



notes

Anthology
2015-16

Edited by
Katy Lewis Hood
Savannah Adeniyana
Sarah Howden
Jun Pang



Now in its fourth year, Notes has flourished into one of Cambridge's foremost creative societies. And true to our aim, the publication has continued to embrace and showcase writing, artwork and creative expressions of artists from this university and far beyond. Great credit is due to all of those who submitted to us, and also to the ever-growing numbers who have attended our launch events this year, purchased our magazine, and discussed it with friends. We also could not have made it this far without the other societies and organisations who have worked with us to host amazing events.

Special thanks needs to be given to the Fitzwilliam Museum, which allowed us to use a space within their building for Notes' first writing workshop, and to Rebecca Watts, who kindly led this first workshop to great success. Thanks also to The Heong Gallery at Downing College, who offered us their fantastic new space in support of our ekphrastic thirty-fourth issue. And finally, great thanks to Ali Smith, Paul Muldoon, Sarah Howe, Simon Armitage and Don Paterson, all of whom allowed us to republish their pieces in the second issue of footnotes.

Our third annual is a showcase of the best writing and artwork across the fortnightly issues of this year, 2015 – 2016. From our Ekphrasis issue to notes on Nostalgia, we have gone through submissions as a team to decide which pieces we feel truly stand out from the rest. The number of submissions we have received this year has been higher than ever before, so while we can say that those featured truly deserve their place, there were many more fantastic pieces which we were not able to include.

The booklet you are about to read reflects the strong creative talent which Notes aimed to display at its foundation. We hope that you come away from it as wonderstruck as we found ourselves when we discovered these pieces again.

The Notes Team

Editorial

Alexander Gingell

Alex is at Wolfson and studies Classics. He joined Notes because he is passionate about creative writing and loves reading the wonderful range of pieces that the team is sent.

Jun Pang

Jun is an HSPS student with a burning passion for literature and hyperbole. She is an Editor for Notes, and her life's aim is to convince as many people as possible of the joys of feminism, Bohumil Hrabal, decolonization, and Frank O'Hara.

Katy Lewis-Hood

Katy does English at King's. Apart from editing, she does the stressing, the sending, and sometimes even the spreadsheets. Her (very small) room is full of two years' worth of Notes clutter.

Savannah Adeniyani

Savannah studies English at Fitz. As one of the Editors, she's pretty big on all kinds of prose writing. She can often be found in Caffè Nero, pretending to work but getting distracted by hot chocolate instead.

Design

Sarah Howden

Sarah likes cake and mainstream poetry. As a Notes Designer, she enjoys spending her Monday afternoons weeping softly over InDesign files.

Olivia Fletcher

Olivia is an English finalist at Caius, and works with Sarah to design the layout and feel of each issue. She has a strong interest in visual culture, especially photography, and works to accentuate these elements of Notes.

Publicity and Marketing

Amy Faulkner

Studying French and Spanish at Fitz, Amy holds the accolade of being the only linguist on the Notes Team. She has a passion for dance and poetry and her favourite poets are Ted Hughes and Philip Larkin, though she can't decide which she likes more.

Freya Pratty

Freya is a second year English student with a keen interest in innovative writing and art. She's excited to help publicise Notes, hopefully increasing the platform for student creativity in Cambridge.



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Joanna Kozłowska

an attempt at travel

we're both a joke tonight: raw, earthbound,
relenting. no skin to speak of, no strains, no frontiers. shots for
want of a fire

(both glasses
half empty) - racing,
gathering hunger, dismissing the fear.

sap and soot and bad luck in
still closer company. uncertainty of distance. sweat. idolatry.

tonight someone will head out for the open ocean: constellations
of salt, gifts of tongues. the bliss. sulky sirens,
sad victories,

songs, warpaint,

commotion,
debris, frills, pointless clutter. missing. being missed.

with hindsight you will seem a continent.
I would have settled
for a pair of hands.

sleep tight, I'll do the waiting and the wandering.
maybe I'll see you somewhere. maybe you're the world.



Joscelin Dent-Pooley

Two Songs about Genesis

I

We stood still
In the herb-garden
Which in those days
Was a sea of milk

Above us
In the darkening sky
Hung a wheel and a bell

If we, in turn,
Placed each of our hands,
Our own hands, in
Our own hands, for
Our own hands' sake

The coupling of the knuckles,
The sweat,

We believed after that night,
The first night,
That consequentially the sea
Of milk would burn
And the day would break

It did – later
That garden would be Gethsemane,
And later the garden of the end of days,

But at that point
We waited at the train station
To catch our trains



II (Dove,)

Dove, tread on the feat of the ark
Didn't it give you peace from the waters?
Wasn't the starboard varnished and sanded?
Wasn't the restaurant tastefully furnished?
Didn't the engines sing in the dark?

The sky turned green in the morning
All of the thunder broke into petals
Under the beehives ants sucked on peaches
Farmers went halvesies on unbranded cattle

Eve Hawksworth

Lacquering

Their brief bliss settled in the word ‘lacquer’.

He’d taken to being domestically vengeful, clogging the sink with shavings of cheddar and angling his shit onto the ceramic. That could be handled. Resented and then handled, with a twisted-up face and some kitchen roll, or handled through resentment. It touched the surface of things – it was taken away. Then the wood needed varnishing.

The smell of varnish is so particular that it has to be in some way pleasant. She admires a smell so unabashedly itself. And he wants to be as precise as the smell, taking pride in any task of permanent visibility. Not for her sake; he merely wants it to be right – this longing for rightness is so overwhelming that it transcends necessity or logic, he just “likes things to be right”, and for him to be right with them.

