

An abstract painting with a complex, swirling composition of colors including yellow, green, purple, and pink. The background is a light cream color. A prominent, dark, gnarled tree branch or root extends from the bottom right towards the center. The overall style is expressive and textured, with visible brushstrokes and organic, flowing forms.

ISSUE 2

The Field
of Enna

Ode to Dionysus

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EDITORS' NOTE

We feel so privileged to continue our journey by publishing unique and beautiful masterpieces in our second issue. It has not been a smooth ride, with technical issues left, right and centre—but we got here in the end, and we'd like to send out a warm thank you for everyone's patience. This journal is our passion project and we wholeheartedly love being able to showcase creations of all shapes and sizes.

This issue's theme is centred around Persephone and her mother Demeter. As with the last issue, we allowed the theme to be open to interpretation. While every piece in this issue is individually divine, some of them contain content warnings, so please read with caution. We hope that you enjoy this issue as much as we enjoyed compiling it!

Love,

The Editors.

CONTRIBUTORS

In order of works

[Cryptid Parke](#)

Cryptid Parke is a college junior studying creative writing and editing & publishing. Growing up in the Midwest instilled Cryptid with a fierce love of the strange and lonely, and they can now be found leaving ghosts of themselves in every place that they visit. When they are not busy haunting strange clearings in the woods, Cryptid is hard at work leaving drafts half finished, rotting on the kitchen floor, and cuddling with their cats. Their work has been published or is forthcoming in 'How Do I Put This?: An Anthology,' 'Buried Within: A Haunting Anthology,' and the Windward Review.

[Casey Dickinson](#)

Casey is an aspiring writer who surrounds himself with creativity within his various Lego sets, books, and games. Each one inspiring him through his youth, and now, watch on as he attempts to craft new worlds. They set him on the journey to write, reminding him of the power of his mind.

[Ríobhca Ní Cíonnaigh](#)

Ríobhca is novelist and short-story writer from Ireland. Most of their works are themed around mythologies, the majority of such being Irish mythology. She believes that this dying

mythology should have its beauty shared with the world, and incorporates as much of it as she can in her works. When not writing, Ríobhca enjoys animal care and research, as well as a good long walk in the woods for inspiration.

[Angela Arnold](#)

Angela Arnold lives in Wales. Published in print and online, in the UK and elsewhere, she is also an artist, creative gardener and environmental campaigner. First collection *In Between* (Stairwell Books, 2023).

[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 *Querencia Press*, *Midnight Fawn Review*, *THINK Journal*, *Poetry as Promised* and *Sublimation*. Meanwhile, her visual art, mainly photography and self-portraiture, is or will be featured in *Small World City*, *SCAB*, *RESURRECTION Mag* and *Bleating Thing Magazine*. Tumblr & Twitter: *@godstained*

[Danielle McMahan](#)

Danielle McMahan's work has appeared in various literary journals. Forthcoming poems will appear in *The Woolf*, *Mollusk Lit*, and *Alice Says Go F*ck Yourself*, amongst others. She is editor of the engine(idling. Instagram: *@dehm000*).

[Diego Calle](#)

Diego Calle (he/him) is a poet from Toronto, Canada. He studies English and cinema at the University of Toronto and works as a part-time library assistant. He spends most of his free-time reading and writing, and loves classical poetry and mythology. If interested, his work has been featured in The Woodsworth Review and is forthcoming in Aôthen Magazine.

[Devon Webb](#)

Devon Webb is a Gen Z writer & editor based in Aotearoa New Zealand. Her award-winning work has been published extensively worldwide & revolves around themes of femininity, vulnerability, anti-capitalism & neurodivergence. She is an in-house writer for Erato Magazine, an editor for Prismatic Press, & a founding member of The Circus (@circuslit), a collective prioritising radical inclusivity within the indie lit scene. She can be found on Instagram, Twitter, TikTok & Bluesky at @devonwebbnz.

[John RC Potter](#)

John RC Potter is an international educator from Canada, living 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). Recent prose publications include “Letter from Istanbul” (The Montreal

Review) & “A Day in May 1965” (Erato Magazine); recent poetry publications include “From Vaisler Brothers to Tel Aviv” (New English Review”) & “Chiaroscuro” (Strangers and Karma Magazine). The author’s story, “Ruth’s World” (Fiction on the Web) was a Pushcart Prize nominee. His gay-themed children’s picture book, The First Adventures of Walli and Magoo, is scheduled for publication.

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[Peter Mladinic](#)

Peter Mladinic’s most recent book of poems, The Homesick Mortician, is available from BlazeVOX books. An animal rights advocate, he lives in Hobbs, New Mexico, United States.

[Maudie Briant](#)

Maudie Bryant is a multidisciplinary artist from the Pacific Northwest now living in the Southern USA. Her writing often explores the depths of human experience, surveying the disquiet that lurks beneath the surface. A graduate of the University of Louisiana Monroe with a M.A. in English, Maudie’s work has appeared or is forthcoming in Anodyne Magazine, Susurrus, and Spellbinder.

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[Rian Moneypenny](#)

My name is Rian Moneypenny and I'm a teacher and musician living in Campobello, South Carolina. I received my BA from College of Charleston with a concentration in creative writing and am an MFA candidate at Converse College. I also just completed my 12-18 Orientation Course for AMI Montessori and am devoted to furthering my study of the Montessori methodology. When I'm not teaching, I spend my evenings playing local gigs around the Upstate of South Carolina and trying to learn "Pink Pony Club" by Chappell Roan. I'm also a huge fan of Madeline Miller's interpretations of Greek mythology, Larry McMurtry, and Emily Wilson's translation of The Odyssey.

