you to be grateful. San Diego to me is a tanned, gruff father like my own with his hands on my childish forearms gripping so hard that red spots appear. Don't you see how lucky you are California screams at me. Can't you see how good you have it?

I don't drink caffeine and I don't really like being outside unless I'm making a specific task to go somewhere or accomplish something so my habits feel more primitive and animalistic than others. I wake up when I'm done sleeping and I fall asleep when I'm tired. My body moves when it needs to and it stays in stasis when it feels safer. When the sun comes out, as it does virtually everyday, I don't feel a burning need to rush out and experience it. My days and my concept of time just melt from one moment to the next. For so much of my life I couldn't understand why I was being pulled outside and redirected to spots to better watch the sun move. I knew then and I know now that the sun does this everyday and will always do this, at least until it burns out. In my mind the sunset looks the same every time, but to Californians new and old each sunset is a baby being born, it's a miracle.

In Chicago you can't see the sun setting, at least not like that, and you can't always go outside. It's true what everyone says: it's cold, it's very cold. I have a winter coat and fuzzy gloves and boots and socks and ear muffs and sometimes I am still very cold. It's hard to walk or breathe or think when you're that cold.

I was an impatient child and became an impatient adult. But I have somehow

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found this peaceful slowness, a gift from Chicago's winter. I am almost meditative in the way I put my layers on and take them off. No need to rush, Chicago's motherly voice coos to me as I get ready for work in the morning. It's better to be warm and cozy for your walk to the train!

Chicago is a tender brown-haired woman with pearl earrings and a ruffled apron on who is proud of me. And she is right, it is easier and smarter to layer with care and take my time, and step ever so gently and with purpose when I walk on the icy streets.

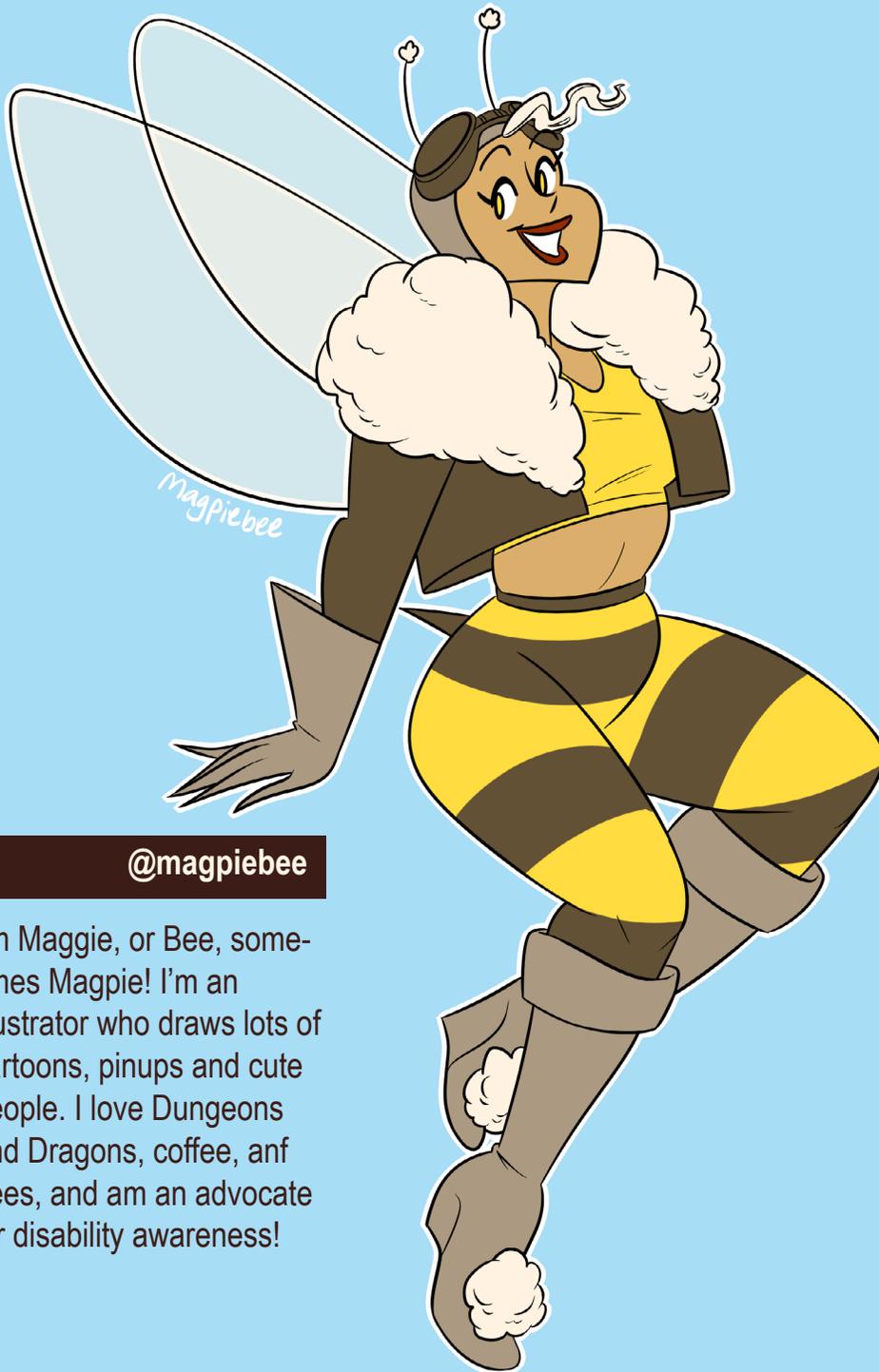
On the first official day of the spring equinox the animal inside me feels the most alive. I can see the trees and even though they're still bare I can tell they are starting to wake up from their sleep. I can sense the promise of a warm summer and for the first time I feel ready for it. Everything is coming back, including me, even though I don't know exactly where I've gone.

