

Ode to Dionysus

A black and white photograph showing two hands reaching towards each other from the left and right sides of the frame. The hands are positioned just above the main title. The background is dark and textured, with some light streaks and dust specks. The hands appear to be belonging to a person, with visible skin texture and some jewelry like a ring and a bracelet.

Farewell my soul's delight

ISSUE 3

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EDITORS' NOTE

It has been a pleasure to be able to continue this project. Two years ago when we started *Ode To Dionysus*, we had no idea that we would make it to Issue 3, let alone have submissions to publish.

Farewell my soul's delight is inspired by the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, the original star-crossed lovers. Orpheus famously travelled down to the underworld to bring back his wife, Eurydice, to the living world. The god of the underworld, Hades, had one condition—that Eurydice would walk behind Orpheus until they made it back to the upper world. Not being able to hear his wife's footsteps, Orpheus looked over his shoulder, only for Eurydice to be pulled back to the underworld, never to leave again. The myth is about love, grief, and deception; it was our aim to mirror these in Issue 3.

Thank you, once again, to everyone that supports us. We are forever grateful to have this journal in our lives.

Farewell, until next time,

The Editors

CONTRIBUTORS

In order of works

[a.d.](#)

a.d. is drawn to the sacred, the profane, the mysterious and the mythological, which provides inspiration for her work. She is an emerging bisexual poet and visual artist, and her poetry is published or forthcoming in *THINK*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *The Groke*, *Sublimation*, *PISSOIR!*, *The Cove Review*, *DOG TEETH* and elsewhere. Meanwhile, her visual art, mainly photography and self-portraiture, is or will be featured in *SCAB*, *Welter*, *Audi Locus*, *Hominum Journal*, *Antler Velvet*, *Bleating Thing* and elsewhere. Tumblr & Twitter: @godstained

[Angela Arnold](#)

Angela Arnold lives in Wales. She's also an artist, a creative gardener and an environmental campaigner. Her poems have been published in print, anthologies and widely online, in the UK and elsewhere. Collection: *In Between* (Stairwell Books, 2023). Twitter/X: @AngelaArnold777

[Castle Yuran](#)

Castle Yuran is a writer of poetry and fiction. She loves all things horror, supernatural, and true crime. Her favorite pastimes include aimless adventures throughout the New England countryside and spending time curled up with her cats. Castle holds an MFA in Creative Writing, and she currently works as an Academic Coach and Instructor at a university in Connecticut. Her poetry can be found in the Pitkin Review, Ghost Light Lit, and Bleating Thing.

[Daithí Kearney](#)

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.

[Danny P. Barbare](#)

Danny P. Barbare resides in the Southeastern USA. His poems have been published widely including in the United Kingdom. He has been writing in free verse for 43 years and has been published over 1500 times. Most recently in the Free Inquiry.

[Diego Calle](#)

Diego Calle is a poet. He lives in Toronto, Canada and is an undergraduate student at the University of Toronto studying English and cinema.

[Devon Webb](#)

Devon Webb (she/her) is a Gen Z writer & editor based in Aotearoa New Zealand. Her award-winning work, concerning themes of femininity, anticapitalism & neurodivergence, has been published extensively worldwide & accumulated six Best of the Net/Pushcart nominations. She is a founding member of The Circus (@circuslit), a literary collective prioritising radical inclusivity in the indie lit scene. She is currently working on her debut novel & full-length poetry collection, & can be found on social media at @devonwebbnz.

[Fabrice B. Poussin](#)

Poussin's poetry and photography work has appeared in hundreds of magazines worldwide. Most recently, his collections In Absentia, If I Had a Gun, Half Past Life, and The Temptation of Silence were published in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024, by Silver Bow Publishing.

[John RC Potter](#)

John RC Potter is an international educator from Canada who lives in Istanbul. He has experienced a revolution (Indonesia), air strikes (Israel), earthquakes (Turkey), boredom (UAE), and blinding snow blizzards (Canada), the last being the subject of his story, "Snowbound in the House of God" (Memoirist). His poems, stories, essays, articles, and reviews have been published in various magazines and journals. His story, "Ruth's World" (Fiction on the Web), was nominated for the Pushcart Prize, and his poem, "Tomato Heart" (Disturb the Universe Magazine), was nominated for the Best of the Net Award. The author's gay-themed children's picture book, The

First Adventures of Walli and Magoo, is scheduled for publication. He enjoys duties as Istanbul editor of Masticadores online magazine.