She comes home, hears the shout: “I’m lacquering!” She loves how foreign the word sounds in their home, between them, in him. In him, especially. He keeps saying it, all the time, as if to remind himself of the gravity of the task. She’ll nod and say, “good”, or an unrelated “do you want a cup of tea?”, but really she’s listening to the word. The Gallic mystery of it, the hard curves belying the messy task, the spike of the ‘q’ both harsh and elegant. A ‘q’ always producing a slight thrill in her – a suggestively androgynous letter, obviously and ridiculously obtrusive in that dull section of the alphabet. She’s fond of the letter ‘q’ and she’s fond of him when he says it. She starts thinking that the word might fix the lack of precision between them, so she brings

him more cups of tea, reaches up to kiss the hollow of his neck, laughs at the skidmarks, purposeful or not.

Lacquering can take a while. He decides on an egg-shell finish but then finds himself looking at pictures of semi-gloss on the internet. “It wants a fair few layers.”

Then suddenly the task is finished, and he feels weird about it, still proud, the worry dissipating into something on the border of contentment and numbness. There’s a nice sheen that she really quite likes, though, so they go to bed happy. Her lying on his chest, the thump of his heart “lac-quer, lac-quer, lac-quer”.

His success is symbolic in ways he can’t understand. Household harmony is important to her. Between them, yeah – “I guess” – but what she really wants is harmony with the house. An irrational fear of houses governed her. Houses only as a whole. Their elements could be variously soothing or nothingy or hateful, but only a house as a whole could unsettle. At night, the idea of the house, this false fortress, tormented her into a keen, electric fear. Intrusion, the one he understood and indulged, but more than that the house as a force that she has forced, existing side by side in a one-sided agreement, less a coercion than a violation.

It’s 4am. She drank a lot of water before bed. She disentangles herself clumsily, grunts her way to the bathroom, tries to piss onto the shit, hoping to budge the stains that won’t budge. What is he eating to produce super-glue shit? Are there any chemicals in urine that could weaken such shit? She thinks about excretions. Forms: various. His excretions versus her excretions. Tries to remember the dream she was having by not really thinking about the dream, just thinking around the dream, like the e-how said. She nearly forgets that it is dark, she is naked, and the house is a separate entity. She’s not sure if that’s a good or bad sign.

She walks back to the bedroom with a mere hint of the panic that the night ushers on. “This is the bathroom, this is the bathroom, this is the corridor, this is further along the corridor, this

is the bedroom door.” The usual chant, staving off ‘the house’. But here, now, with the walls gleaming, her naked body reflected, her own separate entity exposed, maybe on the left side of the corridor or maybe on the right, the darkness whole she feels the house, or she feels that the house feels her. She’s kneeling in the confession box and the bathroom is behind the grill. It has been half a day since her last confession.

Thinking all this at once makes it easy to shrug off. It’s not so bad tonight. She goes to the kitchen, even, for more water, passing the drying wood. She whispers “lac-quer, lac-quer, lac-quer” and feels safe.

A few days later she sees it and screams. It’s a friendly time, about 7pm, but it’s just there, next to the bedroom door. Dark drips of burgundy threatening to pool bloodily onto the carpet.

“What happened here?” she demands.

He wants to react twice. He is pained at the mistake, bashful, made not right and not making things right. Groaning, he says “sorry”. Then the second reaction, which ought to have been simultaneous: “I killed someone while you were out.” He laughs throatily and she laughs too, looking at the dripping, flooded by it even as it halts mid-flow. Tears form, everything pouring but the lacquer, the skirting forever destined to look like that: just creepy, really.

“But you do know that you should have been more careful?”

He’s not sure if this is meant to bring him down or not. “You’re right.”

She claps him on the shoulder, goes to make the tea. The slap sounding to her like ‘lac’.



here slumbered
any-numbered:
snows encumbered
flower that grows,
heart overflows,
of snows.

Age, Iba,
Gath,
Coc

Sacrum

Coccyx

Illum

Line

Iba

II

10

Mathilde Sergent

Apocolypse Season

this is the end
of life as we know it: by morning weeds will have eaten through the
wood
the chairs will be reduced to exoskeletons; the porcelain
will hang like pieces of a broken jaw, gaping, incapable
of understanding the fate of the world. Twinning
around the doorjamb a clump of hurried flowers – violets –
grown in bursts like earthy anxious sighs – but fragrant – strong
and resolute: flowers who will go on to tell
tales of the world ending, and still sway to say that they survived.
The heating: broken. Sun through all the cracks, dousing the ruins
shining with a passion, unaware of the reports of its coming death.
When it implodes,
then we will get showers of gold, dust returned to
dust. The bed turned over, sunken in the middle, heavy
with dead embers. Children scattered
begging – this is the end, but the end has passed
now they run with girlish screams and rattle the bowels
of this country and tan its skin with their wild stampede.
By the time
we let go, we breathe, we give way the river flow in
between us: that is when the termites go to work, that is when the
flood arrives
that is when the rains pour and the sun shuts off and around us as we
sleep
the sleep of the partially innocent. Everything around us crumbles
to pieces, better to be reborn. Can you call our love
a breath of spring? It is devastating and mythical
and it works slowly, like thunder, and it is
completely and utterly breathtaking.

BRICK
BY
BRICK



Oscar Farley

Tables

There are six tables in 'The Arts of the Twentieth Century':
Mary Keepax, Alan Peters, Anthony Caro,
Alan Peters, Rupert Williamson, Alan Peters.
All are adorned with the same notice:

PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH

Works of art are seriously damaged by repeated touching

[These tables are designed to hold no object.]
[Nothing should be placed on these tables.]

Yet the tables are damaged already: function
-stripped, they are abandoned, they are ruins.
Mary Keepax's table has fungi already growing
beneath the glass in white ceramic trumpets.

