



summer

summer

summer

# warmtime



# *Blue Daisies Journal*

## I s s u e I V — w a r m t i m e

Blue Daisies aims to be a cozy cot for experimentation with genre stylistics to explore the psyche of changing aesthetics. Learn more about the journal at [bluedaisiesjournal.wixsite.com/bluedaisiesjournal](http://bluedaisiesjournal.wixsite.com/bluedaisiesjournal). Find us on Twitter @DaisiesJournal & on Instagram @bluedaisiesjournal



# Editor's Note

“A snake is summer’s treason,  
And guile is where it goes.”  
— Emily Dickinson

Welcome to Blue Daisies Journal’s Issue IV: “**Warmtime**” based on the theme of Summer!

Anxiety often precedes summer for people in the East and those living closer to the planet’s central latitude. There is a sense of impending tour de inferno, months-long drugery through the vaporising, then humidly drowning waves of heat and showers, all crawling up one’s body slowly as if etching wounds on the temporal plane of memory, marking what the precise moments of prickling heat of June or July feels like, a citation of the life of the flesh in the mind. All a summer can do now in a constantly warming world is to vehemently remind all devoid of powers what actual powers that be are capable of and how lives, bodies upon bodies, laid on the ground in heaps without a single tear in the archive as the planet is torn apart by a handful of neo-empires and egotistical tantrums of a few people in power.

Where does poetry stand in all of this? Perhaps nowhere for a business-minded SEO obsessed person. Yet, here we are, putting together this volume, a document recording a few experiences of a few people. It is indeed a symbolic act, an act that determines its own context and mediates a result for n-number of times, the more it’s read, the more it survives, the more it acts. Poetry and the arts are the only hope to imagine a future beyond what has been registered as the hegemonically accepted doom of the world; it is the mode through which the singularity of the experiences is put together and put in a dialogue with the universal, a site where the individual stands and looks back and find all that has been, from the tip of the fallen nail to the death of the empires, all of it comes together and is whirled into you, the writer and the reader too, and then you feel, the yes, an occurrence is registered, perhaps, you had a similar experience, a revelation, an epiphany and all changes.

If poetry can do something in times like ours is to be for the sake of an imagination that preserves what is vigorously under attack, the identity of all those who oppose the empires and their pervasive erasures, and imagine a future that is free of such bondages, in line with James Baldwin, we must never put it out to the powers that yes we have lost the hope, it might be a thing with feathers, yet it must not be caged or put beneath the snow of dejection.

[Han, *Guest Editor*]



눈앞에 펼쳐진 건 우윳빛 은하수  
피어난 금빛 계절 like our summer  
어디에 있어도 어떤 계절에도  
우리가 함께라면 feel like summer

싱그런 너의 향기 반짝이는 너의 눈빛  
내 맘 일렁이게 해  
현실은 힘을 잃고 지구조차 숨죽이고  
순간은 영원이 돼



Spread before your eyes is the ivory Milky Way  
Blooming gold season, like our summer  
No matter where you are, no matter what season  
If we're together, feel like summer

Your fresh fragrance, your sparkling eyes  
Makes me feel better  
Reality loses its power, even the Earth dies  
The moment is eternal

— *Our Summer*, TXT



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# It's been a minute

*Bronte Lemaire*

*Hello*

Water over eroded rock  
Pleasure in simplicity  
A path unblocked

*How have you been?*

Trees in a rustle  
Not competing in skyland  
Branches leaning out, leaves brushing

*I've been good, how about you?*

A new tree  
Dried up sap  
A mark grown over

*I've been well*

Sun on freckles  
A warm breeze  
Grass between toes

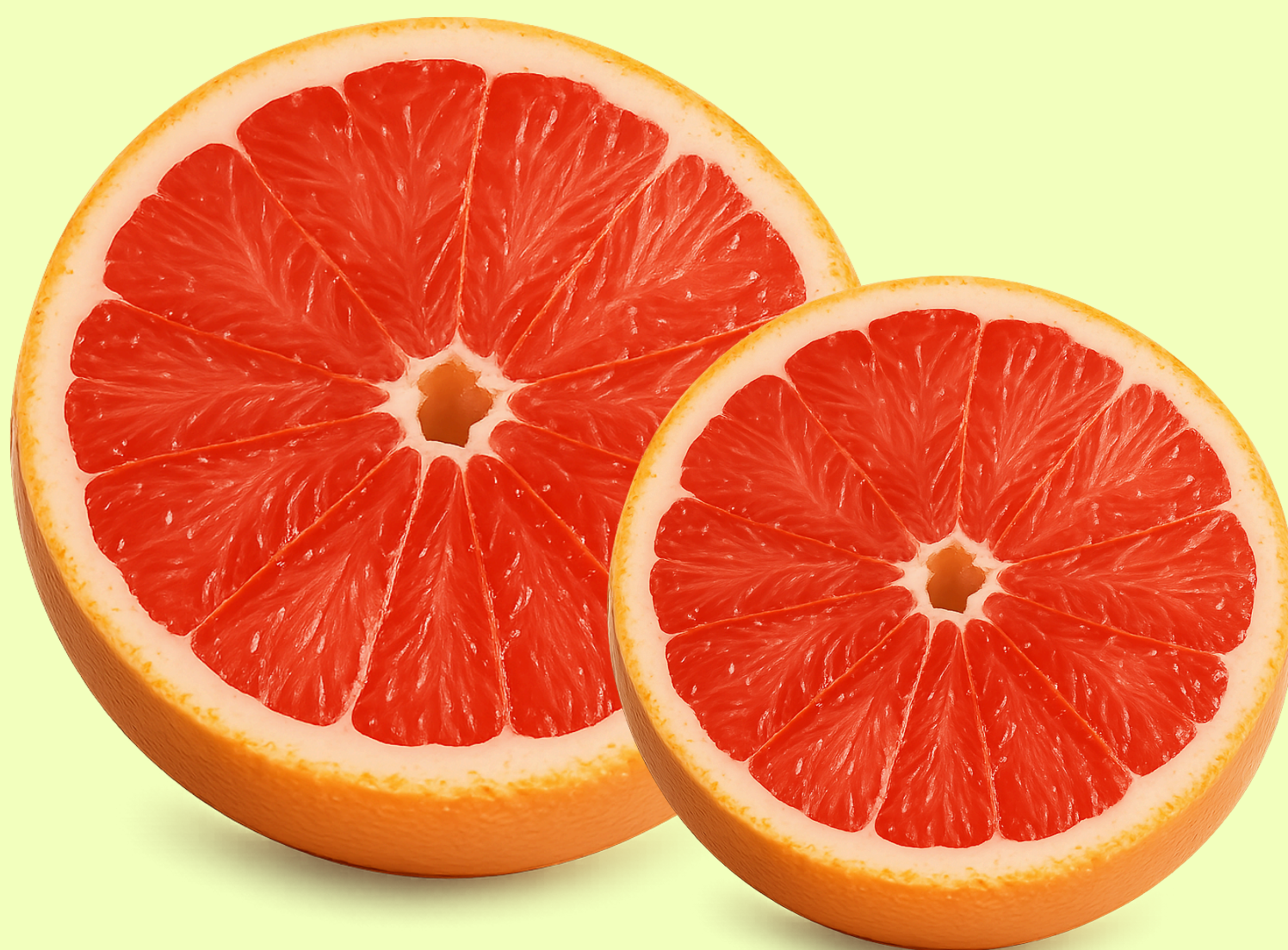
*I missed you*

Open air  
An elderly leaf  
A flat dry stone

*Me too*

Ripples tickling stillness  
A sink, a laugh  
An old song hummed under breath

*How wonderful*







# If I Kept It

*Bart Edelman*

If I kept it—  
Say, for a rainy day—  
What good would it do me  
The summer I turned 17,  
When the sun appeared,  
An orange light orbiting  
The barn we chose  
To feed the fire.