[Kenneth Pobo](#)

Kenneth Pobo (he/him) is the author of twenty-one chapbooks and nine full-length collections. Recent books include *Bend of Quiet* (Blue Light Press), *Loplop in a Red City* (Circling Rivers) and *Lilac And Sawdust* (Meadowlark Press). Forthcoming from Fernwood Press is a book of poems called *At The Window, Silence*. His work has appeared in North Dakota Quarterly, London Grip, Amsterdam Quarterly, Orbis, Nimrod, Mudfish, Hawaii Review, and elsewhere. @KenPobo

[Mark J. Mitchell](#)

Mark J. Mitchell has been a working poet for 50 years. He's the author of five full-length collections, and six chapbooks. His latest collection is Something To Be from Pski's Porch Publishing. A novel, A Book of Lost Songs is due out in Spring of 2025. He's fond of baseball, Louis Aragon, Dante, and his wife, activist Joan Juster. He lives in San Francisco where he points out pretty things.

[Paul Whelan](#)

Paul Whelan is a poet and publisher from Sheffield. He currently lives in York, where he runs Acid Bath Publishing.

[Sameen Shakya](#)

Sameen Shakya's writings have been published in Alternate Route, Cosmic Daffodil, Hearth and Coffin, Roi Faineant and Thin Veil Press, to name a few. Born and raised in Kathmandu, Nepal, he moved to the USA in 2015 to pursue writing. He earned an Undergraduate Degree in Creative Writing from St Cloud State University and traveled the country for a couple of years to gain a more informal education. He returned to Kathmandu in 2022 and is currently based there.



POETRY

of Absence & Desire, *a.d.*

[Love] survives only if some part remains for it to conquer.

We love only what we do not wholly possess.

— Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, tr. C. K. Scott Moncrieff

All her life she had been chased into being.
The life of a muse is merely the toil of constantly birthing
something for another. When he met her, he sensed
her trembling song and longed to possess it.

Desire buds
within the mouth.

Her untimely dispossession of self
was the first time she divined this music within
her, fingered its feeble heartbeat like a bird yearning to flee—
the first time she could let the winged notes freely hover
without being snatched and disfigured beyond recognition.

Wavering, he reproves her liminality.
He craves to hear the tread of her hesitant footfalls,
to feel the warmth of her breath against his neck.

His desperate attempts at shoveling the verge
of her absence only widened the gaping hole
in the shape of her being that swallowed him
and spat him here.

Asphodel inhabits the space between the eyes;
she does not remember much of her life except the running.
Now here she is again, being led, being dragged,
her peace and song dissonant and disturbed.

As the default state of the mouth is silence,
her protest remains unuttered. Yet all the way
throughout the ascension she wills him to look back.

The thoughts of the living echo clamorous
in the hadean stillness. He envisions his imminent success as definite
as the pinprick of daylight ahead. He doesn't feel the tension, its shadowed
pressing— what use is the pitstone will of the living
against the abyssal will of the dead?

In the end, he did what any lover would—
he succumbed. It took all her life for him
to finally surrender the one thing she wanted.

How convenient to be free of memory, to painlessly depart
from the remorse that crowns him here,
while he remains burdened with the afterimage of her
eyes leaden with accusation.

Reality floods him— his beloved wanders lost
by his own hand;
what choice is left for him now
but to love her forever?

grandmother then | now, *Angela Arnold*

herbs I inherited no question
nothing precise but at least
a sprig of knowledge
a pinch of appreciation familiarity
her and me dabblers both

crotchety she was so-o?
but grumpy old woman is a thing
as is awkward middle-ager
and bolshy younster all kosher now
I'll carry that torch then

a mind carving its own parallel tracks
doing *her* thing set chin
waving a flag of no known connotations
or history cheesily: her story
let's just imagine a neat So There! tattoo

if veggie had been an option
she'd have signed up in a flash
and if I believed in 'looking down'
she'd deffo smile in recognition
not warm or cold exactly

just sort of me-ish

I want back, *Castle Yuran*

all that I've lost.
Lily and Jade
and Silver un-
euthanized,
my home un-
foreclosed,
my father un-
diseased and
breathing once
more. And I want
our tiny morsel
of love, which
leapt into my
heart like a
bucking
deer, un-
withered.
The breathing
tube weaves
its way out of
my dad's throat,
the kittens wake
up, and we all
pull back into
our ragged
driveway in a
car that
never died.

Entangled Pair, *Castle Yuran*

If you and I
were an entangled pair, we
would be
at the dusty pink center
of an orchid blossom.

I flush,
even in shadow,
as you lap the sun
somewhere else.