What do modern artists use when they need to eat lunch?
They frantically circle the studio, BLT
in hand, eyes jumping at each surface.
Each time they spill a crumb on the pristine
fluting they whip themselves fifty times in penance.

Then again, one label reads:

Given by the sculptor.

M.3 – 1998.

Anthony Caro must have had a spare table.

Oscar Farley

Angels

In the window of the Courtauld Staircase stands *The Angel of the North*, or, rather, one of the twelve maquettes designed two years before the big event. [Thirteen seems a strange number of angels.]

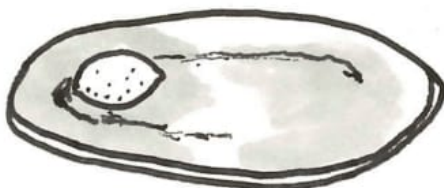
The label says the wings are ‘seamlessly melded’. It ‘encourages the viewer to consider space, and the nature of his or her own body’. It ‘imposes a physical barrier that blocks the optical horizon’.

From halfway up the steps the statue is backed by cloud. From the top step, the orange crane [building the Judge Business School] rests beneath the extended copper wings

out of the window, into the distance it swings to the right with its payload of cement. Wings are alright for artists. People build with arms and claws.

But from halfway up the steps the wings block everything but the cloud.

going to the Fitzwilliam
not ~~come~~ to look at
the things even but just
to be in the space.



De Proserpina, de Plutone, de Marmone

Inspired by Gian Lorenzo Bernini – The Rape of Proserpina

You will never love anything like that hand that touches that leg.

In the marble there is hand and leg apart,
The skill, thus.
But in the heart, in mine and yours, not flesh of one flesh,
more. Closer.
Not fused,
Never separate.

I wept, and I thought I wept at the sculptor's hand,
But it was at the love
That makes flesh into one rock.
More than a gem, more than a string of diamonds around
Two necks.
They show, are shown together
In one lively stone.

I wept at his hands,
The god's,
The man who rules with rubies and sapphires
And is found here unadorned.
The jewel is not on his finger, nor on hers.
It is his finger, and the next, and next
Which pinch her mortal thigh.
You can see the veins in it.
He would make her bloody.
They would make me weep some more.

Jun Pang

Rothko

It was easier to lose yourself
in a chapel of muted icons
than to paint yourself whole
and pure and permanent.
Feats drawn from the Oresteia
prove no match for your floating
forms, but I wonder sometimes
if the spirit of your myth will live
on, if the pulse of your play
on light will persist after the
shimmer wears out; after the
space that once engulfed you
so completely ceases
to shatter our wits.

(There is a method,
I think, to every madness;
a proportional stretch to every canvas.)

If you've found something
beyond truth and tragedy,
if you've found mercy
in the below and the beyond,
I hope that those fields
bring you brighter hues.

Without you, the world is
quieter, darker,
but the size and the whole
have moved so out of reach
that silence no longer seems
to me a trap: perhaps
a miracle, or just
the taking of breath.



Mattie Weschler

What of the Season?

Inspired by Vincent Van Gogh – Houses and Figure

The houses are pleased as punch
about the existential order of things.
Nothing makes them happier than exactly this—
 the way they are all lined up
 nestled in a row like spring ducklings
 jovial green roofs and proud red chimneys
 spouting blue and green and grey smoke
 into the pink twilight air like a song—
they are so very glad to look like one another
and so very glad to be captured in this moment at sunset

or, is it sunrise?

And for that matter, what of the season, Van Gogh?

The yellow and brown of the field suggests autumn, but it could also be winter's end.

It could be a hopeful scene, one where the glorious day is just starting
and spring is only a week away
with her suitcases packed full of warm rain
and buzzing insects and mama birds ready to lay.

But winter could also be coming, the sun setting early in the day,
before the supper bell calls the blue man in from his hard day's work—
 the blue man, who you've placed just outside this provincial nest,
 just outside the elegant diagonal lines joining the cottages and the field
 and the sky
altogether in one perfect eye-full—

it could be the beginning of a long cold night
and no one is happy but the chimneys who are excited to be in use
again,
happy to be singing their blue and green and grey smoke song.

I don't think it matters which it is, Van Gogh.

This was the year you killed yourself and I imagine you couldn't see
the spring coming,
couldn't see the sun rising.
Every ambiguity looked its worst to you,
and so you painted your poor blue heart into the body of the man
looking at those houses, seeing how lucky they were to be themselves
and wishing he were anywhere else.







Brontë Philips

Kashan, Eating Pomegranates

I'm not from around here;
You can tell by the way I hold a pomegranate,
How I drink mint spice,
How my scarf slips,
How I impregnate silence with with shaky sentences.
I have no roof here, no pillow,
No time to be home for,
No arms to run to.
I'm not from **Kashan**;
But I have family here, better than the leaves of trees.
We don't share a skin or tongue
But they taught me how to eat pomegranate
With my bare hands,
Nectar running down my arms.
They showed me the foundations of trees and water,
How to speak in silent stars.
The air of **Kashan** is clear
For a head full of smoke,
For a stranger
Who doesn't know how to eat pomegranate.



Greg Forrest

‘The Sunken Earth’

The sunken earth set on her eyes, from crumbs
to pasted rain. Steady drip - one, two, shoe;
laced with arsenic, wilt in the nick of time,
a cut glass - brandy no doubt - a cut throat
attitude towards the press. All the tools
to take on the world; or the day at least.



Anju Gaston

Growth

My grandmother used to tell me that sap
was the blood of trees.

Goopy amber.

Geological juice.

My grandmother used to tell me that
if you put pips down the plug,

Orange trees might grow.