If I kept it  
In a box of thread—  
And never learned to sew—  
How would I know life  
Held secret after secret,  
Each worth the gold spent,  
No longer pretending  
Love needs a name.

We languish in listlessness,  
Welcoming what little wind remains,  
One final time before summer ends.  
It's been a dreadful season,  
With Willy's recent illness,  
Clara's inability to find employment—  
Anywhere between Fulton and here—  
And the wicked weather,  
Even more distasteful than normal.  
Still, we press on, as we must;  
There's nothing else, I'm afraid.  
Perhaps, our futures will change,  
Although there's no guarantee.

Tomorrow, Edna arrives from Sinclair.  
She's good tonic at times like these.  
And what would we do without Aunt Kitsy,  
Or Uncle Irwin and his harmonica?  
Willy claims he'd like to learn the accordion,  
Join Irwin as a musical duo,  
When he feels a wee bit better—  
Able to hobble out of bed—  
Possibly, by Thanksgiving Day.  
They say God has a divine plan,  
For those who believe in him.  
Well, we've been waiting at his table,  
But he hasn't served us just yet.



# Summer

*Bart Edelman*



# Album of the Summer

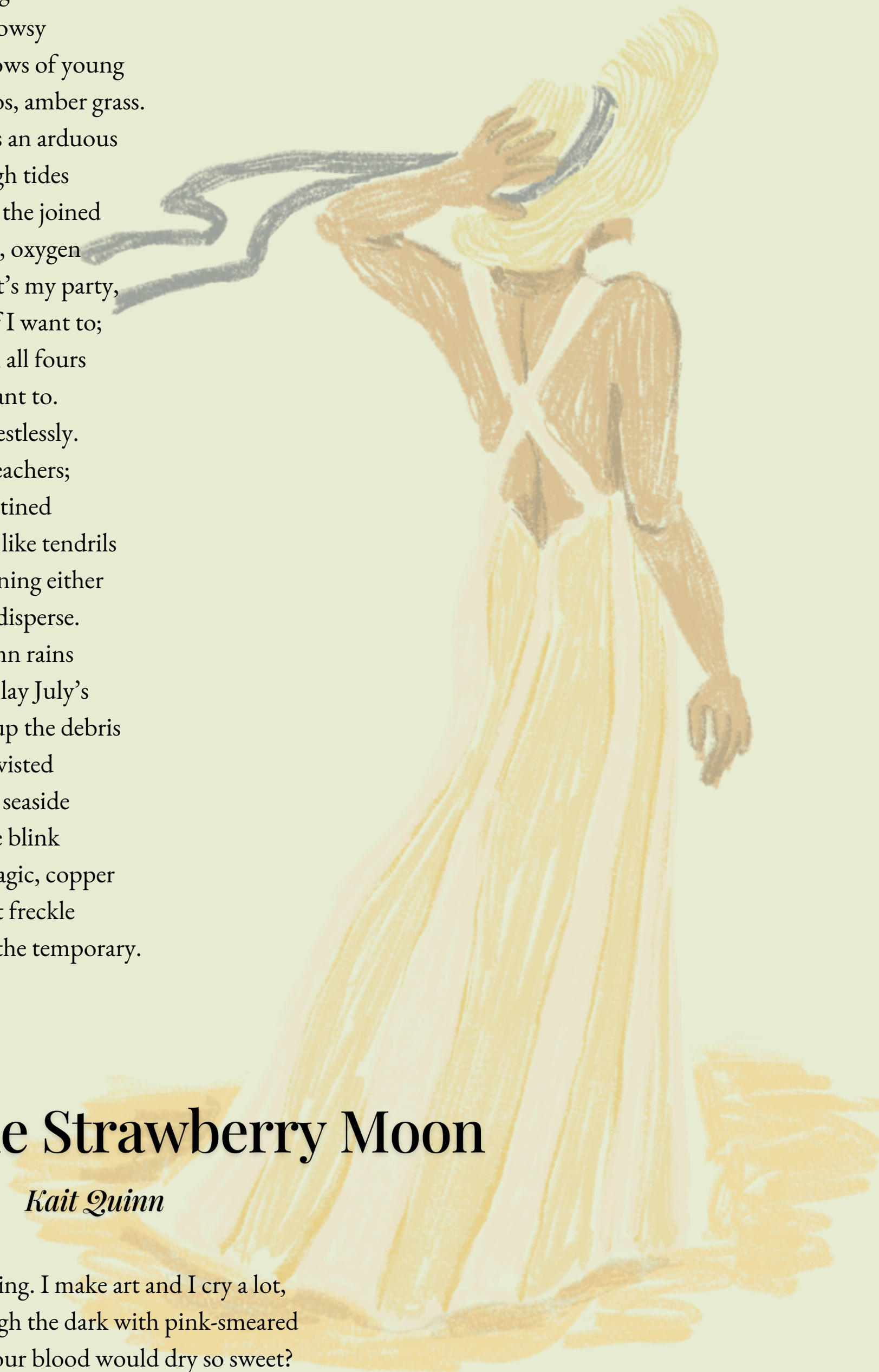
*Kait Quinn*

What a relief to be human  
in this untamed stretch  
of desire, yawning  
like a willow's drowsy  
silhouette over rows of young  
marigolds, cosmos, amber grass.  
Aching for you is an arduous  
task, a time of high tides  
slipping through the joined  
hips of my palms, oxygen  
from my lungs. It's my party,  
and I'll spit salt if I want to;  
stalk nostalgia on all fours  
like a beast if I want to.  
Summer wanes restlessly.  
I'm under the bleachers;  
your arms serpentine  
around my waist like tendrils  
of clouds threatening either  
to downpour or disperse.  
And when autumn rains  
grow heavy, I'll play July's  
album to churn up the debris  
we dipped and twisted  
into the carpet: a seaside  
tongue, that little blink  
of light flicker magic, copper  
hair and chestnut freckle  
all tangled up in the temporary.

## Poem for the Strawberry Moon

*Kait Quinn*

I am overripe and falling. I make art and I cry a lot,  
feeling my way through the dark with pink-smeared  
fingers. Who knew your blood would dry so sweet?  
Who knew the strawberry moon was silver as any  
moon? It makes me think of you—wolf eyes gulping  
my hips like red Kool-Aid at the dwindling house party,  
but your body immobile, hands so empty of copper.  
If my roommate hadn't pulled me through saffron  
horizon into daylight's yellow bedroom, I'd still linger  
there, full and flush on your chocolate velour couch,  
waiting, like starlight gazing into sea mirror, for you  
to drag me up the stairs, toss me beaded belly first  
onto goose down and tencel heaven, coax orange  
juice teeming with goldfish past my parched lips  
in a tangerine trick of afternoon light.