The rain is falling lightly and I can smell it. There is a quietness in the early morning hours where things feel different, when no one has complained to me about the weather yet. I think that I am becoming new, too.

Instagram: [@kaleenarayewrites](#)
Website: www.kaleenamadruga.com

Kaleena Madruga lives in Chicago, IL. She received her BA in Creative Writing from San Francisco State University and is currently pursuing her MFA in Creative Writing at Roosevelt University. Her favorite animal is a fruit bat.

Maggie Burt



@magpiebee

I'm Maggie, or Bee, sometimes Magpie! I'm an illustrator who draws lots of cartoons, pinups and cute people. I love Dungeons and Dragons, coffee, and bees, and am an advocate for disability awareness!

Ashton-Taylor Ackerson

Woman with a Whip

Oil of orchid anointed daily,
to give her skin an added glow,
with cheeks and lips pinched tight for color,
a woman of Victoria's time,
with the air and beauty of a queen.
By day she ruled stallions and mares,
her land their spacious kingdom,
all her subjects to be governed,
she found comfort in command,
as her whip met their fuzzy flank.
But under the dim evening light,
her whip wielded an alternate use,
she waited coyly on Granby Street,
to lash those who sought her batter,
with rouged lips and a ravishing smirk.
One morning at the market,
as she selected floral remedies,
a man in red approached her,
asking if she buys the blooms for her face,
because of the remarkable glow about her.
Brimming with pride she confessed yes,
then he confided that he had one better,
a vial of golden liquid,
that would make her beauty eternal,
and allow her to exist forever.

Intrigued she asked the price,
surely more than several pence,
but he said her beauty was enough,
a vessel worthy of no other charge,
as it had beckoned to him.

Once home she removed the cork,
to a serum smelling of sour apples,
married with the perfume of lavender,
an eternally lavish life,
this blend could provide.
Swiftly she swallowed the serum,
elated for ageing to cease and her beauty to sing,
like a vampirious red-lipped queen,
ready for the evening's moonlight,
to thrash new prospects repeatedly.
The vial rested empty in her hand,
and at first she didn't feel a thing,
but as she clung to her looking glass,
a searing pain started in her face,
and no sooner she began to scream.
Her radiant skin melted from her face,
to reveal every bone in her cheek,
her luscious lips perished next,
exposing wailing tongue and teeth,
she watched her reflection unravel helplessly.