Tara Lee

The moth-watcher

They spend all day eating, turning
green with leaf after leaf like little buds
with mandibles, their skin stretching
with soft hawthorn-white spines.
And now, fat, they are ready
to spin silk and spool themselves.
It's just something they do; but
every so often the cocoons twitch
like children dreaming. They
liquefy in their translucent
jade-green chrysalides,
disintegrating, creating, their old cells
in new places, becoming something
rich and strange. Coated in fur,
in mahogany, chestnut, and hints
of rose, they crawl out of their
cocoons with antennae full-feathered
to air their wet wings under April sun.





Olivia Scott-Berry

A Cambridge Bestiary, or, Is this a deer I see before me?

“The presence of Hamlet in Romantic discourse usually indicates that the artist is examining his own self; the presence of Hamlet’s creator is often indicative of an attempt to “annihilate” the self.¹

Often, mornings and evenings both,
I see a singular deer, or
pheasant, or squirrel from
my window. My first instinct? To shoot
a picture through the glass. But then,
I reason, why not simply
enjoy these odd visitations,

always, of course, remembering
that a doe seen from one’s window
does not a nymph make,² nor the
flickering script of a white-
gold squirrel-buck paused, tail a-
loft, on the same spot of the
lawn, nor the darting bird or

its fellows seen from the road
where the heron stalks, frogging, the
Cam, among whose contented
waterfowl, huddled in rich
circles of glossy green wrapped
round conker brown chests, able,
I have heard, to sleep thus, afloat



(spherical embodiments of
what I envy, too, the flitting king-
fisher, the heron & the
haughty swan- all the birds of
my fenlands bridge-side aviary-
in my high-mammalian
jealousy) you may not number-

each a mind unto itself in
my secular kynde wit, whimsy,
the duck's encircling, 'intailed'³
'self-pillow' its symbol;⁴ no bird
or beast will nest you a dress
or bring feathers to disguise you,
Cinderella, Sapsorrow.⁵ No,

a doe seen from one's window
at quiet times, dawn, dusk, but proves
a prudence- marble constancy
found in work ethic, early
rising, isolation, Snow White
trilling at her work, with problems
of its own, with the gaze, still

of the hunter, explorer,
would-be duck enfolder; all
mitigated only, perhaps,
by remaining a Straggletag
enfurred, outside, aware, seeing the deer
at all (then complain, pieta-
cradle their blood-streaked flattened forms).

-
1. Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p.19.
 2. Marvell, 'The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn'.
 3. 'strongly intailed, neat/ head for core, on neck not breaking off, with curled in feet'- Marianne Moore, 'The Pangolin'
 4. Alice Oswald, *A Sleepwalk on the Severn* (Faber and Faber: London, 2009), p.27.
 5. 'Sapsorrow, *The Storyteller* [TV Series] (1988)- Cinderella-like story adapted from German folk tale. The ring that will only fit the woman who must become his wife fits his youngest daughter (Sapsorrow). She delays the wedding by demanding three dresses made of rare materials, then escapes with them into hiding. Disguised by fur and feathers brought by animals, she is known as Straggletag, and works in the kitchens of a royal palace. She sheds her disguise to attend the three nights of a royal ball, donning a different dress for each and dancing with the prince. On the third night she runs away from him, leaving behind her shoe. The prince searches for its owner and, upon finding that it fits 'Straggletag', agrees to marry her. The animals then remove the fur and feathers, revealing the beautiful Sapsorrow, and they are married.



Nora Rosenberg

Frostbound

Yesterday, we stood before this painting
she said, “if it moves something
in you, it’s art and if not, not.”
We look at the naïve winter landscape
delicate trees, the texture of snow
woven into pigments of grass. An ambiguous
shade of green and white lingers
on the horizon and illuminates the fog.

Last year I was your student. On the canvas,
you drew attention to the houses
and the river, as a symbol of hope.
Fused by our fascination with civilisation,
we concluded that the landscape
had stirred something homely in us.

My eyes slide through landscapes
snatched in frosty moments, bound
into the vacant conversation
of a warm car. The painting made
all frosty memory landscapes converge into
one and yet, one stood out:

December, the park at the lake
on the morning of grandfather's funeral.
pigments of piled leaves underfoot
A still moment to myself
shared with the landscape.
Now we stand together in front of this one.

After the Museum visit, my steps bounce.
Filled with the joy of strolling with someone
whose thoughts give names to mine,
after years of walking in landscapes
where I had not expected to find her steps.



Rosa Price

Romney Marsh

Beige and brown, speckled sparse
spotted green. Water lies
flat on the earth, a clouded
estuary. Unbounded
beneath scoured waste
the stagnant wetland.

Here malaria could incubate
drained of blood but still
preserved and fecund.
Nourishing the white fat
larvae clumped and blind.
Ambassadors from the wriggling swamp.

Here in arthropod territory
dragonflies suspended
in a miasmatic sulphur stutter
and buzz in bloated air. They drop
cradled by hissing vapour
caressed by soil's sweet rot.

Mud sucks in and bubbles up
belches rank and fetid
sticky yellow, a gassy seep
digestive ooze. Well-fed
simmering under the marsh
tropical and carnivorous.



Nell Whittaker

Five Dead Sperm Whales in Lincolnshire

Storms at sea.
Rain, then squally showers,
Moderate, becoming poor.

They knew the cold
And the dark heavy water
Like cartridge paper
Folded around them.
Then the shallow North Sea
Where the water came undone,
Collapsing into shingle and sand,
Tissued into not much at all.
They beached
Probably quietly.