[Sarah Das Gupta](#)

Sarah Das Gupta is an English teacher from Cambridge, UK who has also lived and taught in India and Tanzania. She started writing a year ago, after an accident limited her mobility. Her work has been published in many magazines and anthologies in over fifteen countries.

[Helen Gwyn Jones](#)

Best of the Net finalist 2024 (thanks to @Acropolis Journal), three time nominee Helen Gwyn Jones started recording her world at the age of 8 when she bought a Brownie camera from her sister, something which has become a lifelong passion. A collector of the past (hers and other

people's) she likes nothing better than muted images of imperfection. Oft found poring over Welsh grammar books when not photographing drains or rapturing over rust. Recently published at Heimat, Feral, Transients, Lunar, Quibble, Paddler, Moss Puppy, Storyteller's Refrain, Full House Literary. Instagram: @helengwynjones. Twitter: @helengwynjones. Facebook: Helen Gwyn Jones
Photographic Artist

[Mirjana Miric](#)

Mirjana M. are a digital artist and writer from Belgrade, Serbia. Their work focuses on exploring the juxtaposition of various elements through mixed media of photography, double exposure, textures and light. Their work most often explores concepts of duality and has appeared in "Gulf Stream Literary", "The Good Life Review", "waxing & waning", Vocivia, Broken Antler, Spellbinder, New Limestone Review magazines and other places. They authored 3 poetry collections. You can see more of their work at their blog olorielmoonshadow.wordpress.com or get in touch on Twitter (@selena_oloriel) and Instagram (cyanide_cherries)



FICTION

The Tower of Lies, *Cryptid Parke*

Like most animals, I was born bleary-eyed and shivering. My first steps wobbled, and my senses became overloaded by all the colors and smells I had yet to encounter. My mother was by my side, and she reached out to steady my trembling form. Before I could even gather my footing, I was hoisted up into my mother's shining tower that she had built to keep us safe.

As I grew, my eyes cleared, my steps steadied, and I became accustomed to the light of the sun and the scent of the earth. My skin stretched across my bones and my hair grew long and wavy. My face shaped and matured, a perfect mirror of my mother. I watched each day as she lifted glittering stones into place, her hands cracked and bleeding from the toils of her labor. The tower grew as I did, reaching higher and higher up into the clouds until the earth below was nothing more than a speck beneath us.

When the air became so thin that I could hardly breathe, I asked my mother why she continued her labor even as it brought us pain. She sneered at me and sent me to collect more stones. My stones were rough and jagged, nothing like the shining masterpieces that my mother crafted. She would never say it, but I knew my mother resented my stones.

The tower became a place of solitude and suffocation. Any move I made ran the risk of disrupting the precarious balance that had been established. Amongst it all, my mother crept about like a cheetah, searching for imperfections day in and day out. She never seemed to rest, always alert

and attentive to any change in the sparkle of her stones. I watched as she wore herself to the bone with paranoia.

As I grew older, I watched as the foundation of the tower strained under the pressure of my mothers glittering stones. As cracks began to appear and pieces fell to the ground, I did my best to fill the gaps with my own stones. No matter what I did, my stones stood stark in the walls, hideous and *other* compared to my mother's. While neither of us could admit it, we both knew that it was only a matter of time before the tower caved in on itself from the pressure.

It was one of my stones that did us in. The tower creaked and groaned as my mother placed another one of her stones, and before either of us could move to fix it, one of my old fractured stones finally gave out. Cracks spread like spiderwebs, spiraling and reaching across the walls of our tower. I watched as blood seeped from the cracks in the glittering stone, dripping down the wall and seeping into the carpet. My mother moved frantically, desperate to patch the fractures in her beloved tower before they could disrupt the stability of the foundation. But the damage was already done, and I was forced to my knees as our tower shook.

One moment, we were soaring high above the world, safe and secure in the tower my mother built. The next, we were falling, plummeting down to earth like birds whose wings had been clipped too short. As we fell, the tower fell with us. My mothers glittering stones were shining brighter than I had ever seen them before. I squeezed my eyes shut as my body returned to the earth that it had been separated from for so long.

When I woke in the rubble, I found myself reborn as a stumbling fawn. My mother was nowhere to be seen, and I was left to fend for myself. My mothers stones laid around me, dull and fractured. With bleary eyes and shaking legs, I hoisted myself up. I flinched against the bright rays of the sun that threatened to blind me, and my stomach turned as the scent of wet earth filled my lungs.

With only the memory of my mother left to guide me, I picked up a stone, and laid the foundation for a new tower.

A Mother's Patience, *Casey Dickinson*

The field of battle bloomed with new life.

Roses blossomed in the once barren wastes, painting the land in hues of red, which glowed under the burning sky. Hands, hardened from work, yet graceful, brushed along the petals of the flowers as she walked toward the castle in the distance. Her footsteps echoed in the silent expanse. She held her head high, with golden eyes focused on the approaching structure. The palace was intimidating, black stone built up each of the walls, parapets, and towers. A subtle red glow glinted through every window, shifting in shade but never in colour.

She paused before the entrance. An intricate arch loomed over her, with depictions of death marked along the curve. Famines, natural disasters, and wars only began to scratch the surface. Each image shifted under her gaze, as if they felt the tension she carried, and did not wish to get in her way.

The entire realm silenced as she walked up the steps, each one reverberating like thunder through the quiet. The heavy wooden doors burst open under the force of her shove. She paid no mind to the damaged wood she left in her wake. Instead, she followed the obsidian carpet forward, until she passed under the threshold, entering a deserted hall.

She strode across the empty throne room, each footstep echoing with determination. A man, adorned in his stygian crown and onyx robes descended the dais to meet her with open arms.

“Where is my daughter?” She boomed, shaking the walls.

Each step she took grew heavier, and more dire, cracking the stone she stood on.