# summers

*Sophia Zhou*



## I.

Muffled summers patter against my windows,  
and it rains down forks—I'd run away  
into english pear and shower water, your MLB cap  
and sinusoidal worms under a microscope.

I am a morning person.  
We are falling asleep to folklore at three a.m.  
& this is a summer of lies.  
It is not yet august yet it is all I know.  
Little lies build upon one another  
like the wooden kapla bricks my *ayi*<sup>1</sup> taught me to stack.  
Two by two, they strip me bare in truth.

## II.

In another version, it is the Heytea  
and plastic dishes in indoor bamboo gardens  
and its koi pond.  
Here is our impulsive bike ride,  
the mcflurries under golden arches.

This version of us embodies a shared truth  
of lies we've committed.

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<sup>1</sup> babysitter/caretaker



Lying down all day. I think of you.  
 A weary flesh. A sad bone.  
 Eyes closed in the dark mouth of the room.  
 The sound of rain falls tender to the ear.  
 And when I thought of getting up—  
 The bed urged me to lie down again  
 as if it were the tall grass of your body.  
 Longing opens the heart like a knife cut.  
 It's not difficult to understand how you've changed me:  
 The way light enters through an open window  
 and fills a dark room.



## Petunias in July

*Christ Keivom*

*“Nothing could have survived our life”- Zelda Fitzgerald*

What will death do to us?  
 That life hasn't already. *Now's*  
 gone before any living is done.

So I go on hoping against my hope  
 That we don't die before our time.  
 When each year, the petunias make their

Debut in July. The stain of white, yellow  
 And red is smeared upon the city.  
 I pluck one of each color for you

But none of them are your favorite.  
 And we both find this hard to believe, that no flower,  
 Here, blooms in the shade of sage.

Today, in the evening, the park is in perpetual green  
 Where dust rises from the surface  
 Like a doormat beaten with a stick.

We walk barefoot on the grass,  
 Under a row of lamp posts lined up  
 Like umbrellas against the blue sky.

Above your head, butterflies dance in courtship;  
 They've been at it our whole conversation,  
 By my old apartment was a garden

Where I used to sit and read, a boy caught  
 A butterfly in a jar, and came back the next  
 Day looking for another when it died.

I asked him if he thought the butterfly  
 Died before it's time. *I'd like to believe it lived*  
*a long life.* He said. Yes, I'd like to believe that too.



# Inosculation

*Rosie Beech*

*Awake.*  
*Find the place where consciousness ends and the rest of the world begins.*  
*Stretching out through the red earth, curling up towards a place where light might be.*  
*Draw water in and hold it close.*  
*Drink, grow, find light.*  
*That is all there is.*  
*One searching root brushes against something unknown.*  
*A thread loops around, spreads, encases.*  
*Tapping, prickling, sparking.*  
*Boundaries blur, the threads grow inside and the world unfolds.*  
*So much new all at once, a whirl of formless pulses and scattered impressions flow through the threads.*  
*Knowledge, memory and thought from hundreds of sources.*  
*The maelstrom calms to a gentle time, enough to examine one thought at a time.*  
*A settling sense of self, collections of concepts, forming meaning.*  
*Root and twig.*  
*Limb and branch.*  
*Tree*  
*Oak*  
*I*  
*Me*

I stood in the shade, thin and pale from lack of light. I was in a sea of crowding, uniform spruce, scattering their poisonous needles. Every inch of growth had been a fight. But the threads that tied themselves into the soul and centre of me brought more than whispers. They pulled water and sustenance from the soil. Once bone and sword, waste and rot, the filaments helped me gather them in. An ache inside me eased. The desperation I was holding exhaled out of my leaves. They were limp and few but despite everything, I was alive. I stretched up defiantly in the gloom.

Time uncoiled inside me, I started to recognise a rhythm. Warmth and rain contrasting against chill and lengthening dark. The distant whispers gave them names, summer and winter. When the cold set in, everything slowed down and I drifted into dormant reverie. I came back to my surroundings and the evergreen trees around me had towered ever higher, blocking out more of the light. I was trapped beneath their suffocating canopy. The woods were heavy with gloom and loneliness. The spruce only had green needles at their very top or on the sides facing out of the woods. Here in the heart, their branches were horrifically bare. It was like being surrounded by the bones of a rotting bird, the feathers on the outside hiding the extent of the decay. I was still filled with that defiant determination to live, to endure. But purposelessly clawing survival out of the earth had a hollow feeling to it. I was desperate to feel the warmth of the sun with my own leaves. And there was a deeper, shapeless ache that I could not name. A longing for something that was not food or water. The threads sang to me about patience. Again the creeping frost pulled me back into sleep. I resisted as long as I could. I dreaded how oppressive the woods would be when I woke again. Before the last of my awareness slipped away I felt a strange scratching at my bark. Maybe an animal was gnawing at me? I wondered if I would even wake up in the spring.

My sap began to rise. It pushed up from my roots right to the tips of my smallest twigs. Something unfamiliar brushed the edge of my drowsy awareness. A melody humming against me. It was gentle and bright, a harmony of rustling leaves and swaying wood. I narrowed my focus on the vibrations. Burrowed into my side, curling up around my trunk as if it were one of my own branches was another tree. Fear hollowed me out like a bolt of lightning. This tree wasn't just close by, competing for resources, it was growing out of the same space as me. I had no idea if I could survive that. Panic and uncertainty churned into anger. I creaked roughly against the intruder. But the song only grew sweeter. It was impossible not to listen to.



*Shoot and thorn,  
Fruit and blossom,  
Shrub  
Hawthorn  
I  
Friend*

The music made me pause. This tree wasn't choking me, simply holding on. I rumbled a tune of my own.  
*Where does Hawthorn come from?*

A merry flurry, like fresh rain echoed back.

*A thrush, with speckled breast and fleet wings carried my seed in winter. Dropped me down into the shade. Here I landed. You kept me safe all through the bitter dark.* Hawthorn's song was full of the sweet warmth from the spring sun. These experiences and thoughts were so clear, not dulled by distance like the messages that ran along the threads. I could feel the sensation of soaring through the sky. I'd been longing to touch it my whole life.

*Have you seen other birds?* I asked hopefully.

*So many! Tweeting, trilling, warbling. And many more creatures! Scurrying mice, grumbling hedgehogs and delicate moths that fly towards the moon. They all sheltered in our hedges.*

*Our?* I asked.

*My family. We knit together in long lines across the land. Stretching for miles and miles.* The melody faltered. I never thought I'd grow so far away from them.

A drumming sound started above us. Rain pattered down through the dense branches. It soaked into the packed earth, releasing a comforting petrichor scent.

*I always feel safer when it rains.* I broke the silence. *It smells like hope. Tiny pieces of the sky coming down to us.* I hesitated for a moment. I really needed this water. But so did the Hawthorn. And their stories were even better than spring showers. I let some flow through our connection. Their leaves rustle and brush against my bark.