Things bow in and out,
as they do,
needles
on the metronome
of a single space,

lace curtains puff
in open windows, living,
a house with lungs;

But nothing
extravagant—
only molecules
of the blush lip,
awake with the spring
and wizened by summer.

Before, *Daithí Kearney*

I buried my head in your
light blue lambswool jumper;
lingering perfume masked
the antiseptic ambience before

the nurse slapped and prodded
my matchstick thin arms before
inserting the needle into my limp veins,
drawing warm blood into a vial before

I felt evermore faint
yet supported by your embrace;
your words were painkillers that
seeped into my ears

blocking fear, inhibiting pain,
calming the feverish thoughts
before I nodded off to sleep,
lingering in my subconscious before

I awoke to find my face buried
in the soft pillow of your jumper
spoiled a little by dribble that
you gently wiped from my cheek before

you pressed your lips against my forehead
before handing me a drink,
encouraging me to sip it slowly without
spilling on your jumper.

Another day when I'd recovered
you watched beside the pitch and
as I returned cold from the field you
rolled your jumper up and ringed

it neatly over my head to keep me
Warm in your embrace before
We got back to the car
Where its magic got to work.

That was all before and now
I'm many miles away but when
I'm worried I still seek
the jumper that was always there before.

Northern Lights, *Daithí Kearney*

Between Bellaghy and Bergen
Northern lights inspired
I looked around saluting
Ordinary faces whose eyes
Met mine as I journeyed
Their eyes saw the world
In a different light
Time travelling through
The Boyne, Belfast, Bermuda

I stand at the threshold
Setting my compass
Past, present, future
Home and away
Scales, perspectives,
Balanced by words written
Beneath and beyond
Northern lights

Cliff Notes, *Daithí Kearney*

In the darkness the notes flowed
Like ropes over the cliff edge
Trying to drag me back up from
The ledge where I had landed

Some tunes I grasped easily
Others slightly out of reach
As my fingers flexed and fumbled
To satisfy my ear

I had not sought to scramble
From the shelter of the ledge
Warmed by a golden sunset
Content in simple comfort

But the clifftop blocks the sunrise
With its promise of possibility
Rather than bring the curtain down
It's time to begin the ascent

Subterfuge, *Daithí Kearney*

Subterfuge discovered
Malicious scheming sends
Shockwaves that should
Have been smothered

Wounded, without choice
Forced to absorb
The jab and roll
I find my voice

No longer silenced
Should I shout
Or negotiate
In defiance

Realising strength in
Victory over revenge
Wounded warriors
Gain redemption

Not by force but
Adapting to circumstance
Knowing the path
Is not a shortcut

I am to be lived in
abandonment is subterfuge
when all that is needed
is a little renovation.

The Clock Hums, *Danny P. Barbare*

We work together
thank you, you're welcome
no clock about it
the day goes by like a red
second hand
oh hear it hum happily.

The Star, *Danny P. Barbare*

All these scars and bruises upon my soul
I put my elbows upon
the sill and pray
to the star in the window.
I find my peace
as if my spirit has followed
the light and my troubles are simply gone.

The Severed Head of Orpheus's Song, *Diego Calle*

Though down the Hebrus severed now I flow,
Ye nymphs, ye fish, hear me however long:
This is my death song so I sing it slow.

Yea 'Pollo breath into my chest did blow,
And what is heaven giv'n to heav'n belongs
(Though down the Hebrus chestless now I flow).

Ye nymphs, ye fish, I sing it so ye know:
Let Orpheus self live on in ye—live on!
I sing this death song—sing—I sing it slow.

I sang of trees, and lo! those trees did grow;
I tamed each beast under a yoke of song
(Though down the Hebrus trunkless now I flow).

I bade the Argonauts on deck: *Ye row!*
No siren would dare think try song . . . among
My song. I sing this death song—sing it slow.

I hear the main, yet I've much left to go!
Ye nymphs, ye fish, let's seaward—seaward throng!
Though down the Hebrus severed now I flow,
This is my death song so—*gurgle gurgle*

Iris, *Diego Calle*

i shall bring ye a word, a letter, a note;
ye shall sweat, ye'll drip—the dread ink of my bow.
i shall leap with god's tongue—'cross heaven's crystal moat—
various, manifold—down the vault shall i float;
where i land—in homage—stone'll shine with my coat
(*till ocean reclaims all old realms of his flow*).
i shall bring ye a word, a letter, a note;
i shall leave, ye'll yearn—for the wet of my bow.