“Safe,” he replied with a silken voice. “You need not worry.”

Her golden eyes burned at his response. Barely two sentences had been spoken, yet they were enough for her to deem their conversation over. A glint of gold was all that could be seen as she revealed a golden scythe, slicing across the man’s throat with ungodly rage.

The body dropped to the ground.

Blood rushed from the wound, spilling out onto the cold stone floor. Decay sets in immediately, morphing the flesh into soil, saturated by the ichor. It took mere seconds for roses to blossom; life blooming where another had ended.

She dropped to her knees.

Tears fell from her cheeks, splattering onto what was once the body, and from each droplet, hyacinths sprouted, breaking through the flowerbed of red. A hand was placed onto her shoulder, and she reacted quickly, in the same way. A single arc up from her scythe, separating the head from the body.

Another patch of roses sprouted from the corpse.

“The field of roses outside is beautiful, but must you keep killing me?” Spoke the voice of the man she’d killed, stood to the side of her this time, just out of reach. “I just wish to talk.”

“So long as my daughter is forced to reside here, I shall kill you as many times as it takes for her to be returned to me.” She said, shaking under the rage that had been festering within her.

“She is safe. She is cared for.” He continued. “Right this very moment she tends to her garden. I never thought anything would grow here, yet she has managed to bring life while surrounded by death... she gets that from you.”

“Do not try to placate me.” She spat at the man, the scythe in her hand glinting again in warning.

“I mean no offence.” He spoke, circling her with his steps. “I just wished you had sent word first, before you came all the way down here on a wasted journey.”

“A wasted journey?” She said, sounding insulted, looking up at the man for the first time. Tears were slowly descending down her cheeks. “It is not a wasted journey. I shall reclaim my daughter.”

“And I would bear no issue with that. Were it not for the seeds she has already consumed.”

The woman’s face darted towards the man, now standing behind her. Her body stood and followed in turn, marching toward the man. Reaching out, she clutching his robes, bringing his face in line with her own.

“Seeds?” She seethed, knowing what he was insinuating but wanting to hear it from him.

“Pomegranate–”

“How many?” The woman said with an unsettling quiet tone.

“Only four.”

“Only four?” Her teeth grinding like a flour mill.

She lifted the man, using pure strength. His legs dangled, and yet he remained unfazed by her actions, as if it was a mere inconvenience that he was just waiting to be over. Tears continued to fall down her cheeks, dripping onto the cold stone and morphing into hyacinths.

“Would you be so kind as to let me down? You cannot do anything for her now.” He asked, sounding more concerned over the creases she was putting into his robes.

“You tricked her. Took her from under my watch. Entrapped her with your seed and you expect me to let it be? I will not leave here until she is back with me.”

“You are more than welcome to stay. Although, you do have duties to attend to. Do you not? Surely, you would not ignore them?” He smirked. Even as he dangled mid-air under her hold, his confidence still persisted as though he had the upper hand.

“The duties you speak of, are in no way comparable to the safety of my daughter.”

“Very well.” He spoke, before vanishing from her hands.

Reappearing before the throne across the room, he took a moment to straighten out his crumpled robes.

“I do hope you enjoy your wait.” They were the last words he uttered to her, before he made his leave. He abandoned the woman in the empty throne room, leaving her to fester in her loneliness. The silence returned, encompassing her. It forced its way down her throat, threatening to choke her. She made no noise as she sobbed– silenced by loss. She knelt before the bed of roses and hyacinths, gazing into them as a reminder of her daughter. She hoped her child was in the garden the man had spoken of, staring into her own flowers and thinking of her mother, waiting for the day they could be reunited and leave. Four seeds for four months. Four months she’d be waiting, wilfully ignoring her duties. It was what had to be done. She couldn’t complete what she needed to do without her child there with her.

She sighed.

“Persephone. My child...I will wait for you.”

The Devil Came Down to the Valley, *Ríobhca Ní Cionnaigh*

Blood leaking, mouth dripping. Standing atop the corpses of countless, claws slick with lost life. He took lives, too many lives, but even then, it was never enough. Blood leaking, marks of desperate reaches for survival littering his body. He wore them like trophies.

And an Angel.

Swooping overhead, brilliant like the moon, pristine in all forms. Blessed then was his self-made graveyard, and enlightened did he find himself. War incarnate, and the heavens most wondrous angel still saw the broken Halo that hung around his head.

“Broken, but can be mended in gold,” Was what he said.

He believed him. Everything could be mended once what was remained. If it remained.

He tore that broken Halo from his head when his angel lay strewn on the ground. His soul felt pure. Too pure, for what he was about to do. Heaven needed a Crusader, and by his name of power, that is what he would do.

They took him away from him. Tried to strike him down. A God could not die, did they not know this? A god of war, god of vengeance. Their golden hides would be rent with the wrath of a raging god, and he hoped they found solace in their final hours.

Golden and bright, and yet their blood was still black with their prejudice. They took him from him. Hid him. Such a brilliant soul was not meant to be hidden from the world. After light followed a shadow, and this shadow wished to consume all.

He practiced honour during battles. The valiant last stand of a titan, he respected its splendour and wisdom. He did not take those lives needlessly. But these, there was no room for honour. No room for respect. They had shown his Angel none, and the Devil had already fallen.

He tore them apart, all in the name of his Angel. He sank his fangs deep, savoured their blood. Vengeance was sweet. They stared at him in horror, and he loved it. *Witness me!* He thought. *Speak of the Devil and he shall appear.*

His blood red wings were stained black from their sacrifice. He tore down their offense, bludgeoned his way through their defence. He marched on, until it was down to the Devil and the Almighty

She provided a good fight; her fangs making his skin itch and burn. He tore her flesh. Her wings went first, and the Almighty was stripped of her flight. She howled in rage, but never backed down. Her Kingdom was all but ruins, and she knew she would now breathe her last. She drew back, black blood staining her marvellous floors. He stood tall, and with a loud voice, said:

“I am Mortuus, and Hell hath no fury like the Devil scorned.”