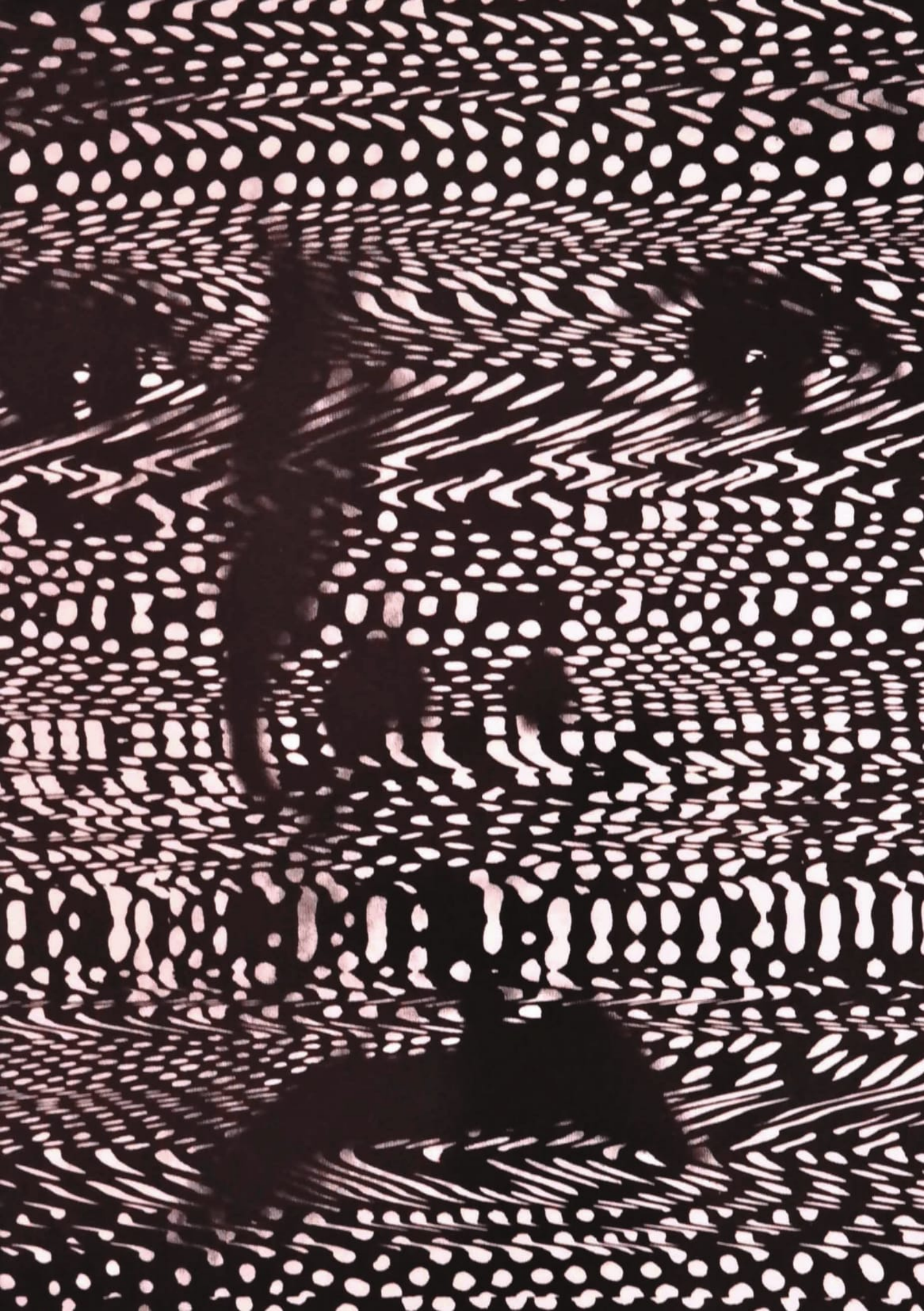
The sun must have come up slowly
To show them,
Grey as slate – dewed, maybe –
Close to one another,
Much smaller looking.
Still punctuation
On a wind-hushed page.

Daniel Baksi

Huê

Sun sets into the fish-pond ripples
where blissful boatmen skip. Crickets
chatter from the frangipani,
its scent sent-out like a silkworm's silk
into the gently waning breeze. A flag
flaps solitary from the castle-wall.

And you, sat there
like a magnifying glass all the while,
distorting the world irrevocably.





Jerry Cummins

and so we danced

around that Cretan chair
and back in london, margot pirouetted on the set I made for her.

you were crossed to the back, working your foot away
as a cantilever. your eyes were almost on the 45,
out of step, searching for me on the ground,
where I'd been just a moment ago,
when our hands touched each side of the rush weave.

did you notice that our farmhouse floor is baked earth?
and that even the skirting board-blue we chose is lifted from a painter's brush?
you know a pipe used to sit on this chair, and a handful of tobacco –
but all these things are base compared to a Cretan cat.

one day I'll paint us as humans. but aren't these cats enough?
after all, they prosper on this island by expanding to fill the time.
though we can't multiply we know that if we wait until the last minute
it'll only take a minute to do, and so we live with hope
that one day we might be humans too.
then I'll paint us frolicking and romping
on this chair, or on the farmhouse floor,
but for now, my dear, aren't these cats enough?

Dani Cugini

letter no postmark

hello

found your hair ties
in the medicine cabinet
hinged around a tube of cherry balm

and i wanted to ask

how many times do you turn
them around the wrist

before you wrap around
and let it
close?

is it two or three
four seems too constrictive
but three and a strand
spills

soaks with light, sticks against the jawbone


it compels me to ask you

i can't remember
how you did it

i just know it was right:
it always
seemed to hold

everything






BUT MAY I
STILL RETURN
TO SEE
YOU
GROWING?


MAY I WATER YOU?




WHO CHECKS
YOUR PULSE?




WHO
FEEDS YOU?




WHO
IS
THERE ?