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As patches of flesh fell away,
her heart suddenly stopped beating,
though her eyes continued seeing,
witness to every horror of her being,
now akin to some grotesque mummy.
Oil of orchid once a daily anointment,
to give the skin an added glow,
with cheeks and lips pinched tight for color,
a creature of Victoria's time,
withered, undead, revolting.
Yet still a woman with a whip,
she rides on concealed by dark,
her brutal strikes that never relinquish,

still tyrannizing London's men,
even with her beauty gone.



Instagram: @ashtonalopoli

My name is Ashton-Taylor Ackerson, and I have been writing from a young age. I graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a BA in English, and write both fiction and poetry. I am one of the co-founders and editors of the online literary magazine Crown & Pen, through which I have published multiple poems, as well as my short story Limpia.

"Woman With a Whip" is the dark story of a wealthy woman living in Victorian England. My poem is inspired by a tattoo I got while studying abroad in England years ago, fueled by my fascination with horror, Victorian England, and Victorian fashion trends.

Frances Firster



My name is Frances and I'm a freelance artist from Brisbane.

Specialising in portraits, fantasy, and working my way up the artistic world one commission at a time :)

Facebook: [Facebook.com/defaultgoblin](https://www.facebook.com/defaultgoblin)
Instagram: [@defaultgoblin](https://www.instagram.com/defaultgoblin)

Gareth Culshaw

SOMETIMES HIS SHADOW SLEEPS IN HIS SHED

His shed holds saws, hammers, nails, screws,
and a photo of his rabbit. Sunlight squeezes
through holes in the panels as torches in fog.

Spiders hang around corners, beetles brag
to woodlice on the concrete floor. The odd ant
visits, runs away with a bread crumb.

He spends every night inside this shed.
Listens to jackdaws that nest in his chimney.
Sometimes he sleeps on a two-legged stool.

The neighbours hear him tap away or grind
metal teeth against timber he needs for his fire.
When he walks out he leaves his shadow inside,

hangs it up on a peg hook. He bolts the door,
clamps a lock, enters his house, turns on the light,
then sees another shadow hanging up.

He swirls it around his body threads his octopus
arms through it. Wears it until he goes back
in his shed the next night, then he swaps again,

determined to keep his life a secret.

My second collection, 'A Bard's View' available now at:

gcwculshaw.moonfruit.com

Twitter - @Culshawpoetry1

YouTube Channel - Gareth Culshaw Poetry

I am a poet from Wales. I love writing poems and aim to keep a child-like exuberance for it for the rest of my life. It's amazing.

SHE CUT THE LAWN AS HER HUSBAND LAY DEAD

She is the woman who wore a hat
made of feathers from her dead budgies.

Her walking stick is the two femur's
of her dead husband's legs. She smoothed

them down with Wickes sandpaper. Painted
each one in walnut decking stain.

She does talk, but only on a weekend.
Rumour has it she whistles, though her nose.
She already has her gravestone engraved, Date of Birth,
Place of Birth, Name, and favourite skittle flavour.

When she goes shopping she uses her late husband's
wheelbarrow. Holds it with weightlifting straps.

Her grandson pops round on his skateboard.
They go to the local park, take it in turns on the slide.

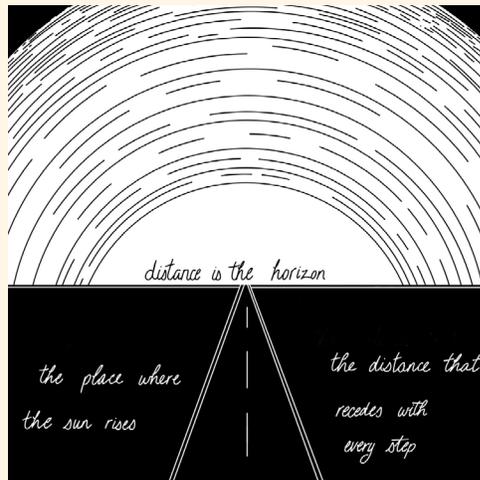
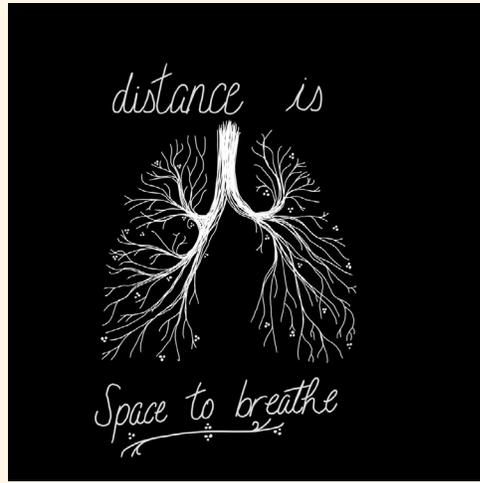
Seventeen years ago she found her husband flat out
on the lawn. She thought he was having a nap.