A flash of his claws, and the Almighty fell.

He left Heaven in its ruins. Only one Angel remained, and the Devil had a pact to make.

The journey to his resting place was slow. Agonising. Seeing the body, even more so.

“My Angel,” He whispered. “Heaven has failed you. Let me save you, as you did I.”

He willed his energy forth, and the blood from the fallen sang. They would fulfil a purpose they had never dreamed of. They sang in anguish, desperate to escape the pull of the Devils torrent.

He pushed pulled, severing his soul to give to his Angel. A dual reflection of himself, light and dark, good and evil. He was sorry that his Angel would never see his Halo mended, but he needed not for it. His Angels heavenly Light was more than enough.

Wind whipped around his face and the ground trembled. Flowers bloomed around the Fallen Angel. He was not surprised that his horrible creation would give his Angel something so beautiful. Ugliness could not touch his Light.

Soon, the corpse was no more. Enveloped in an eternal tomb of red tulips and white roses. His Angel did not deserve to see what had become of his first Vessel. But now...

His graveyard thrummed in glee. Death, turned to life.

“Caelestis,” He breathed. “Come back to me, my sweet Light.”

He did.

And oh, how the Aurora was beautiful.



POETRY



My Lovely Bones, *Angela Arnold*

Harvested from my bed of earth,
brushed free of a long
slumber – wiped of history,
speculated over –
one day you'll have found me

and then you'll ask your programme
to provide a crop of new-
old muscles, attached just here and
there, see, like so, and I'll stand
re-revealed . Re-ensouled,
down to the programme's prompt
of twinkley eyes (blue, sure to be,
the shreds of DNA will have testified)
and a naff approximation
of (dated) hair style.
You'll truly have me then.

Right now, I'll hang on to
this virginity,
this inability
to render freely what's
already spoilt, ripped from me
by force.
My far-future husband will not be
a menace of a father's brother, a witless
father, father to a knowing brother's snigger.
He will not stifle cries when my body
is never, in all his time, found.

He is watching even now, already
stroking my lovely bones.
Even now, he, *you* may be
tenderly considering how to fill
the cradle of my pelvis
with a harvest

of translucent-green grapes
and, sweetly, place a glow of ripe berries
where my eyes can no longer see.

Fusion, *Angela Arnold*

He whittles at time minute by
weed-pulling minute – not that he'd rather

not be here, drawn day after day
to feeling her close and clear,

the small shape of her,
peremptory stance of her, laid to something

that was never going to be rest.
Not for a gale of a soul like that.

He pulls, he mutters, checks the time.
The earthy grasp of her,

of here – fusion of elements –
has him firmly by the hand.

He observes his fingers as they wander
from fleeting plant to slow watch,

and back. Much of that: back.

Doing Undone Sleep, *Angela Arnold*

Simply, like a thief, break into the night.
Step by step by second turned hour; and another.
Do this as if
letting yourself. Do this despite
the dead one still breathing
in your bed, reminding you at every
turning over
and turning over
to switch off his light in your eyes.

And still you can't obey
such airy prompts.
Not when the news blares on, on mute,
the world's boxed pain only grating.

Sleep will continue burning
in the furthest imagined future where
Joe will be just a sound
a tired mouth makes, on occasion;

where your own name
will finally start to brighten,
making dark again
possible.
Sleep doable,
probable,
unbearable.

Greta's Chair, *Angela Arnold*

When you offered it, in exchange,
I forget what exactly for, there wasn't
a murmur of *that*, nothing
but your dust-ruffling energy
and (as if to bear properly witness) sun.

No inkling, then, of your noisily unwilling, shrunk, hopelessly
riddled going, your children's seed-wreck ruin, husband's
long before last ditch flight from a stick-insect of a howling
fighter (no gift for tears, not then, not ever) and a prize bunch
of cowering friends barely present at your last unbrave –
some have said – denial.

We did a swap, then, simple:
one of our many (chocolate-binge!)
gigglesmiths' transactions.
Life, stuff 'n' everything
all present and correct,
no complications.
Sun-squint; laughter.

Now it stands here, somehow
sentry: crowned with the lightest pile of the maybe,
one day, readable. Still hovering
between dust and an attempted opening.

Inverno: A Lament, *a.d.*

After Louise Glück

[CW: death mention, allusions to rape]

I.

At first, the earth was doused
in spring. Nature did not wither
or get claimed by rime's
impartial mouth. Now, the flowers die
just as the daughter dies, with each lapse
into her husband's stalagmite bed.

Fate can be as subtle as the snapping
of a stem. You gather the abducted
buds in the warmth of your palm,
unaware. Soon,
it will be your turn.

II.

The event occurs
almost as a karmic act: the deflowering of the land,
the deflowering of the self.

When the earth splits
is also when daughterhood
splits.
Spring will ease the pieces
back together, but they will never quite fit
the same way.

III.

Winter starts as a whisper
of fatherly violence.
The field, suddenly barren, quivers.
Nothing remains beyond the screams
swallowed into the silence
of the god.

IV.

The descent, like youth,
is transitory. Here,
the darkness feels almost
like a balm, it cocoons
the mouth from screaming.

When the daughter is gone,
the mother punishes the earth
that couldn't keep her. This is one way
to deal with suffering: mold it
into self-immolation.

No amount of pain inflicted on the self
will dull the agony endured
as a mother.

How long until grief becomes
its own object, becomes a stand-in for the daughter
despite her bargained return?

V.