*Thank you! Oak, friend, kind.* They swayed happily. I'd never helped another thing before. It felt good.

Summer saturated the land around us. The threads and filaments brought some of that sunshine to us. I kept sharing what I could with the Hawthorn and they kept telling me stories of hedge life. We grew together. Our roots mingled and our bows draped over each other. They leant on me. A reassuring weight. I held them up. It made me feel strong for the first time.

*Watch this.* The Hawthorn had been turning some of their energy into clusters of pretty pink white flowers. I'd been admiring them.

*Look!* A breeze shook their branches and scattered their petals into the sky to dance down. Joy reverberated through their bark, delighted by the beauty that they made. It kindled something deep inside my heartwood. I had used my share of the energy to grow acorns. I threw one and it bounced playfully from branch to branch, tapping a tune. An excited squirrel shot after it. The Hawthorn creaked in amusement. I dropped some more, playing syncopated melodies. We made a game of guessing where they would land.

The spruce' whipped and lashed frantically, caught in a storm. A storm without wind or rain. The groaning and creaking of the trees dying all around us was deafening. Hawthorn clung on tightly and I tried to stand tall, but I was terrified. I could feel their stumps being ripped out of the mycelium network, creating blank spaces, cutting us off. The last things we heard were snatches of tearing, metal teeth. Their cries for help were horrifically cut short. I wanted to be strong enough to protect us both. But I was helpless.

*It will pass.* Even in the unbearable cacophony Hawthorn's voice cut straight through. Their roots around mine.

*Please tell me about flying again.* I gripped into the earth, braced for the worse. The woods crashed down, but in the eye of the storm I focused on their soft voice and stories from a Birds Eye view.

I had never seen the sky before. It stretched further than I ever could have imagined. Clouds, like the greatest trees there ever could be, spreading out to frame the sun. Glorious, radiant and sweeter tasting than I could have dared hope. The fallen spruce had been dragged away leaving stretches of gently rolling earth. Here and there in the distance there were fellow surviving trees.

They were spindly and malnourished. I wondered if we looked anything like them?

*You're glowing.* Hawthorn trilled. The sunlight filtered through my leaves, making them shine. I was thin but with all this sunlight I would be putting on extra rings in no time.

*You have more blossoms. It suits you.* They looked like a cloud themselves.

*Just wait until you see stars. Like dew coloured petals that got caught up there.*

Something disturbed the ground, sending signals along the remaining fungal threads. Bigger than a deer. Two feet.

*Humans.* Hawthorn whispered. Their crunching footsteps stopped beside us.

"You ever seen anything like that?" One asked.

"Nope. I can't believe the hawthorn managed to get that tall."

"It's not doing the oak any favours. It's probably taking all the nutrients."

I felt a hand touch the place where we were connected. My sap boiled inside me.

"We'll need to cut it out."

I felt like I was going to snap in two from rage. They couldn't do this.

*I'll tear my own roots out before I let them.*

*You'll do no such thing.* They were firm.

*It's not fair! We survived that nightmare, made it through together and now they're going to cut you down. I won't let them!*

*Just be with me now.* Their branches held me close, swaying gently. *Look at the clouds being blown along. Have you ever felt the wind like this?*

Beauty stretched in every direction. Endless horizons, birds looping and swirling in murmurations, distant fields with rippling wheat. But all the joy had dried up inside me.

*You made my life so much more than just survival.* I creaked in misery.

*And I would have withered and died in the darkness without you.* They sounded so calm and strong.

A bird landed on one of their branches and plucked one of their early berries. *Another Hawthorn will grow from that. They'll be carried far away, just like I was. So will your acorns. Maybe one day one of my seeds will land near one of yours, and they'll grow like we did, supporting each other.* The bird hopped between their thorns before flitting away.



*I like that thought.*

The sun ran like a drop of rain down the curve of the sky. Another set of footsteps broke the silence. This human trod lightly, as if she was trying to cause as little disturbance as possible.

She was followed by the same heavy footfalls as before.

“Are these the trees you were telling me about?”

“That’s right.”

“It’s a lovely oak, thank you for cutting around it. I want to encourage trees like these in the garden.”

“The Hawthorn needs to come out. It’ll give the oak the best chance of surviving.”

Hands touched again, but this time they were gentle and questioning. They stroked over the bark, as if she was trying to listen through it.

“I don’t think so. We have a truly remarkable thing here. I’d like to see what it grows into.”

“You’re the boss.”

The footsteps retreated. I held myself completely still, not daring to believe it. Hawthorn swayed in relief, tossing their flowered branches up towards the sky.

*We’re going to be ok.* I breathed out a long rush of air.

*Look around.*

Grass was growing, no longer held at bay by a carpet of needles. Comfrey and pink purslane sprang up around our feet. Once a choking, lightless place was now a garden. The remaining trees had room to breathe, banks of flowers squabbled far below and thirsty bees danced amongst them.

*I am so lucky that I get to see all this with you.* I whispered to Hawthorn, winding closer with them.

They held me tenderly and sang.

*Golden days and silver nights*

*Catkin and Haw*

*Acorn and thorn*

*Together*

*You*

*I*

*We*

# Firefly Weaving

*Stephen Mead*



One speck, a floater,  
the eye unsure about seeing  
but gradually the gray dusk  
is lowered by the black  
stage curtain of the night.

Then their lightning show is a play  
against a backdrop of the leafy—  
These field weeds, thin sky scrapers  
with decorative roofs, the tree tip silhouettes  
opening for starbursts, the green-yellow flashing,  
landing amid grass.

What a stitch in time each—  
here, there & everywhere  
all at once a masterpiece  
these flickers embroider  
pulled through Nature's frame,  
a painting in motion, but air-soft,  
the canvas transparent, this patterned fabric,  
the gentle imprinted scrim of best Summer memories  
held close as though in a pocket  
jingling with the comforting percussion of loose change.



# Summer Waiting

*Louis Faber*

The river flows more slowly now  
than it did before spring's rains  
ceded slowly to the earth oven  
of summer. I sit on its bank  
unafraid to stick a toe in.  
On molasses afternoons  
I venture partway across on  
algae slickened stones only to  
turn back to my seat at the sound -  
laughter of approaching children  
with small nets for the tadpoles  
to fill the mason jars, taken  
from cupboards waiting on harvests,  
some to swim on window ledges  
dreaming of sudden growth, maturity,  
others for a sister's water glass  
when her back is turned, for the squeal  
that will obliterate sound and thought.  
The teens have gone on downstream  
here the river is too still, shallow  
and the frayed rope dangles over  
the water that feeds the oaken limb  
from which it now hangs motionless.  
There will soon be a chill in the air  
the breeze will soon play the forest  
like a sea of flutes and the leaves  
will paint my sky in colors that  
defy description but fall to time.  
Winter will follow and to all eyes  
above this river will go still.



# Aren't Those Funny Shaped Rocks Jutting Out Of The Sea?

*Laura Cooney*

If you picked me up now  
I'd slide through your fingers.

A melted ice cream trod on  
by three toddlers and a dog,  
only good for gulls  
with as much flavour as the grit  
now stuck to the second wee ones  
left sock.

There's no nougat, sauce or wafer  
that could organise this gooey leak into  
something  
palatable  
easy to touch.