I DON'T KNOW HOW THE FUCK TO TALK TO YOU SO I'LL JUST WRITE YOU ANOTHER POEM, *Devon Webb*

I wish I could've wanted you
in a way that doesn't scare you
it scares me too
but I guess I found that kind of... exciting

but here I am standing around
tryna snatch some fragment of a word from you
just a word, cos my hopes for a conversation
were too high, I realise now

& I feel like an idiot
I feel small, smaller than I am
& it's not your fault I feel that way
but you've still got a part to play in it
you've still got pieces in the chess game
or whatever stalemate fuckery this is
whatever attempted strategy
that didn't seem to work

anyway
I'm standing here feeling small
& fucking cringeworthy like I've got the word
SIMP
written on my forehead
in the same bright pink vivid pen
your name found itself in
on the interior of my bedside table

the words are all dead in my mouth
& if I find myself on the verge of tears one more time
when your friend gives me the hug I didn't know I
needed so badly
I will crawl even deeper into the hole dug by this
desolate silence & outward expression of apathy

see the reason I tripped up on those words
the only sentence I kind of half-said to you all night
was that I was touching on the fact that
I overthink everything & have anxiety & it's all
rather a lot, especially right now

but when you start playing it all goes away

it all goes away
cos those songs
& that energy
take me back to that one perfect day
before things got way too complicated

what I have discerned is that
there is a Before the Trauma
& an After the Trauma
& a vivid memory of the Trauma itself
& I have been trying so hard
to recapture the feeling of Before the Trauma
when we had no complex backstory just blank pages
unsaid phrases waiting to be written
& I wrote them delightedly in cursive with black ink

we were friends then
we were friends on the brink of a maybe
& your friends were my friends too
& it was so easy & I felt so seen
& I loved sitting in your living-room,
watching a movie

but now I see that there's no getting back to
Before the Trauma
cos Before the Trauma doesn't exist anymore
& the fact of the matter which none of us have addressed
is that you were the catalyst for the trauma in question
you were the single cursed blessing of a reason

it wasn't your fault & I'm sorry you had to
play that role against your will
it wasn't my fault either,
it was the pasty bitch with the bad hair
but it happened, & there's no going back to it unhappening

there's no going back to laughing at the party
& looking at the view
& wanting so badly to get to know you
there's no going back to being just... me
a curious little mystery

there is no mystery anymore
cos my sexual history got broadcast on my furniture

even though there was only one person I wanted to...
add to that history
& I broadcast all the rest of it myself
on the internet in poetry

I guess this is one of the reasons why it's so
sensitively complicated
how the whole group of you got all twisted up
in my mess & my unmaking
& as part of remaking myself I guess I tried to remake us
but what is us but
avoiding difficult conversations

what am I but liking you too much
what am I but the masochism
of sitting here with my silent sincerity &
the stale aftertaste of an outdated hope
what am I but hanging around
even when I got treated so badly
at the hands of your feigned apathy
which I know is feigned cos
what kind of Pisces doesn't have a
fuckload of feelings

but the night is getting old now
am I just wasting your time?
or am I wasting mine

guess I gotta sober up
cos my whole head's been high on you
put it down to the... addictive personality
my whole head's been high but
I ain't been able to clarify shit
cos I've got... drymouth or something

& I guess I'm ashamed of being shy
of being scared
cos why should I be scared
of a boy with nice clothes &
questionable communication skills

I wish I could just look you right in your beautiful eyes
& say, do you wanna fuck just like, one time
so we can get all this god damn lust out
so we can just finally fucking do something
though speaking of which my feelings for you

have always encompassed a whole lot more than lust

I just wanna do something
other than stand here in the void of a non-existent dialogue
honestly I would prefer it if you would get angry
& say fuck it no thank you one more time
or punch me in the face
honestly I would prefer it if I had to watch
some pretty art school student with photography skills & nice hair
sucking you off in front of me

what I am saying is that anything is better than nothing
what I am saying is that the nothing makes me sick
what I am saying is that I hate waiting for you to
look at me & look away
when there are boys that look at me with stars in their eyes
stars that stay

I look at you with stars in my eyes
but it's not just cos of the singing & the dance moves
& the impeccable fashion
I like all the things I see when I see right through you
like the softness, & the privacy

speaking of privacy I know you're a private person &
I'm a public artist &
there may have been some uncomfortable clashes with that
but nobody ever gave us any privacy
so I've gotta work with what I've got

which is not a lot more
than one big crush & too much honesty
looking for an out when
I keep holding it in too deeply
til I fucking drown in my feelings

drown in your blue,
oh how I love to love & hate to hate you
hate to love & love to hate you
love running through the wet dream
of a what if
what if we went back to the beginning

what if we went back to before we were afraid
before all this shit I wish we could change
before every time I saw your face