Initially, the rescue is a relief. It is after conviving
with your body that you notice its deficiency.
The nacreous film of death falls like a shroud
on the immensity of the world, covers
even your eternal mother.

What is the purpose of being torn from death
when you know it will win you again?
At a certain point the mind resigns. With each sojourn
you feel your grasp on yourself slacken.

Still, you must value what you have been granted;
for a while, in the company
of your regained shadow, you get to relive who you were:
a beloved daughter—unsoiled and deathless.

VI.

The leaves are slowly turning: amber, ochre, madder.
Your mother keeps reminding you that you are alive.
Your mind keeps remembering: *not for much longer*.

VII.

There is no capacity for the pain mothers can swallow
and still survive. Daughters, too,
endure this ability.

Once again, death will come
unabided. Death, like a father,
will tear the girl
from her mother's arms.

The women are transient; death
the only constant. As long
as the seasons turn, the scene
keeps being recited.

VIII.

The meaning of all this strays
past the edge of the scarred field, hovering
placidly out of reach.

dear forsythia, *Danielle McMahon*

lay me down
& bed me in black soil
grow wild with me, forsythia,
& stretch the fruits of my soul

this yarn i spun, a tangle
of yellow starbursts,
a knot of hair,
& the songs of mourning rain

lay me down, forsythia,
to bed, to bed, a fertile copse
wound round the boughs of giants

Pleides, *Diego Calle*

When Kore maketh her slow descent down with a sigh,
Begin the night sky to showeth
Atlas
All he has lost
In its splendid and sorrowful type

Creusa of Corinth, *Diego Calle*

The princess dying there alone,
Save mirror, carcanet, crown, and robe. . . .

 Came meekly in the little ones:
 We've come to give gifts from the Sun,
Where naught but joy and gold is known,

And all dance gay 'fore Phaethon's throne.
She saw and smiled—the thought to own
Divinity! . . . different boon won:
 The princess dying.

See couchèd poison take its hold:
'Neath burning skin, how her soul rolls;
 Fire! the fire has begun—
 A person turning into none,
But a puddle of gore and gold!
 The princess dying.

A VIOLENCE OF LOVE, *Devon Webb*

[CW: themes of misogyny, toxic relationships]

Was it a kind of violence, this love?
Did you sharpen my heart yourself
& fall on it crying victim
did you only ever see it as a weapon
instead of the healing I intended
Oh, am I the villainous martyr of the romantics
am I the scourge of transparency
was my openness a prison to you
picking locks like our intimacy
took all your agency away
Did you appropriate sincerity for your indie-pop songs
as if you never cared
as if you were not the one
always coming back when I had left
Have you ever forced a smile as you danced
to a past lover's victorious resentment of you
as if you have to feign an ego
to fit his narrative
Was my love a sin
was it a bad dream for you
& if so why didn't you go when
everything was hurting less
why didn't you stay away
Was this love nothing but pain
nothing but trading hits
did you ever listen to the things I said
did you ever learn?
Because if there was any less love there
would've been silence
& with your songs stuck in my head I think
maybe that would've been best
if I just turned away & stayed there &
didn't keep overflowing with forgiveness
you didn't deserve my lessons &

you didn't deserve me
you & your fucking misogyny
I was too good to be your muse
we were never in tune
because you projected onto me until I was your enemy
when I just wanted to be your friend
Don't you see that the poetry
was the only honour I could pretend that you gave me
& now I'm the bad girl in your story
oh such a burden for the boy who's trying to find himself
as if he is not buried
as if I was not trying to offer you a hand & pull you up
but drag me down to your little hell babe
I've learnt how to live with the worst.

SEX THERAPY, *Devon Webb*

[CW: themes of sexual/body trauma (largely metaphorical, not graphic)]

I think I need sex therapy
my body isn't working
my body is a dried-up husk
old shell of what it used to be
my body isn't... connected
it doesn't get the message from my brain
it doesn't know how to... move
how to incite the action it used to embrace
I need to relearn my body
I need to nurture my body
I need to undo my body
& look inside
& put it back together
I need to heal my trauma
I need to accept what stays
I need to navigate old battlefields
minefields
graveyards
& bring life back to this place
I need to plant flowers in my body
I need to write odes to my body
I need to sing to my body
& coax it out from the corner it hides in
I need to love my body
as it is
shy. broken. changing.
growing. warm. emerging.
wiser than it was,
if not so effortless.
my body is innocent
I tell myself again & again
my body
is innocent
like a child

wounded by apathy & abandonment
like a child
with memories it will take to the grave
but which peers out from around its corner anyway
& steps tentatively forward
eager to live,
even if afraid
shuffling awkwardly
until it remembers how to play
until it remembers
the way dancing liberates shame.

SNAKE, *Devon Webb*

The serpent tells me
passion is a sin
& in my femininity I must be
flawless purity
what sort of woman would I be
on my knees in the mud
feasting on decay
am I not allowed bad days
are you, a snake
morally superior
as you slither & hiss
in the ears of those
desperate for your venom
am I such a bad bad girl
for trying not to starve
shall I pull
your one long body
from my throat I
do not want you
down here
weighing my ethics
against your egress
oh, I wish you
disappeared better
I wish you really left
I had a garden
& you were the rot.

ASH & TAR, *Devon Webb*

You have lingered on my lips like tar
but if there's one habit I'm to break
let it be you
your ash, your decrepit remnants
clogging up my throat
let me expel you
how I would love to breathe clean air
instead of choking on you
instead of coughing up a lung
I'm too young
to love something
so dead.