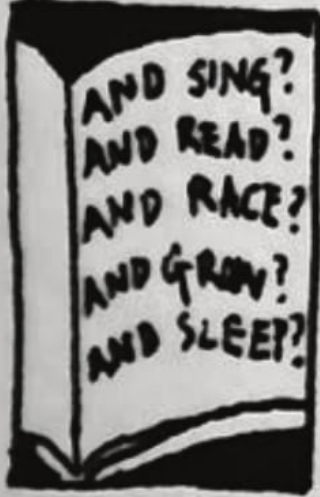
WILL I BE
ALLOWED TO
CUT YOUR
NAILS?




WILL I WAKE
YOU UP
AND
CLEAN
YOUR
TEETH
?



AND SING?
AND READ?
AND RACE?
AND GROW?
AND SLEEP?



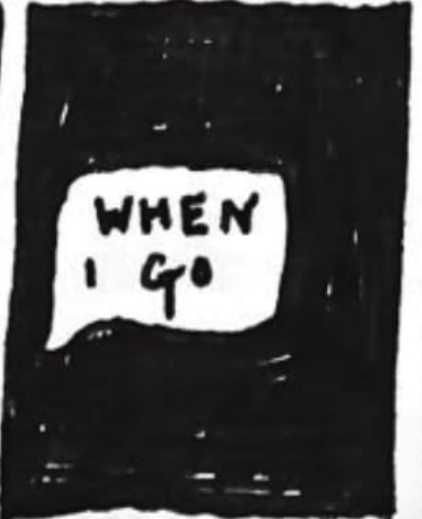
I WISH
THAT
I COULD
SEAL UP
THIS
SPRING
TIME



IN
MONEY
POTS
AND
COFFERS
...



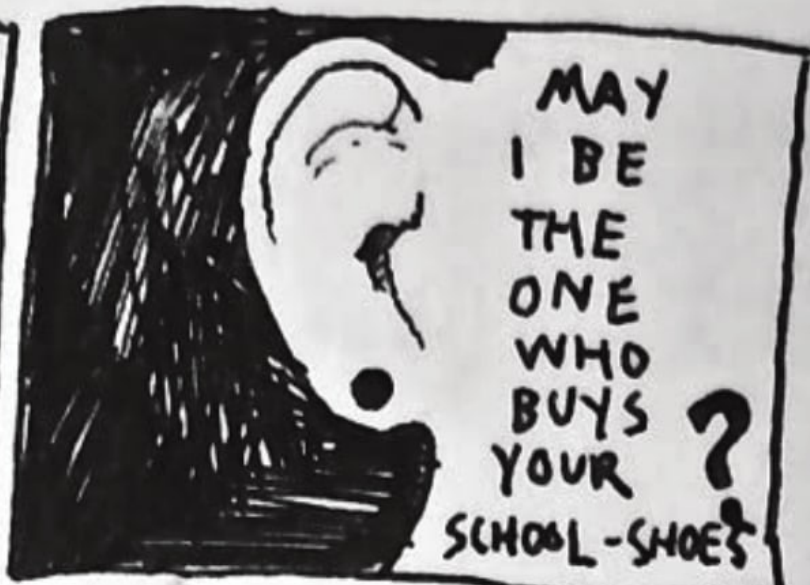
WHEN
I GO



AND WASH
YOUR
HAIR?



MAY
I BE
THE
ONE
WHO
BUYS
YOUR
SCHOOL-SHOES?



MAY I HOLD YOUR
HAND TO CROSS
AT CROSSINGS'?



MAY I SLEEP BESIDE
YOU WHEN YOU'RE SCARED?



WILL WE
CHAT?



KISS,



BICKER,



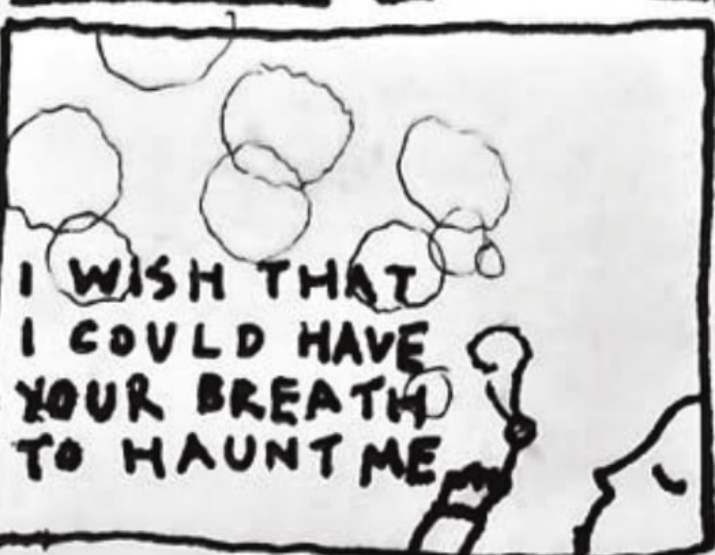
ROAR,



AND
PLAY?



I WISH THAT
I COULD HAVE
YOUR BREATH
TO HAUNT ME



I WISH I
COULD COME
BACK AND
WATCH YOU
GROW



Emily Adlam

Things Change

You believe that the place you came from
will stay with you always
but a life is longer than you know.
The dark forests of your birth, the cold cities,
will not melt away
but they will become external,
small bullets of time.

The unfamiliarity of other people
does not last. We mould ourselves
to society, as it moulds itself
to us.
Those unequal scents
meet and mingle

Just don't ask when.
Nothing ever happens while you're still asking.

Wind pours its emptiness
into your itinerant eyes,
and you remember yourself as temporary.

Between your fingers you crush
fossilised bread, preserved
for centuries under mounds of ash.
Sometimes it is a relief
to be transient.



Cuts

Aristotle

chose to ignore what did not fit

neatly

but

wood and root

rings of growth

cypress pine

(extinct)

remain visible.