I found myself gazing into an
ending I wasn't ready for

why have I held off on an ending for so long
why have I dismissed it when they said you
didn't deserve my poetry
why have I not been listening to anything but
the god damn fucking noise of you
I create in place of your quiet
& the songs on Spotify which are the
only thing that sound like
you speaking to me
(Weirdo by the Vaccines
if you were wondering)

can you see now
how pitiful it all is?
yet I stand by what I've always said which is that
you deserved it
you deserved it cos I think underneath it all
underneath the fear & the anxiety
& cold coolness & false apathy
you are just like me
just a quiet private nerd
with aesthetic sensibilities
& god I just... loved this

god I just wish
I could've seen more of it
god I wish I could've gotten under your skin
into your grin which lights up
your whole fucking face

god I wish the beginning kept being the beginning
& there was no fucked up confusing middle
& an ending I have to swallow so sourly
god I wish everyone fucked off & let us just
have a conversation
& I wish I'd been brave enough to
have the conversation when I could've
when I should've
I'm so ashamed of not being brave enough

but here we are &
I'm sick of feeling sad, & small, & full of regrets
like not wanting to overstay my welcome when you

invited me home from Eyegum
I'm sick of not knowing what the fuck you think of me
I'm sick of clarity being an unattainable myth
I'm sick of hating silence but being too weak to break it

I'm sick of being too weak to break things
or too proud or sentimental to
take the love I have for you & smash it like sparkling glass
even though I know I should

I'm sick of saying sorry
& only meaning it half the time
& I'm sick of being sorry
for not speaking

but I'm not sorry for having shit to say
I'm not sorry for tryna find creative ways
to get around our mutual terror
I'm not sorry for writing these stupid fucking poems
cos they may be stupid & fucking cos there's
too many of them about you
but they're also art, & therapy

& they make me feel better
in the aching wake of your silence
they make me feel like I have a voice
when my other one ran at the first sight of you

& I will say the things I need to say
to take me one step closer to closure
& another, & another
til this whole song is said & done
& I can turn away
at last

into the horizon of a new perfect day

into the beautiful noise of not being afraid.

AT LEAST I SAID GOODBYE, *Devon Webb*

I was a little shit at saying hello but at least I said goodbye this time
at least I didn't leave in the middle of my three bad sentences
at least I said *something*
at least I slipped into the centre screaming

GOD DAMN MAN CHILD

beaming my bright grin
at least I snatched one fucking moment
at least I drank enough vodka soda to not be afraid
the rejection sensitive dysphoria well that's a story for another day
I'm sorry I complain
I'm sorry I'm so shy
I'm sorry I'm so eager
I'm sorry I left without saying goodbye
I'm sorry I can't capture you
I'm sorry I can't let go even
though I never captured you
I'm sorry I keep trying I'm sorry I can't forget
I'm sorry I'm set to love you for a longer infinity than this

EVERY MEMORY, *Devon Webb*

Every memory I remember gets stuck like future in my history
everything you said so shyly
went straight into me & around & back again
how many hours of sleep have I lost in the
shape made by your shadow
in all this empty space constantly expanding
as if you are a dream & I keep
waking up
how long do I have to hold on to stop falling

& what if I like being speechless
what if I like gasping into the sparkling air between us
what if I keep coming back to the start
& the middle & the middle & the lack of ending
what if I like being at the mercy of your rhythm

& what if an unwritten story is the best kind of promise
what if I prefer silence to disillusionment
or the unuttered harmony I keep on loop inside me
what if it's not such a terrible thing that
I can't forget you

what if my inability to say goodbye to you
is the birthplace of every poem that
pulls itself out of me
what if our agonising fate is in itself a masterpiece
shall we thank this beautiful doom of a destiny

shall I thank you for never breaking my heart only
making it beat right out of my body
oh how boring would it be not to love you
how tragic not to be stuck
in the flicker of the vision of us.