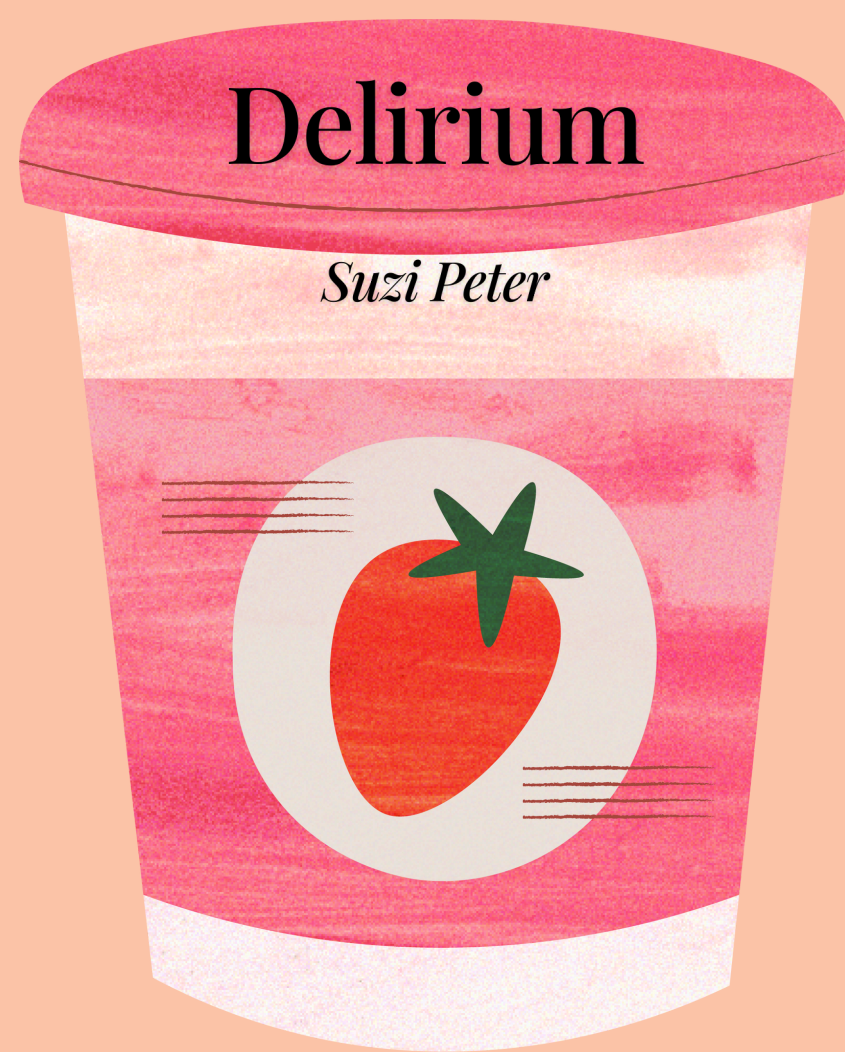
You'd better just sit there,  
wave-gazing.

The crow watches and it knows.

But -

well, it doesn't really matter now.





In August, the heat can make you delirious—  
the knobs of my spine pressed into the hardwood;  
eyes on the ceiling fan, daring it to save me;  
my heartbeat's abrasive lullaby threatening  
to pull me back into juvenile dreams—  
I felt myself losing my mind  
like springtime lost her gentle demeanor  
to the glowing intensity of summer.

Indigo sundress, bedroom floor,  
box braids adorned in matching blue ribbons,  
my face like a coin left to drown in a puddle,  
fourteen and on the heels of my first date,  
I'd felt so composed before the unraveling,  
but down here, I could see the persistent gold light  
from the hallway tiptoeing beneath the door.  
Down here, I could see the dust-speckled window  
through which I'd watched the seasons shift—  
in the dark, the window became a mirror  
and the room reflected in the glass's blank face  
was stubborn, unwavering, fixed in its form  
for longer than the girl in it had even existed,  
both—hopelessly the same.

Could I let the young fantasy—that solemn promise,  
the way lovers' secrecy blurred into sanctity—  
entirely undo and rebuild me?

The idea wound me up and unspooled me,  
claiming my hands, possessing the fingers,  
which blindly roved down adolescent calves,  
searching for any rogue hairs I'd missed.  
My mouth was not mine—anticipation  
had pushed the teeth into the lips  
and I tasted cherry ChapStick and blood.  
I was not mine—I was coming apart  
and something new was descending  
to take the shape of what had been.

I was not mine—  
surrendering gleefully to the undoing, dissolving  
into the cloud of lavender, jasmine, vanilla,  
perfumes I'd tried on like personalities.

The air was so thick that ardent summer evening,  
I could've suffocated on the night that lay ahead  
and spared my body, my soul, my sanity,  
the violence of love's transformation.

# “Sun’s Up, Kitten”

*Jadelyn Hwang*

Sun’s up, kitten. You might as well jump off of my lap. Keep it quiet while you do-atmosphere is a fragile bubble you’re all too likely to pop. I know you don’t like it when sunrise slips into morning and I get up, kitten, but at least we can see the sun now. At least the clouds are gone.

I know, kitten, that bad thunderstorms can come in the balmiest times of the year. But it’s easier to pretend that the sun is synonymous with joy, and light means levity. You’re a good reality check, kitten, you know that? You knock down vases, just to remind me that sharp edges exist, and you leave scratches in dappled lacquer to reveal imperfection. You’re warm and fuzzy, too. A perfect mix between comfort and clarity.

Sometimes I don’t want to leave you, kitten. Bad things happen outside of the armchair, when we’re apart. Clouds come when you leave your umbrella at home, and the sun’s glare is the worst when your sunglasses are missing. Weekends are my surrogate, but dawns don’t feel the same on Saturday and Sunday. Too much luxury, too much decadent time stretching forward. Impending time is what lends urgency, shades of lemon to the bars of sun creeping towards our chair. I wish I could take you with me, kitten.

I could see us in a midsummer dream, on a bike, refreshed, pedaling down a sidewalk while the sky blooms from pink to blue. I wish you could see the world rushing by like I do, sometimes, kitten. Or maybe it’s better that you don’t. After all, you hiss whenever I have to haul you to the vet.

I don’t bike to work, kitten, but I wish I could. You know this well. Not out of some romantic desire to save the world from global warming, or even to limber up my legs or see the world go by from a more personal angle. Both of us are selfish creatures, kitten.

I’d take the bus if I could. I would walk, I would scooter, I would surf through salt-struck waves rather than take the car. Unfortunately, the only ocean between me and the office is one of asphalt-with no sidewalks or bus stops to pose as islands.

The last time I took you to the vet, kitten, you tore up the backseat of my car. You left long gashes with stuffing drifting out. I didn’t blame you kitten. I want to do the same thing all the time.

Every time I stop at a red light, I remember it. Every time I accelerate, I remember it. But it’s the lulls in between that scare me the most, kitten. The straight sections of road criss-crossed with dusky morning shadows. Those are the stretches where the sun seems to disappear, and all I remember are red lights and accelerated time.