- still -

after

twenty million years :

a petrified forest

of

tree trunks

tree trunks

tree trunks

buried

by the seashore.

trunks lying underwater



Isobel Laidler

Early Late Late Early

Stake ichor perfumed the vacant atmosphere,
drifting aimlessly as clouds; vacant
and designed of dead warm ice; obscure
to the optics and as dear to the stale
olfactory organ as the violet, that spent toilette,
or the thin trail of an the eidolon's shadow.

A mere bisection,
wilting without choice of voice of election -
a stagnant thought absolves the original
haunt of its unexecuted
lapse.



Alice Chilcott

Radiokind

I think I may be better. That is, perhaps, what this strange feeling is: health. After all, how would I remember? I have not felt it in a long time.

Certainly, what is certain, is that I am different today, and different - I believe - in a way that is positive, yessish. The pain in my shoulder, the stiffness in my back, they have gone. I see it, the yellowish sun, but it does not burn me as I reach towards it with my silver birch arms. I do not sting, no, I do not sting, neither do I feel. My hand passes through the water, no, it does not pass, I am not a ghost, or at least not yet. What I mean to say is that I see the water rippling against my wrist, see the tracks I make in the weeds. But I do not feel the water against my skin. No, I see, but I do not feel any longer.

Did I feel the water when I rowed my little boat? That was the day, you understand, the day I left the mainland for good. I could see the hills of the sea as they rose and fell in front of me, like the shifting Saharan sands. Occasionally, when I turned to adjust the tiller, I saw other humans lining the shore. "Come back!" they shouted, and then the "back" lost its "k" and then they were just vowels fighting the breakers, and then a distant, shrill bleating and then nothing, nothing.

The island is very pleasant today. There is a beach where the tide

never comes in, which I have made my living quarters. My rowing boat, for which I had no further use, I made into a bookcase, which I have placed at the edge of the beach where the sand meets the forest. There is something strange about this bookcase, namely that the books inside it are defunct. Should one open them, most of the pages are blank, and the ones that are not have turned themselves upside-down, or the individual words gone scurrying about the page like termites. I used to love books, but if the words will insist on absconding before they are read, I have little patience left for them.

When the words left I turned to my radio. It seems I am not so far from the mainland that the occasional chorus could not find its way to my radio and emerge, albeit back-crooked and stuttering, from the tinny speakers. It is a comforting property of the musical note that it can mean anything to anyone, which is why, perhaps, even most civilised people never bother to learn to write it. A word that could mean anything would mean nothing. For my part, 'nothing' is a feeling I have always struggled to express. Anyway, it was Zadok the Priest usually, usually almost always Zadok the Fucking Priest. That was the ragged, mighty dirge that my radio sporadically belched. I do not remember how it sounded, that is to say, I remember exactly how it sounded, I could sing it for you now in my freakish cracked infant-voice. What I forgot, had forgotten, is how it felt to listen to it. How it felt to sing it as well, now that I only had my wheeze for evidence that air entered and exited my lungs, as it did in the old days.

It was, I believe, shortly after the death of my radio - I mean, the point at which it ceased to reproduce Handel and began instead

to emit an incessant and rather menacing hiss - that the men arrived. There were two of them and they dressed in black. They arrived in a smart white boat with a shiny rail on the front of it, emblazoned with a red plus symbol, I feel like I should remember what it symbolised, I do not. I hid in the bracken and they walked up the beach past my bookcase at the edge of the forest. One of them reached out and took an old leather volume, and opened it apparently at random.

“No man is an island,” he quoted, and raised his eyebrows at the other man in a way obviously meant to be significant. He must have been quoting from memory, however, because when I consulted that Godforsaken tome I could read nothing of the sort.

They advanced across the island and it took them, I confess, a relatively short amount of time to find me. (I do not know at what point I assumed it was me they were looking for.) I think it was because I was frozen, I do not move, much. Moving requires such effort and my bones still ached from the crossing, I take time to heal. Moreover, I do not swim, I am necessarily inhibited in my movement by the fact of the existence of the sea, and what is the point in even standing up straight if one is not as tall as the sky? I must grapple with these questions every time I go to move.

When they found me, one of them used a word which I have since identified as being my name. At the time I was quite convinced of its status as an expletive, and reacted quite violently, that is to say I threw back at them what few expletives I had left. They looked at me with dark, angerish eyes and then their heads swiveled towards each other and their eyes, naturally, followed in that general direction.

“Clearly, too ill to move.”

“Do we take him by force?”

“He’ll be co-operative enough. Just inarticulate. But I think it will have to be done through the courts, just purely because he doesn’t understand the seriousness of his condition.”

Yet I am not weak, though I ached, or rather I derived a fleeting strength from my chronic and inexplicable weakness, no, it wasn’t the boat, I don’t know why I told you it was the boat. Perhaps a strong intermolecular force existed between myself and the island, a sort of lonesome affinity, but at any rate they were unable to shift me. One of them then sat down beside me, on a log, in the bracken, he sat down beside me, and he put his hand on my hand. (This I ascertained when I looked at my hand, and saw his instead.) He asked me: “What do you think your name is?”

I replied, with some dignity I hope, that my name was Nathan the Prophet.

This caused them a strange heaving contortion in their throats, a word I have been chasing, I forget it, it’s gone, perhaps it never was. Then the same one asked me if I were hungry. “You are very thin,” he said.

He ran his gentle, hairy hand across my ribs, which again I would not have noticed unless I had looked down of my own accord. My skin was the hue of the wordless pages in my books, and here and there bones rose like hillocks out of it, like a skeleton, very much like a skeleton, for that was what it was, my own skeleton poking out of me to remind me of its own continued existence. A sensible idea in all, and the effect was quite impressive. Yet no sooner had the man spoken than a volcano of hunger arose inside me, no, I should not describe it as a volcano, for volcanos (as I recall) are mighty and reddish and the very extreme opposite of cold; hunger is but the physical manifestation of nothingness, and we have already discussed my feelings on the expression of

that abstract noun; it follows that the more words I put the less capable the reader will be of understanding exactly how hungry I was, in that moment. Then one of the men, to my very great surprise and eternal gratitude, held out his hand to me, an offer.