THE POTATO CHIPS ARE A METAPHOR, *Devon Webb*

The potato chips are a metaphor
for how I'll be broke but
spend my last ten dollars on
making sure you've all got something to snack on
I come here
with a heart full of fondness & sincerity
just wanting to be your friend
(I mean
I know there's been
complications
but we can't help a racing heart)
(...or can we...?)
I am here to give
LOVE
&
SUPPORT
following you to the supermarket cos
I dig the energy
& could maybe use some
conversation
& ...companionship...
I am walking alone between too fast & too slow
& god it fucking reminds me
of the past, of the poetry
oh the past
maybe one euphoric week
one glorious connection
that I'm trying to hold onto
by the tips of my fingers
but I'm not holding onto anything
but air
& I fall, & I fall
into the realistic bruise
of not having the things I want to
maybe I'm doomed
to look, & never touch
never materialise
& I look & I look & I look
till my eyes burn holes in your favourite clothes
& I fall onto your stage
like fucking degradation
like metaphors that are getting too real now

I am on the outskirts of a conversation
that used to be behind my back about me
trying to get a word in edgeways but
I've already said too much
DO I MAKE YOU UNCOMFORTABLE?
& I actually have a lot of very valuable things to contribute
but you won't give me the time of your day
so how am I supposed to adapt to it
I am trying to adapt to you
I am trying to figure out the dynamics
like I was doing
from the very start
when I fucked up by not giving my love
in its whole form
in its unhindered truth
I lost myself in the fantasy
& now I'm STUCK THERE
when I realise
that reality slipped out the door & locked it
& there is nothing to this anymore
but what could've been & what is
& those are two very different things
so your beauty
& your fraternity
are still a very watchable movie
but it's the kind of movie
that ends when you leave the room
& go back to real life which is
people who actually love me
who actually see me
through no screen of social subtext & unsaid things
this is my reality & why am I trading it off
for a delusion
no not a delusion a memory
a memory
of you sitting on the floor beside me of
running your hands along my bookshelf of
the day fading to dusk outside as we drink champagne
I have gifted
I have gifted so much
I have given too much
& got fuck all back but
this teaser taste of a heart that can't help but race
how do we help a heart that can't help but race
I will tuck it into the harmony of the songs you
sing with such grace

& leave it there
to sound beautiful
as it keeps time every time
& when I say I'll leave it there
I just mean the part of my heart with your name on it
& I'll take the rest
& give it to someone new
where it will fall into another rhythm
& all the pieces of my heart scattered around the city
will make a symphony
& that's all I'll say about it for now
for now, for tomorrow
I'll try & hold conversations that aren't hindered
by emotional context
& when your apathy turns sour in my mouth I'll spit it out
but when you listen
when you really listen
I will remember why I followed in your tracks
I will remember why I chased you down Tory Street
I will remember what you mean to me & why it's
so much more fucking significant than anything I've
ever meant to you
& I will say thank you
& hopefully, you will too.

Vanish the Dreams, *Fabrice B. Poussin*

Long-haired behind the football
intent on the move to win the game
he was ready to run the gauntlet
with that smile to take him so far.

Simple goals to play with the coming years
at home with an aging family
no large screen to distract from
the grandeur they were to achieve.

Land galore surrounding this boy
so slender in the evening breeze
he could not see beyond his younger years
now a horizon so distant, so full of promise.

New machinery clamored his name
herds sang a song to his future
so gleeful he was to be alive
it seemed spring was a constant companion.

But now he sleeps with the ancestors
those warm days cut down in the dead of winter
by the careless attention of a neighbor
who could never think even of a friend.

While the Battle Rages, *Fabrice B. Poussin*

I see them on the screen
so far away sometimes too close
they seek shelter from the merciless death.

So many battles in numberless forms
to make them suffer while, like countless
others, I sit comfortably in my lounge chair.

Outside of this fortress the storm stages
attacks with lightning, hail, and thunder
and we laugh in unison with the crackling of the hearth.

We witness stories of men who froze
in bottomless trenches, others burnt
in the ovens of the most cruel force.

We hear of the child lost on a Sunday morning
taken from a family picnic to never
be seen again by grieving parents.

Young, old, and middle-aged they die
in the remote rooms of hospitals
to leave relatives helpless for another day.

You smile holding a glass of reddish nectar
snuggling in the arms of safety by the home fire
I hold you close while millions suffer in the clasps of evil.

Heaven's Own Harvest, *John RC Potter*

It is on these autumn days
that I reflect on the past,
and miss them the most.

Mom, Dad, and my three sisters;
who departed too early,
with the holy ghost.

They will be with me always,
from the dusk until the dawn;
a lamp on the path.

When we are giving our thanks,
we will think about them last:
heaven's own harvest.

AUGUST WINGS, *Kenneth Pobo*

We talk softly on the porch, watch
a red-bellied woodpecker pair,
Mo and Moena. Mo tends
to her needs, bringing her suet.
She cries loudly, accepts his gift.