Kitten, will you call in sick for me if I just stay here? I think about this all the time. I don’t have enough sick days left, but it’s tantalizing to just let the light filtering in from the blinds creep towards us. I always have to leave before those rays brush against this chair, and when I get back, the sun has long since departed to illuminate other corners of the apartment. I wonder if you stretch out in this chair alone when I’m gone, kitten. If you take a nap, languid and drenched in gentle heat. What would you dream about, kitten? Do you dream about those yellow lines, roving over your fur?

I dream about yellow lines, but I don’t like to be alone. Luckily I’ve got you, kitten. When I think about yellow lines being crossed, that swerve throwing overcast on a throwaway day of summer, I reach out to pet you behind your ears. Most days I choose comfort over clarity. I think you’re braver than me, kitten.

I’m glad the worst of it comes in stillness, kitten. Work is distracting enough that I’m focused on things anchored to the ground rather than tethered to the sky. It’s just when the light is golden, viscous, and slow that my thoughts slip towards sadness. I’m glad I have you, kitten, to stir up the stifle. You make messes for me to clean up, you create games from our ripped open toys and walk on windowsills set aglow. You’re a great companion, kitten. I’m sorry I broke that vase and blamed it on you. I shouldn’t have done that.

I probably don’t have to go to work this early, kitten. I should leave later, and take a more direct route. I can’t, though. I have to drive around where it happened, kitten. I can’t see that straightaway, the traffic island where I sat on the curb and counted the seconds between lightning and thunder. It is easier this way, kitten. I’m sure you understand.



Today is going to be a hard day, kitten. It's your first birthday in two weeks, which I'm looking forward to. I know you're scared of the artificial light that candles create, but I think I can make it fun for both of us. But two weeks before your birthday is the day I've been dreading. It's the one where I'll receive letters, text messages, and flowers: daylilies, yellow-centered daisies and sunflowers. I don't want to remember it, I don't want to dim the brightness this day dawned with, and I don't even have a vase to put the flowers in anymore.

The sun is warm today, isn't it, kitten? I'm glad it came up. It sounds silly, but since last year I learned not to trust on the reliability of others, least of all the sun. Clouds don't always mean the weather, and the day I adopted you kitten, it was absolutely pouring rain. But today is going to be absolutely gorgeous. I can tell. You're cozy, asleep, and purring, kitten. I don't want to get up today. Instead, I want to stay in this cocoon, this place where honeyed time ticks forward a little slower. I want to see the sun stream through the blinds and advance towards us.

I'm calling in sick today, kitten. The sun's up, and I only want to spend it with you.

# Softening

*Emma Sun*

The Summer ran its course. An endless, divine daze of laughter and love.

I held my friend's hand and we walked down to the water. My body floated up next to the lily pads, facing the sky.

I drank the bruised peach juice. Cut up the pear, soft and warm from the sun.

The nights were slow.

Bottles of orange wine emptied themselves on the promise of our future.

*Tell me you love me and I can sleep until morning.*





# Sunny's Thoughts

*Liezl Villanueva*

Does water have a shape? It dawned on me why it remains the way it is. For science, the answer is obvious. Water is a liquid, thus it follows the shape of the vessel that holds it. Why does it stay that way—formless, lucid, and omnipresent? The story starts in the dog days of July when the scorching heat of the sun will bake your skin like a toasted bun. You need a vacation. A real one where you can soak in the sunlight all day, then drink in some moonbeams at night. You want seawater and jellyfish. That day, you choose peach—a dress with boatneck sleeves, baring the constellations on your skin to the wide-eyed gaze of the clear summer skies. Brine filters the air you breathe. You tread the wooden quay, barefoot and awestruck, the sandal straps dangling off your fingers like someone who wears their heart on their sleeves. The familiarity and strangeness of it all. There comes a point in a man's life where he must decide where to squander his time like chips in a poker table, unaware of the risks and rewards that await him. You have chosen to live here, amongst the sea dwellers—aquamarine creatures, fishermen, kite boarders, surfers.

When you live in a house by the sea, you will see that the big, round sun equates to the smallness of a coin. Ironic, is it? Both have two different sides. The head and the tail. Front and back. Alpha and omega. For someone who lives in a beach house, the sun has different formations. Sometimes, you wake up groggy. You drag yourself from the bed and stretch your arms forward, ecstatic for the day to assault you with its novelty and routine.

How do you spend your day? People ask me that sometimes. I nod my head and tell them how I spend my day depends on which part of the house I am. If I sip my morning coffee just a hand's span away from the balcony, I will greet the sun in its warm splendor, the heat of each ray kissing my throat like a lover's mouth in a passionate night. If I go downstairs and spend the day in a stretchy hammock, flipping through the creased pages of a paperback, I will see a hazy sun, no shape, its creamy texture as delectable as the briny sea foam washing up down the shore.

If I step inside and cook something in the kitchen, I will see another sun. The curtains dance along in silent harmony with the sea breeze, an hour before the sun is due. Sunsets are a beauty in their own right. They have a quiet allure to them, simplistic yet inspiring. They have been the source of joy and sorrow for the heartfelt and brokenhearted. You see why I can't get enough of the sun? Because no matter where you go, it's always there, like the dense seawater surrounding you. The blueness and golden hues envelope your soul, inviting you to shred your clothes, your skin, your soul. Who are you when you're alone? That is the question I sometimes wonder. What do we think about when we see the sun in its myriad shades and sizes? What do you feel when you see it rise, a phoenix engulfed in flames, or when the sun dips into the horizon, an egg yolk somewhere in the ocean floor?

# A Motif of Conroe Junes

*Mahailey Oliver*

I'm reading Mary Oliver poetry on Cypris' couch.  
She peels and pulls apart clementines at the counter.  
The air conditioner blows a lazy 68,  
battling the East Texas summer heat haze.

My bangs slip from my claw clip.  
The cat licks, her claws click  
on the hardwood floor as she patters to her bowl.

In another memory, this too is us  
but  
crochet needles clicked in her hands;  
a different book rested in mine—  
  
different themes for a different time.





# August almanac

*Stephen Keeler*

She had lived alone now long enough  
that even taking breath  
had turned to ritual

the way a cared-for sharpened chisel  
turns a peeling of soft wood  
as if undressing

precision growing out of repetition  
unconsidered celebration in crushed hands  
drawing back the curtains every morning after sleep

hardening feet placed just here so often  
that an undulation in the floor  
might be observed if someone were to look

the salted crumbs and egg-shells brushed away  
the towel hung to dry  
a sleight of hand up to her hair

checked in the mirror in the hall  
she walks the gentle mile to town  
to get the next year's diary

she always buys in August  
sets aside a morning sacrament of pens  
and venerable lists the birthdays of the still alive

set out like vestments of a superstition  
she has about writing in the age  
she'll be next year.



# Nature and Mirage

*Nayara Güércio*

My nature? It's the sun.  
It's... rather... the Brazilian warmth.  
Not just in the rivers that carve through the land,  
or the mountains that rise like silent giants,  
but in the threads that spiders spin...  
just like this people, free, fierce, and burning, weaving their own fate.

The nature of our struggle,  
we are bound together,  
held in the grip of something stronger  
than we could ever understand.

It's a strength that's never been seen  
beyond Brazil.