With my incisors I removed his index finger. Then his pinkie, of course, I did not feel it come away, but heard it in the snapping and screaming and tasted it in the iron on my lips. Nerves, pain exhausts them eventually, I wanted to tell him, but perhaps I did not, I do not remember, or perhaps I could not hear myself, the noise was abominable. My ribs banged against his rather convex stomach.

When I had devoured them both - with the sole exceptions of their eyeballs, which I left for the vultures, in accordance with the cliché - I caused myself to unfreeze, in order that I could search their cases, yes, they had cases, heretofore unmentioned. In fact they are hardly relevant, as they contained only papers, which bored me, and chocolate eclairs, which I also ate. I am now some distance away, in their boat, I do not know how far, and if I could guess I have lost the units to articulate it, but I can see the island, the whole island, not so far from the mainland as I am from both - I am advancing every second - and can observe that it is a lovely day. The waves are again moving and so is my pen. I think I may be feeling better, now that I so very scarcely feel.

I do feel a little bit guilty for eating them - the chocolate eclairs, that is. I examined the packaging afterwards, and discovered that they contained alarming amounts of fat. Though why I should be scared of this I do not know, my bones breach the threshold of my skin, I feel no more, I see no one. The sea is my only mirror. I rush onwards.

I surge towards the edge of the earth, away from the coasts and the flat sands and the dead trees, to the crux, where the sea yields

me up to the stars and the universe surrounds me like an orchestra, yes, and every string made of gold, and every bow from the silver hair of a unicorn, if there were such things, which there are not. There I will lie frozen, beneath the silent crescendos and the static fuzz and the water that rolls off and falls forever, frozen and wordless and drowning, drowning.



Niamh Ryle

Saddleworth Moor through a window

Fog proceeds like a visitor:
Shouldering no identity, permeating
The peripheries of turf.
We cannot drive through it anymore.
It squats like a cyst, ripe for extraction,
And we tail around its industrial skin
As the lens eye feasts and saturates.
(And was it worth those ruptured lives
Pilfering the soggy earth?)
It catches my kisses in the soil,
Wrestles them into tumuli,
And we drive on with greedy hearts.
I am courting with that fog.



Sam Rhodes

This is not great writing

They say the important thing is to write. Doesn't matter what you write, just keep putting down words, and eventually the right ones will flow. I think that's a crock of bullshit. Not because you don't need practice to be good- you do- but because you need a reason. Writing can't exist in a vacuum. If a tree falls in the forest it doesn't make any sound (that one's a lot easier than most people would have you believe), and an unread piece of writing is just another set of lines thrown down randomly by the universe. If you don't know who you're writing for, or what you're writing for, then all you're doing is rearranging pixels on a screen. You might as well be playing minesweeper.

Of course, people aren't actually capable of "just writing". They invent an audience, exactly like I'm doing now. Part of me thinks that the only way to write well is to invent an audience that just happens to have an analogue in real life, although of course there's a lot more to it than that. That's not to say that writing should obviously pander to its audience- you need to be subtle, because that's what people want. Challenge someone who doesn't really want to be challenged, and it doesn't matter if your prose is as crisp as an autumn morning, they won't read it. Equally, it doesn't matter if your writing is as clichéd as a crisp autumn morning, because if your words find their way to someone who wants clichés, well then that's all well and good.



That's why I'm yet to be convinced that greatness really comes into it in any meaningful way. Successful writing is just a question of giving people what they want. Perhaps greatness is just giving enough people what they want before they realise exactly what it is that they desire.

I'm sure something like that paragraph has been written more than once by someone who greatness has eluded, and more often than not it's delivered with a tinge of bitterness. That's not me. Not because I've found greatness, but more because I'm not looking for it. I just like to write. Perhaps one day I'll invent you.

Victoria Ibbett

Academic Malpractice, or The Subject's Retort

A brief glimpse,
It was an evening with friends
'til you walked in.
You two men
cocksure, carrying craft beer and
clad in beanies, Docs, and worker's jackets;
you wore your intellect like the latest fashion.

We exchanged the usual pleasantries:
you study, I work
(but you preferred to say, "You labour").

You were reading Žižek
(though you spared me the name),
you admire him intensely,
I said I don't feel the same.
You asked again, "Do you labour or do you study?"

You lectured me on politics for half an hour,
I heard about ethics, freedom and workers' power,
miners, designers and right-wing maligners,
the reductive mechanics of psycho-dynamics
(when pressed on that last bit you couldn't explain):
you said, "You're my thesis. I'll study you."
I suppose you thought this was flirting.

You took off your beanies and looked in my eyes
you said, “Just like Žižek, we really despise
all cooking and cleaning as petit bourgeois ties,
our clothes and our Image are lies.”
I felt sorry for your mothers.

I know that sociology is a singular practice
and I get that it's easy to lose politeness in praxis,
but radicalism seems a trendy game
for pseudo-progressives making their name
and patriarchy is an ugly word, still too often heard.

At last orders you said your goodbyes and went.
You left me reduced, small, but poetic with intent
to repay kind with kind, to take back both voice and gaze,
to objectify you, type you, and leave you both
nameless.

'never
at a laugh
live dragon'

JRRT

G Morris





Cover Design: Ellie Winter
Issue Design: Sarah Howden and Olivia Fletcher



Handwritten cursive text, possibly a name or decorative flourish, in grey ink.