Butterflies and moths are ample—
If they start to fight in mid-air,
we hear vivid silence. Monarchs
light on Jupiter's beard or a bright
lavender sweet sultan, flying
orange stained glass windows.

These days make me grateful
that you're my man, a blue
sky that covers me.

DEEPER YELLOW, *Kenneth Pobo*

In early November
one last blossom
clutches autumn's
icy fingers—I pick
a sturdy zinnia.
For a few days,
spring again.

Last picked.
A deeper yellow.

STANDING ON YOUR ROOF I SQUAWK, *Kenneth Pobo*

like a peacock. The roof tilts
so I might lose my footing.
This world is an exhaust pipe,
but you still might find
a talking ruby. Beauty has
held many others in place,
keeping them safe.

I flaunt colorful circles,
drape feathers, squawk
even louder. I have work
so I must come down,

a bird landing on grass
looking for worms.

UNDERGROUND SONG, *Mark J. Mitchell*

She leaves her underground church. Gray daylight
plays games with her aging eyes. Now someone
calls her name—his voice sharp as love bites
he gave her underground, in a church. Her white
neck feels them after gone years. Small delight
shivers through her form. She stops. Looks for sun
before going underground to her train, Light
plays gray with her eyes. She misses someone.

ERAT HORA, *Mark J. Mitchell*

She placed her jacks back in their small red box
then squeezed her red rubber ball hard as prayer.
A spot behind a technical handbook
she built for storing childish things awaits
her hand's push to complete the hiding rite.
Underground trains are less patient than toys,
she knows. A grown up now, she dons her age
as disguise. Frowns. Nothing can take away
her morning's playtime with a ball and jacks.

FRIDAY MORNING, *Mark J. Mitchell*

Blossoms blow by and underground calls her.
A warmth floats up, a gift from trains. She heard
the doors kiss open. She aches to obey
a thin voice no one else hears. Stairs roll down.
She drops under the storm and its cold sounds,
bartering winds. There's music under noise.
Below noise, someone pronounces her name.
She'll find her own commute, not that lost boy's.

EVASION, *Mark J. Mitchell*

He wants to lift her. She's happy to stand
as still as a statue and far away
from him as possible. She knows his eyes
are greedy as his form and his love songs
are built of lies, treacherous as his arms.

She likes lies, sometimes, drifting like sand
off old statues, always found far away
from her. She still laughs at his tricks and sighs
when he sings. If she listens, she's lost, gone
from now. Underground again. She's alarmed

by closeness—his smell, his long-fingered hands.
Her skin awakes. He won't touch her today.
It's not possible. She knows his deep eyes
are searching her, luring soft flesh along
to steal what she won't give—love like alms.

Standing there, cars rolling past on a grand
avenue, with people watching her sway
gently from memory of his still-tempting lies—
She grows greedy for his delicate songs
but isn't pulled by his magnetic warmth.

Chance meeting. Old friends in traffic. Bland
occurrence. Her wait's a game she might play
with anyone. Still, something's tickling her thighs—
a breeze against a skirt, a wish gone wrong—
she feels lies, his treachery. His arms

waiting to lift her. She's happy. She stands
close as a statue but still far away
as possible. Out of range of his eyes,
his greed, his known form. She can't hear his song.

His composed lies won't call her to his arms.

THE YORKSHIRE AFTERLIFE, *Paul Whelan*

The church bells ding-dong
Nearby in fair Pocklington
Where this mourning is set.
Revived on the settee of friends
After a fierce bender in the town
Following my sour funeral in the city.
There are rabbits in a hutch
Keeping me company.
If only I could mute things
In my life like on social media.
Last night, I learned a 23 year old
Owns his own home and makes 34K.
My professor friend is older and
Owns typewriters, printing presses.
I own my own business and
May one day be successful.
Though richer, my friend out here
Is closer to squalor though the house
Is immaculate, excusing the stray
Bits of straw scattered about the
Carpeted floor and the pot on the hob
Unwashed from our Last Supper last night.
The bells of All Saints chime out,
Calling me back to religion,
But I'm too old at this young age
And I'm mad at God for not giving in,
Giving me everything I want
All the time, even just now
When all I want is my resurrection.
There didn't seem too many graves
In the churchyard as we passed through
Drunk and I realise what I need
Is a less crowded afterlife.
Really, I am recovering already
When I accept that I was dead and am risen.
It will be Easter soon and by then
I should've shifted the great fuck-off rock
They've rolled over my path.
There will be heathen orgies
Even if only with my other selves:
The feminine, masculine, and then