Love's Labour's Lost: A Poetic Trinity, The Haunted and the Hunted,
John RC Potter

Shadows dance across the room
as I walk upon this dusty floor,
mere spectres that come too soon
and make soft noises on the door.
In my eyes, there are now reflected
the elusive images of another lover
and the reality of love deflected,
with nothing left for me to discover.
I am everyone, I am the haunted,
knowing truths that were never spoken;
I do not need what I've always wanted,
with faith not shattered, just broken.

Mere silence is better than any lie,
it only damages you and you alone;
death comes not only to those who die,
it is life that is the great unknown.
Black on black, those eyes of yours,
drawing in the body with the soul:
eyes that have closed a thousand doors
and threaten to consume me whole.
You are the hunted, you are everyone,
pursued only by your words, your past;
if I can separate the doer from the deed,
the future will be more infinite, more vast.

The haunted and the hunted are we,
now inheriting our own sad legacy;
change the ending before the ink dries,
let love live, not experience its demise;
and if love can take away the eternal night,
I will lift you up to touch the forever light.

Love's Labour's Lost: A Poetic Trinity, The Jailor and the Jailed, *John RC Potter*

A man's mind can be but a prison
and he both jailor and the jailed;
we can only begin to find success
when we accept where we failed.

A man's past is the road behind him,
it is not to be travelled over again;
it lies back of us to shed some light
and to lead us away from more pain.

Be true to yourself and you are the truth,
you are in charge of your own destiny;
the heart will guide you on this quest
so, you'll be no self-fulfilling prophecy.

For all of us life is but a well-trod road,
it can lead you back home or astray;
it is a tired path but one so true,
falter not, it will show the way.

A man's mind is his own mansion
and he the one keeper of the key;
turn the lock and open the door
and it is your future you will see.

Love's Labour's Lost: A Poetic Trinity, Walking in the Shadow of
Someone's Soul, *John RC Potter*

All this sadness and all that sorrow,
all those secrets holding off tomorrow;
making this journey without being quite whole,
while walking in the shadow of someone's soul.

Now give me respite and give me peace,
let unanswered questions now surcease;
we were blind, sightless, without vision,
just two lost souls in near collision.

But wisdom is now so very bittersweet,
cooling down the passion after the heat;
lies soon turn love into a block of ice,
what once allured can no longer entice.

Let it down gently and let it just go,
see which way truth will then flow;
give in to it softly and give it all back,
then seize the moment, plan your attack.

Take no prisoners, make no new demands,
tie down your heart but never your hands;
fortify your soul, make it ever so strong,
and never again let so much be so wrong.

Love is only for the lucky and for the few,
many has it wrestled to the ground and slew;
hear my words: never again will I play the fool,
the only dance I will dance will be to duel.

My heart will be a castle built on so much rock,
love will still have a key but without a lock;
and I will know when the bell begins to toll,
I am walking in the shadow of someone's soul.

Posture, *Peter Mlandinic*

1

The police chief of Charlotte,
on TV, speaks into the mics
about the crazy shooting
that happened there yesterday.

He's straight and tall, with good posture.
Do I have good posture?
I'm not sure. I sit up straight,
but can't step out of my body to see

myself, to say yes or no.
Do you? Can the world be those
with good posture versus those without?
When I was teaching,

standing before a lectern,
a young man clearly
didn't want to be there, that showed
in his work, lack of effort more than

an inability. This was towards the end
of my teaching career. The classrooms
were tech friendly. Students
show topics from YouTube that we

discussed. This young man's,
on posture, drove home to all
in the room the importance of good posture.
The Charlotte police chief's is quite good.

2

It's the first of May.
If it's the beginning of the end
the final chapter, let it be filled
with upright things and creatures:

the aspen stands among aspens,
in oak shade the squirrel clutches a nut.
Let it be about the oak of today
and of yesterday, the oak on the hill,

(stanza break)

at the bottom, near the curb.
Let its sky be filled with chimneys
and its horizontals, streets, hedges
going green, stay as they are

as long as they're able, and the upright,
you and I as long as we're able.
Somewhere, a yellow pencil in a desk
drawer I can open, a pencil. I take up

space, like you. Each day I edge
nearer the ground. The oak
at the bottom of the hill, near the curb,
stands far from the aspens.

In the room next to mine a man
named Frank has a cardboard file box,
on its label, in magic marker cursive,
the signature Anne Sexton.

Let the paper of this chapter contain
her line "a woman like that is not a woman
almost," and far from my room
and Frank's with its file box,

spires of an Episcopal church and far
from those, a meadow a woman
crosses with a calf behind her
in the cab of a pickup.

Of the Dead, *Peter Mlandinic*

His shrink told him not to worry
about things he could do nothing about:
famine, earthquakes, injustice, inequality.
His doctor told him to get a stent.

The ashes in his sister's garden
said put your ear to the ground, listen
before they were swept by time away
his ashes, so plain, as ordinary

as ashes in a bank of snow
he once looked out at from a window
of a train going into the city of the dead

to go to bars, walk around the plaza,
and if the weather cooperated
sit on a park bench, read the paper.

Demeter's Sigh, *Maudie Bryant*

In the shade of ancient oaks,
I unpack my sack lunch—
simple bread and cheese,
 a peasant's fare.
How they feasted on gilded lies,
heavy with assumed virtue.
Claimed heaven's blessing,
 yet encumbered by sin.
Hunger simmers, a silent rebellion.

But even gods, it seems, misspeak
a kind word for the ones misled.
 A child stolen,
 an oxymoron of hollow might.
The trees, with leaves whispering low,
calmly murmur, "Forgive them,
 for Man does not know."
Beneath a burning sky, I concede
a pardon on the fragrant breeze:
clemency for misguided kings.