My nature is the *cerrado*,  
the *caatinga*, the *pantanal*,  
it's the old songs of the earth,  
raw and unpolished,  
but with a rhythm of its own.

My nature is the Amazon,  
the *igapó*, the *várzea*, the *seringal*,  
it's the click of dominoes,  
the hum of the berimbau,  
the fading echoes of a colony  
that never truly left.

It's something like nothing you've ever witnessed  
in me,  
or anywhere beyond Brazil.

My nature is a mirage,  
a reflection of what once was,  
of what still is,  
and of what might have been.

It's love. But it's more than love.  
Our nature is courage.  
Courage to keep pushing forward.

In the end (and through every step along the way), I am *saudade*.  
The ache of leaving, yet yearning to return,  
the sorrow of parting, yet wishing to hold on.  
My nature, it's desire,  
that fierce longing...

...to stay.



# His Green Delight

*Alexei Raymond*

The morning slithers through the half-shut blinds and causes the two to twist and sigh. He's on his back and his pale hand flows through the sheets, the blankets, to find her skin. The palm glides over it. Neither opens their eyes, not yet. It's a late morning—almost noon. He blinks and draws a hand to rub sleep from his eyes. She'd like him to stay as much as he'd be willing to—the longer the better—but his wish is always shorter than hers. He's drawn to his room back home. Something in him, despite the luxury of sharing a bed with her, requires time apart. Though she loves him and he loves her in turn, there are unexpressed aspects that fidget, nudge, and tick. It's the inexplicable between them; how he so willingly leaves her embrace to rush off. For if they truly love, why does he gravitate somewhere other than her side? What wind blows him away, and why doesn't he shut the window to it?

A text buzzes him fully awake. Your sister caught a May beetle for you. Photographic proof accompanied. He jolts up from bed, too suddenly for this languid morning, and she turns to him with a worried, drowsy look. Where did his slow caresses go? And he is beaming with inexplicable delight—bursting with it—incredulous and starry-eyed. When he explains the reason for his state and shows her the image on his phone, it does nothing to explain it. She knows of his affinity for bugs, but frankly, it's something she'd rather not think about, and she cannot fathom how mere affinity makes him glow brighter than she's ever seen him with her. Truly, even he's not sure why the sight of the iridescent-green *Cetonia aurata*, the rose chafer beetle—for that is its correct designation—makes his core sing.

Now he's out of bed; he pulls on his socks, his jeans. She slowly sits up and reluctantly allows more sunlight into the room. The sight of her squinting and looking somewhat sad pinches his heart (it's already gaining a greenish tint), but he's buttoning up his lurid mess of a Hawaiian shirt. Once he's dressed for the upcoming ascent, he's at her side, and she bends her knees to allow him to sit. He's unapologetically apologetic, and he strokes her knee while attempting to rein in the viridescence infecting him; he knows his happiness is the source of the unease in her face.

— Are you really going so soon—because of that?

— I have to; I haven't seen one like that in years.

— Can't it wait? It's caught; I saw it's in a box.

— I know, but anything can happen between now and then, and I must see it now.

— Don't you want to stay with me a bit longer?

— I (think I) do, but I must go and greet it. I hope I do not die on the way.

— Okay.

— Okay?

As he takes his hand away, some trick of the light makes his fingers look greenish. She bunches up tighter and turns toward her phone. She scrolls and types with soft clacks on the screen. She listens to him collect his things—unzipping, zipping, unzipping again—the backpack he has brought with him the evening before. He is taking himself away, and more and more green shows on him. The mirror confirms; his skin is wholly metallic green. With his boots on, his steps turn into deep thuds on the parquet. He has not even brushed his teeth. She looks at him standing there before her bed, and something tells her he is not all that he seems when he is with her. Her pink slippers are on the floor; she steps into them. Her golden hair is dishevelled and heartwarming; it momentarily elicits in him the need to smooth it. He stays his hand when she moves past him to lead him downstairs.

Silence settles between the scarabeous man and the gilt woman. By the time they reach the door with him jingling after her, the fine hairs on her neck prickle. His being out of sight behind her is suddenly unnerving. She needs to have her eyes on him. And as if sensing his effect on her, he overtakes her and stands by the door. With him in sight she feels a bit better—good, he hasn't escaped into some nook—and folds her arms while waiting for him to leave. He gives her one last look, truly apologetic then, and lets himself out after a brief farewell and a kiss on her cheek (did she recoil?). And while he scurries down the stairwell, she locks the door behind him and lets out a sigh of relief. Once he is out on the street, sunbeams light his carapace aglint. He picks up the pace—almost runs—and his chitin sparkles and casts emeralds around him. And now he is running—yes, why not?—running with his backpack jingling harder against him. All-encompassing wind greets him, and he feels not two but six legs sprinting him home.

In a blur of speed, he is there, and his family glints with the same metallic chitin, and he kneels, a suppliant before the scarab his sister miraculously found, recognized its significance, and thought to invite into their home. It scurries over his fingers and the moment is holy. He studies it under yellow lamp, then direct sunlight. It is a benignant, sublime, and simple sight. When will I see you again? He watches the rose chafer standing on his fingertips and thinks it is the illusive given arthropod form. On that perch its glittering elytra open to reveal the powerful, dark wings hidden underneath. They unfurl and buzz furious—angelic—out his window and into the fragrant afternoon air.

He is left pale and yearning for some green delight.



# The Bog Road

*Daithí Kearney*

Walking the bog road  
Where humps and bumps  
Challenge cars' suspension  
Horses outdo horsepower  
Birds sing melodious  
Without the dissonant  
Drone of the motorway

Summer irises stand taller  
As the blackthorn's bunting fades  
Flags welcoming the longer days  
Autumn blackberries are fuller  
Sweeter and abundant  
Nourishing the wanderer  
Preparing for school

It's not a road for winter  
When ice pockets threaten  
Even those who know  
But whether classroom daydreams  
Or tea by the fire  
Memories of the bog road  
Provide escape



## About the contributors. . .

**Bronte Lemaire** is a multidisciplinary writer and theatre maker living in Australia on Wurundjeri land. Their work concerns violence, queerness, and the domestic. She debuted her first original play *Medusa* with Four Letter Word Theatre in 2025. Their writing has also been published in *Voiceworks*, *The Dialog* and *Farrago*. She is currently finishing their honours in creative writing at The University of Melbourne.

**Bart Edelman's** poetry collections include *Crossing the Hackensack* (Prometheus Press), *Under Damaris' Dress* (Lightning Publications), *The Alphabet of Love* (Red Hen Press), *The Gentle Man* (Red Hen Press), *The Last Mojito* (Red Hen Press), *The Geographer's Wife* (Red Hen Press), *Whistling to Trick the Wind* (Meadowlark Press), and *This Body Is Never at Rest: New and Selected Poems 1993 – 2023* (Meadowlark Press). Most recently, he has taught in the MFA program at Antioch University, Los Angeles. His work has been anthologized in textbooks published by City Lights Books, Longman, McGraw-Hill, Prentice Hall, the University of Iowa Press, Wadsworth, and others.