The most authentic which is me.
I will take the middle spot and get spoiled,
No longer spitroasted by God and Jesus,
His holed hands holding my head and
Praying: *Come, Holy Spirit, come!*
There's beer on the table that I didn't finish,
Having a singsong to *Rocky Horror* as I
Crunched my bacon frazzles from the Co-Op
Where the cashier advised me, *Don't move to Pock.*
Then, in the house next door,
The Pharisee neighbour bashed at the wall.
There'll be a bus and then a train
Then I'll be back in the temple,
Preparing to be deified again.
All I can tell you and
All that I know is:
I am a Christlike figure
For I turn wine into piss.

THE COVID-19 CREED, *Paul Whelan*

After the Nicene one

We believe in the body,
At mercy of all that is seen and unseen.
At this altar, all discomfort is laid.

For us men and for our salvation,
Men came down to the night club,
And with their company and many drinks,
I became Man among them.

For fuck's sake!
I was infected with COVID-19;
I suffered the sweats, with heavy chest,
Out of breath.

On the third day, I rasped again
In accordance with my sickness.
I descended into sorrow
And was seated at the right hand of the sofa.

With my body, I will be worshipped and glorified.
Within this body, I will worship and glorify.

I will come out again
To judge you all
And my celebration will have no end.

Amen.

AS THE END OF LIFE APPROACHES, *Paul Whelan*

As the end of life approaches,
We pretend it isn't happening.

As the end of life approaches,
We pretend it never will.

With the blood red spike
Of the second hand
On the hospice clock

Clicking, hardly sticking,
Before jabbing into the next notch,
We pretend it hasn't happened already.

As the end of life approaches,
We pretend it isn't already here.

CATCH UP, *Paul Whelan*

Thank you for the news
I never asked for.
Thank you for thinking
I was stable enough
To hear it.

Thank you for prattling
On about chickpea recipes
While I'm fearing for my life,
When my skull is a splintered egg
And the yolk is pressing into
The jagged edge.

When I am at A&E for 8 hours
And on my offering news that
My brain hasn't been bludgeoned,
That I won't become a vegetable,
That I won't die at 24,
Or have to start using
My grandmother's wheelchair,
You decided to catch me up.

Thank you for the news,
Worth so much more than mine
Because, while mine is that
I am still alive,
Yours is that
You have had the chance to live.

SHIRT HANGING ON A HANGER, HANGING ON THE DOOR,

Paul Whelan

With its arms dangling there.... Horrible!
To the point of being unbearable —
Unbelievable!
By that I mean it reminds me that we are, in fact,
These biological constructs, heaps of tissue and fat.
Walking erect, astride,
Compact packages of meat on bone....
Blood-bags! Disgusting, in fact.
So many of us purposeless, hardly influencing
A thing, only really preventing the odd raindrop
From saturating the ground.
That shirt hanging there,
Threaded by foreign children's hands
Entirely for the purpose of dressing
Some pasty, overfed structure of a being
By all indications considered their better
Because of where they live
And where they wear it.
That shirt hanging there,
Askance,
Asking me for something.
I don't know why I bothered to hang it there
To rid it of its wrinkles.
I should sooner have hung myself up
To get these interminable lines out.

A Sort of Torch Song, *Sameen Shakya*

Uncomfortably embraced we lay in bed
with the moon light slipping in through sundry drapes
without a word or a whisper we then move away
and the sheets form us a border just by itself
while the wind cuts through the silence of the night
the only music our breath in dissonance
the aftermath of an act not innocent but
now stuck together, what's left to say?

Should I leave? I stutter even in thoughts
should I stay? Only the fear of being rude
has rooted my body bound to this bed
I turn my head and hers is turned as well.
Speak!

And she does, with a voice delayed
as if a great truth her lips just might leak, of
“my first lover and I, in a night like this,
found each other and made love underneath
a ballast of promises, which made it sweet,
I believed them all, which made it sweet,
we later soured but whenever the moon
shines just like this, and the night is quiet,
I can’t help but think of him.” I, shocked,
found my heart in a bind and reached for
her face and stole a kiss, nevermind
she might have made it up
(her voice sincere sounded)
she might have made it up to
get me to leave but I couldn’t
my heart in a bind, in that moment I’d find
a deep crevasse within which laid a line
that was tugged when she talked of a lover lost
and out leapt something that desired her all the more
knowing her heart held a torch for some other soul.



lead me out of the darkness;, a.d.



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