Persephone's Refrain, *Maudie Bryant*

\\in the wrong season. We barter futures
for profits, hollow hopes. Spring's bloom
withers before Summer's rapid-fire
smoldering kiss, contour of a blistered planet.
She gasps through darkness, open, splitting
the pomegranate's blood-red heart, seeds
scattering to the floor, prolonging the hunger
for Winter's heart— a deafening roar.
I've spent all my coins, yet nothing arrives
where promises perish\\

Margaret, *Rian Money Penny*

(Grapes of Wrath/Frankenstein)

my Sister ripped pages
from books
two separate piles

some were salvaged and stored within
the bottom drawer of her dresser

others whispered crinkled conversation in the trash.

these i collected
misfits—rejects
i stapled them together
made my own book
read fractured text

anthology on leaving
FathersLoversMothersChildren
every sentence wrapped around
a memory of touch feel sound
what remained in its wake

i tried to locate the books she'd culled
expose a full vision
but grew tired of looking
tired of forcing narrative

serrated edges never returned smoothly to scarred spines.

they had become something else
after all

different animals
like the starving dogs
you drew as a girl

with crooked teeth and distended bellies

cages soldered to fit
frames.

* * *

(One Hundred Years of Solitude/Love Medicine)

i couldn't find the other cache.

she took that ink
when she tore out
south dakota

done with ghosts like me
who linger under chestnut trees
and wait—melting into scenery
pooling under feet
becoming familiar fjords

Dad gone
Brother moved
to the other side
of the country

a Mom who spoke only of little time
how seconds turned the world so small
she couldn't see it
any longer

i'm glad she left.

glad i burned her hunger and threw
the ashes in the mobjack bay

never reading
the story imagined
and the voices who made it breathe.

Abducted, *Sarah Das Gupta*

The fields are a kaleidoscope of flowers,
blushing roses, shy violets, drowsy scented hyacinths.
Happily, we pick pale primroses protected
by leafy fingers of green. Bright crocuses,
an exotic carpet from Susa or Babylon.
The sunlight gilds the petals,
this field of gold stretches to a blue horizon.
An exquisite stem of narcissi,
its sweet scent carried on the breeze,
suddenly springs up at my feet.
A perfect day to fill a lifetime of dreams.

An ugly scar. Now an open wound,
yawns open in front of me.
A golden chariot leaps from
the dark bowels of the deep earth,
drawn by two coal black horses.
Spirits of darkness; creatures of the underworld,
manes woven from the night air. Necks arched,
rearing; prancing, hooves flashing.
Hades; fearful god of the shadowy dead;
ruler of the tortures of hell,
with his strong arms,
pulls me up to sit beside him.
My screams of terror echo loudly,
'Demeter, Earth Goddess, Mother!'

Desolation, *Sarah Das Gupta*

Demeter mourns Persephone

She listened to the wind moaning,
crashing through the bare branches
of the dreary winter forests.
'Why do you grieve?'
No answer came from the desolate
storm or the wind's tears.
She looked out over the bleak ocean,
its waves thundering and broken
on the jagged rocks.
'Why do you moan?'
No response from the disturbed sea.
Nothing but the moonlight
painting the crests with silver.
Helios looks down, the divine watchman.
'What did you see, oh Helios?'
'I saw Persephone, she of the lovely ankles,
snatched by Hades, to the world of the dead.
Oh; Earth Mother, goddess of Nature,
she of the beautiful hair.'

My heart is broken.
In the sorrow of men,
I see my own suffering.
I wander in desolate places.
In the dark jungle, in dreary cities.
The grain is rotting in the earth,
the green shoots wither,
the granaries are empty.
In the olive groves,
the trees are barren.
No nightingales sing.
The food of the gods
to me, is poison.