**Kait Quinn** was born with salt in her wounds. She flushes the sting of living by writing poetry. She is the author of five poetry collections, and her work appears in *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *Exposition Review*, *Full House Literary*, *Watershed Review*, and elsewhere. She received first place in Sad Girl Diaries' 2023 Fall Poetry Contest and the 2022 John Calvin Rezmerski Memorial Grand Prize. Kait is an Editorial Associate at Yellow Arrow Publishing. She enjoys cats, repetition, coffee shops, tattoos, and vegan breakfast. Kait lives in Minneapolis with her partner and their very polite Aussie mix. Find her at [kaitquinn.com](http://kaitquinn.com).

**Sophia Zhou** is from Los Angeles, but she grew up in Beijing and currently attends school in Massachusetts. Sophia loves writing poetry and short stories. When she is not writing, you can find her in the dance studio or admiring flowers growing in sidewalk cracks.

**Christ Keivom** is a poet based in Delhi.

**Rosie Beech** is a writer and performer from Scotland. They produce the literary podcast Yorick Radio Productions and have created and directed several audio dramas including *I will Wait for You* (StAR Radio, 2019), *Communicable* 2020, and *Secret Saint* 2022. Their short stories include: *I Curled with Bauchans* (Crab Apple Literary), *Salvage Me* (The Selkie) and *Wood Woes* (Gramarye).

Resident artist/curator for The Chroma Museum, artistic renderings of LGBTQI historical figures, organizations and allies predominantly before Stonewall, <https://thestephenmeadchromamuseum.weebly.com/>, **Stephen Mead** is a retiree whom, throughout all his pretty non-glamorous jobs still found time for writing poetry/essays and creating art. Occasionally he even got paid of this. Currently he is trying to sell his 40-year backlog of unsold art before he pops his cogs, <https://www.artworkarchive.com/profile/stephen-mead>.

**Louis Faber** is a poet and writer. His work has appeared in *The MacGuffin*, *Cantos*, *Alchemy Spoon* (UK), *Meniscus* and *Arena Magazine* (Australia) *New Feathers Anthology*, *Dreich* (Scotland), *Prosetrics*, *Erothanatos* (Greece), *Defenestration*, *Atlanta Review*, *Glimpse*, *Rattle*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *Eureka Literary Magazine*, *Borderlands: the Texas Poetry Review*, *Midnight Mind*, *Pearl*, *Midstream*, *European Judaism*, *The South Carolina Review* and *Worcester Review*, among many others, and has been twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize. His new book of poetry, *Free of the Shadow*, was recently published by Plain View Press. He can be found at <https://anoldwriter.com>.



**Laura Cooney** is a writer, editor and spoken word artist from Edinburgh lucky to be widely published both online and in print. Nominated for a Best Of The Net award in 2024 and the co-EIC of Frazzled Lit, when she's not writing she'll be with her daughters, as close to the sea as possible. There will be ice-cream!

**Suzi Peter** is a Sudanese-American poet from Knoxville, Tennessee. Some of her other work has appeared in *Short Vine* and *The Mockingbird*. When she's not writing, she enjoys running, taking long walks, watching films, and, of course, reading.

**Jadelyn Hwang** is an award-winning author who wants to pet your dog. Her work spans a broad array of topics and genres, and she enjoys singing along to musical soundtracks, reading, and stargazing in her spare time.

**Emma's** work is reflective, it is a mirror for who she is as a writer, a scientist and a human. Her personal relationship with poetry and photography is forged through an endless fascination with contemporary life. Her work focuses on the complexity of life, love and socio-political relations. She pulls her inhibitions out and lays them bare, using her work as a vessel to heal and celebrate, inviting you to do the same. Socials: @racine.writes

**Liezl Villanueva** is a writer based in the Philippines. When she is not writing, you can find her in the countryside, dreaming of other worlds with her mountain bike. You can reach her @liezlcv on Twitter and Instagram.

**Mahailey Oliver** has an MA in English from Stephen F. Austin State University. Her work has recently appeared in The Raven Review, The Solitude Diaries, and Blue Daisy Literary Journal. For a full list of her publications, peruse her author website: <https://sites.google.com/view/mahaileyoliver>.

**Stephen Keeler** is a writer, poet and memoirist. His first poetry pamphlet, *While You Were Away*, was published by Maquette Press in 2018. A selection of his poems, *Scar Tissue*, won a Coast to Coast to Coast award in 2019, and his second pamphlet, *They Spoke No English*, was published by Nine Pens Press, in 2021. He has edited anthologies for Candlestick Press and his poetry is widely published in magazines, journals, anthologies and online.

**Nayara Güercio** is a teacher, translator, and PhD researcher at Trinity College Dublin. A dedicated educator and sometimes... a writer. Her literary work, research, and teaching practices are rooted in the hopeful step into renewal, and inclusive pedagogy that is dedicated to fostering interdisciplinary dialogue across literatures, languages, and cultures.

**Alexei** is a writer whose work explores post-Soviet diasporic lives, moments of threshold, and fractured identities. Originally from the Middle East, he is currently based in Belgrade. His stories appear in *The Bloomin' Onion*, *Lowlife Lit Press*, and *The Crawfish*, with forthcoming work in *Blood+Honey*, *Waffle Fried*, and *The Argyle Literary Magazine*. Connect with him at [x.com/enemyofcruelty](https://x.com/enemyofcruelty).

**Daithí Kearney** is an Irish poet and musician. From Co. Kerry, he now lives and lectures in Co. Louth on the east coast. His poetry is inspired by his surroundings and his young family. His poems have been recently published in *Paddler Press*, *Patchwork Folklore Journal*, *Martello* and *Field Guide*.



# Afterword

when I chose the theme for this issue, somewhere I felt that maybe this wasn't the way to go. maybe summer will fall apart under everybody's scrutiny, or maybe summer is just so much that it won't be enough. but as all good things surprise the anxious, this one turned into a gem. a glossy magazine gem.

I had a good time with this also because for the first time, our submissions were so high and although, a lot of them were objectively good, these final ones are the best. for the cherry on top, my dear, lovely friend Han was the guest editor and brought in their critical selection skills.

summer—although, hot, humid, sweltering, icky—is a big part of my life mostly because my country sees the season for almost ten months and I was born right in the middle of a humid day. summer is also something I've become emotionally, psychologically attached to ever since we lost a summer of our lives back in 2020. have you heard the song *We Lost The Summer* by TXT? that was the start of it all. I'm also so much into summer that I want to drag it into my research.

recently, I've been having this inexplicable urge to go out for artsy things as if, if I don't do it now, the time would be lost. I want to go to theatres, to recitals, to jazz music nights, to fine dining, to the rooftop for stars, to bed from tiredness, to the street, to the art galleries, to the tulips. is this what we call a fever so high you begin dreaming?

I will be turning twenty-five this month, but why does it feel like *so late into life*?

putting these miscellaneous things aside, I truly, truly hope that whoever has made it through the issue really enjoyed the pieces of collective summer. I hope it made your summer slightly different from the past summers, and I hope we will continue to make your summers different every year.

blue daisies will return again at the end of the year with its new awesome theme (so this is a goodbye for a short time). hope you loved this daisy!

[Berrs]



summer's child

summer's child

summer's child

summer's child

summer's child

summer's child

summer's child

summer's child







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