When he didn't move after she poured water over
his face, she realised he was really asleep.

Phoned for an ambulance after paying her milk bill.
Put a tie around his neck while she waited,

gave him a quick shave, then carried on with the lawn.
The paramedics went to the wrong house
as they thought he was having a kip. She complained.

Holly Heckart



Palmer Smith

The Dollhouse on Fifth Avenue

Zoom in on apartment 4C:
sleepy, sour Mrs. Hayes swallows
Ambien-filled green tea.
Sleepwalking, the moon's light she follows.

Downstairs in the gym
(it is now 4am), Mr. Sickles
stands naked. Wrinkled skin
bounces as he bicycles.

In the Penthouse young Megan
dreams of loving a daring queen.
She slices the throat of a dragon.
The dragon's blood leaves an alarming scene.

Mr. Levine lives alone.
Each night he moans heavily
until his neighbor, in a high-pitched tone,
complains to me via the intercom-phone.

("The kid is addicted to porn!")

O, my beloved dollhouse; I am
its doorman,
keeping an eye close,
delivering their next dose,
dusting their brains,
holding their canes,
propping open the door
wide open, as done before.

smiling
a most beguiling smile.

They called me body #19
when I laid under the half-door
of this half-block,
depleted of what existed above.

Nineteen, an odd, uneven,
unsure number. I observe
a deleted city, uneven in its skyline,
like a mouth without its biggest teeth
to help swallow its food.
It coughs and begs for someone
to help it, with a flailing tongue.
It is one of many mouths.

A number identified me...
not my hair, or my skin colour.
I would be counted amongst 20.
This I did not know until weeks later,
when wild newscasters counted
the remaining bodies like stars
on their fingers.

To count 20 stars
in a Manhattan sky would be rare.
But bodies? What was rarer?

A waking moment: atop smoky glass
and blood burned atop wooden desks,
with loose elevator buttons,
I counted the people surrounding
the rubble. They amassed to more stars
than I would ever count,
even on a clear night.

Instagram: @spdevsmith

Palmer is a graduate of Sarah Lawrence College and an incoming MFA and MA student. She has worked as a paralegal since 2018. She has written for Refresh Magazine, The Online Journal for Person-Centered Dermatology, Sea Maven Magazine and Calm Down Magazine, The French Press Zine and level:deepsouth, with work forthcoming in The Remington Review.

Meet the Editors

Holly Heckart

My proudest accomplishment is being the number one weird girl in my class growing up. I have spent the last decade or so working to expand that to number one weird girl in my community, and someday, the world! I hope to do this by creating, sharing, and uplifting literature and art, because I believe that by learning to nurture and express our own kinds of weird, we truly do build each other up, and if we're lucky, maybe even leave this world a little bit bigger and stranger and better than we found it. Thank you to all of you who have joined us along the way. I can't wait to grow with you.



icons by Maggie Burt
@magpiebee



Eric Brimhall

Artist, writer, and musician are three words that describe me, but I hope that doesn't sound pretentious. Basically, I'm just interested in how we express our ideas to other people – sounds, visuals, words, or some combination of the three. My favorite mediums are photography, digital art, the piano, the flute, essays, and poetry. I have an English degree and hope to someday open a community Writing Center, driven by the firm belief that literacy is a human right. I'm also very excited about this Journal and hope to continue it well into the future! Thank you again to all the brilliant artists and writers who have contributed. You inspire me.