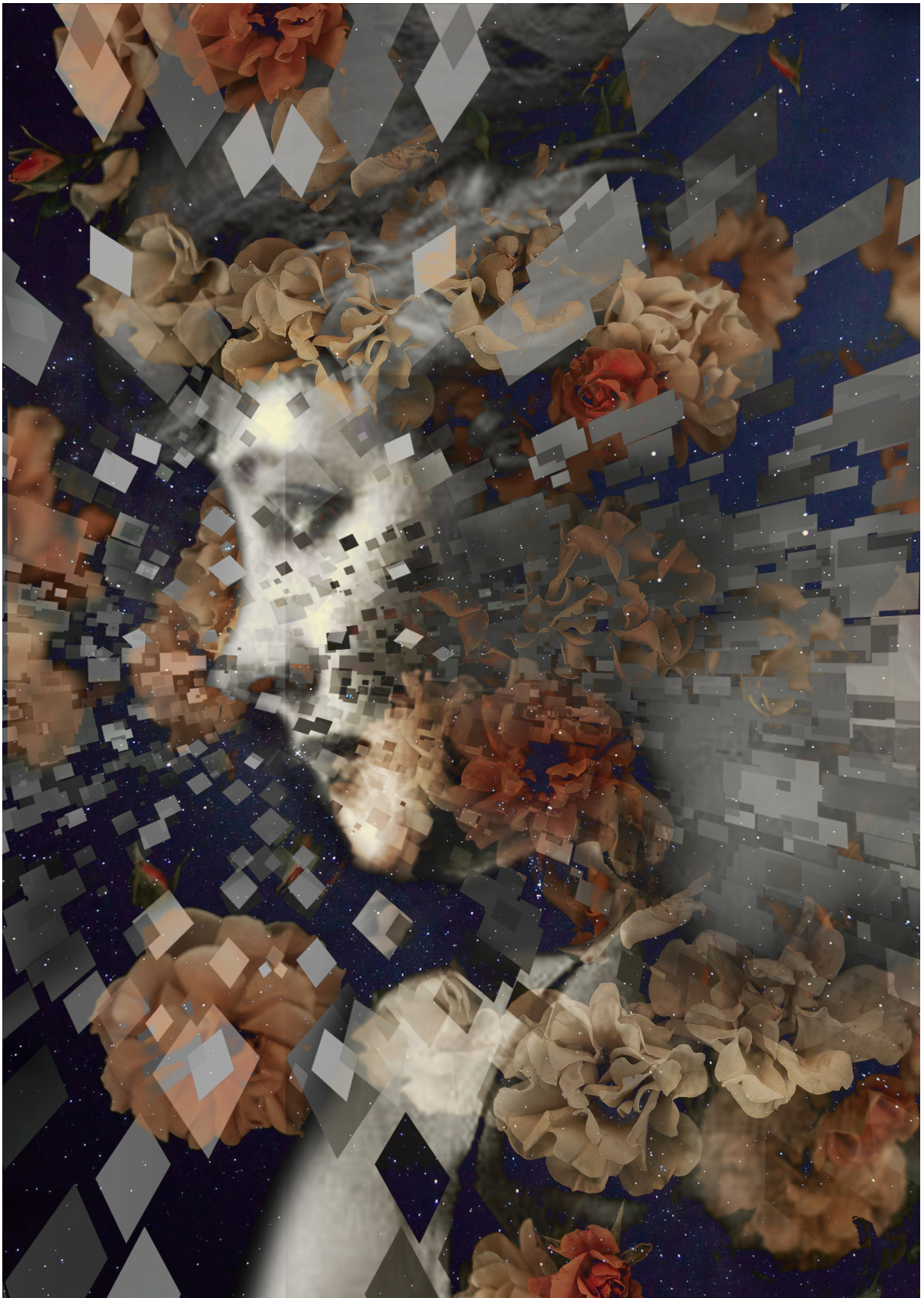


ART

PERSEPHONE BELOW, MOTHER ABOVE, *Helen Gwyn Jones*

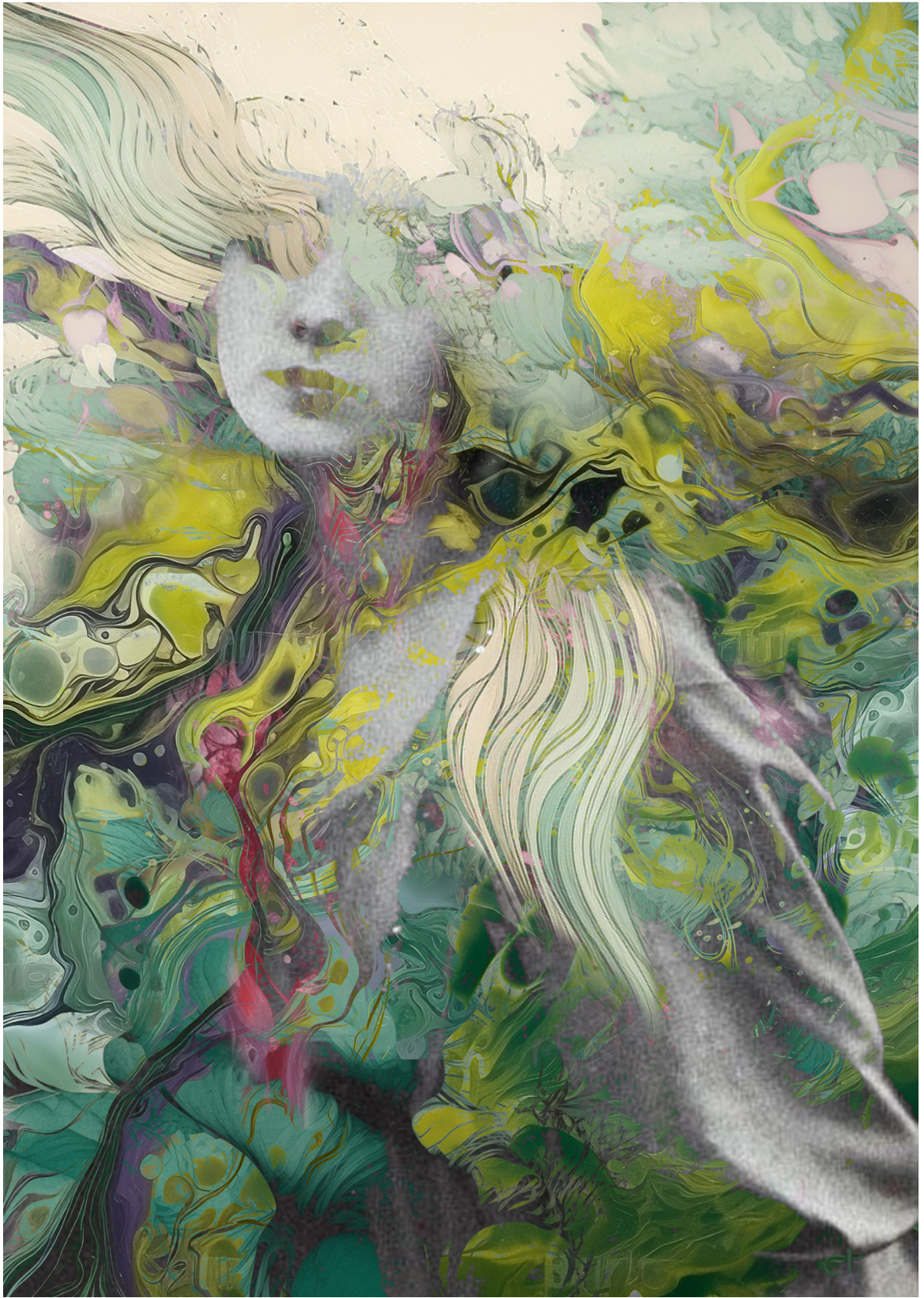


Visual Portfolio, *Mirjana Miric*











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