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Winter 2025, ISSUE NO. 3: ESTUARIES

**Graphic Design** 

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[WE WERE] ALIVE, THROBBING THROUGH ALL HER ESTUARIES, CRYING FOR JOY THROUGH THE MOUTHS OF ALL HER GULLS, AND THE NORTH WIND, WITH CONTRARY.

E.M. FORSTER

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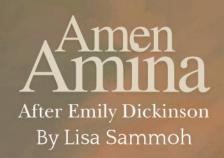
## Letter From The Editor

In its third Issue, Faoileánach Journal has selected fifteen writers at various stages of their writing careers to share a work related to estuaries. In English, an estuary refers to a partially enclosed body of water, brackish in nature, that flows into a larger body of water. Synonyms include a bay, the firth, a loch. In the Irish-Gaeilge, an inbhear is a masculine noun. My picture of estuaries is of planes as tiny ribbons of string unfurling, leading me back to my parents' in the north of Louisiana, little streams over the Red River flowing into the Mississippi, and then the Gulf.

The following poems are a wish, a postcard, a send-off, a return. In her beginning poem titled "Amen Amina, After Emily Dickinson," Lisa Sammoh writes: "Before my day put out / I saw". The last line in this issue, by Stephen Mead, seems to summarize Sammoh's and our collective details: "gain new mouths, & open back so wholly / gladness feeds gladness enough." These are visions of an estuary, up close or far away, leading back to the self. In this issue, we've chosen narratives of speakers watching and rewatching, reacting to water with feeling but without speaking, seeking with their souls as much as their eyes. Beauty lives in the everyday, and together these works read as an ode to wishing and hoping. The collective voice here finds gratitude in the bodies of water that move through our lives. We all have that one stream that is special to us.

Whether you read this collection as lessons in allowance or simply enjoy its beautiful, water-bedded language, I hope you find yourself, today, next week, or a month from now, on a dock or plane, near a river or ocean, taking the time to notice what leads.





Before my day put out –

I saw

white pelicans hazy dragonflies spotted seagulls

whizzing by sunspots
in my eye and I
wondered what starlight may have seeped
barely –

out of the blue to part the miracle at Sea; churning tides into air clear as white –

just so our breaths could fall and rise when swooping as the creatures do –

when they put their eyes over high objects too long see the countless rebirths of a setting Sun –

only from such meadows and mountains do they beckon, become, befit.

## Taxodium distichum

(bald cypress tree) by Lee Summers

Roots are the ropes we tie to Sand, if even to keep a slice Of a feathered pillow of Leaves above the biting tide, Even when metamorphized Into cotton mouth scales, eyes Amid turbid waters' shine.

And though the tide comes and goes, Our roots have tethered us home.

Maybe our feathers won't be
Restricted only to green,
Constricted to lowly beams
The brackish beaks of waves have
Preened until we're only clean
Stumps. Maybe a coterie
Of plumage will roam to us.

And while the birds land, take flight, Our leaves remain by their side.

What is certain is sunset
Will put our feathers to bed,
The ospreys' talons nested
Among branches desolate
Only to fishermen who
Tend to empty pots and nets,
Shells unaware of their end.

And though humans rise and fall, Our branches will carry on.



Waves occupied my tonsils
with tribulations.
Tripped on tides which
toppled my throat throttle.
Waves weighed me down
more than the times
I failed to become an
elementary school teacher.
Bled profusely in pain
during puberty and
banged my head on
middle school wallsblackouts by cycle day one.
Desired to be rescued from my misery.

After many anguishing floods,
I swore never to revisit my past.
Waves weakened me initially.
Servanthood served a ticket
to worry, an eviction notice.
I am a previous Pre-K aide,
a toilet scrubber, a floor mopper,
and a trash dumper. I was
called to help others.
Catch words. Consume them.
Reel them in. They will flip or flag.
Fulfillment is fundamental.
Tides accumulate in the wilderness.
Consider what the current state is.
Prevent the mind from drowning.



## SAINT BRIGID'S BIRD

## by Elzada James

The pied piper, in real life, is one of sand; she runs along with long salmon-colored legs and plucky black and white plumage. Flitting across the dunes,

a roilleach with petite feet fit for the finding of cockles and mussels, a beak wielded to mine deep in the marsh mud.

A sharp red eye pierces the sky, knowing full-well the dangers, blinking, that ill-wager

blinking, blinking,

beeping like a fire alarm's depleted battery.

She shrills a warning of all that could come,
and prepares her bed with blankets of seaweed.

Certainly, I am no fierce beauty,

no fire-hearted saint, no consolation for the breadth of this weary wading wake.

But if I too take off tearing down the beach, little bless'd bird, would you still catch me in the morning, and cover me in kelp, and tuck away the cold?

Would you shield me from this wayward world?



## Estuarine by Sylvia Kalina

### I. The Rite

I float on sudden flames Estuaries flowing forth Salt flushed fountains Irrigating I bathe Pearls trickling Thin streams slip away Fingertips, fluid flourishes Trace Floating edges Through the night Hushed breath clings The tongue Languid lullaby hum This luxurious sacrament Slow-dancing Press Of vast sustained Rhythm rising Suspension Of you And

#### II. The Code

Not mere fire's fever
But lunar albedo light
Ghost gaze grazes
Brine of sorrow
To cleanse this ruin
Softening the scar
Into sepulchre
The Kyphi
Liquid alchemy
Wound

Shadow-selves simmering still

Chronos-current

Washing lost words

That must wield

Memory

Forging

White weightless

Radiant core risen

Of what remains

And

Is

Truth

### III. The Legacy

Neither water's faint wish

Nor sea's secret cold

But brackish breath

Between—

Seamless, shivering sustain—

Silt of sorrow

Salt of sacrament

Woven into trine

Not heavy, but hung

On turn of tide

Elixir, electrifying current

Always moving

Beyond banks

Of us

This liturgical legacy

Precarious but fertile

For the waiting rise

Convergence

Not a conclusion

But a pulse

It seeks

Tempestuous taste

Together

## Reliquary

By Marianne Daigh

God is not a word God is a grunt

A basin

Of perpetual stink

Where the tide is always out

God is a former sea

Now mined for minerals

God is a left hand

Severed

Kept

Wrapped

Shrunk

At home under

**Echoing** 

Byzantine ceilings, no living

Person there, no worship

Only history, any kind

You like

## Am I A Current? by Alma M.

Drowning in red—a cut that bleeds green. Diffused in the void, molded in dream.

I am serrated and blunt, a cliff with teeth for ledges.

I absorb all light and project winged shadows along my edges.

I melt.

Dip me in violet rivers and let me be pulled into their swift currents. Lost in abstract movement— a field of flowers blinking.

Knock on wood to divert tragedy a bowl of rice for the spirits, a bowl of water for the hungry minds, pressing into detached dreams.

The waking world is stitched in fractures; the dream world, raised in resurrected moonlight.

I am a current blinking, whittled from edges and ripples becoming myself in movement,

an altered hiss, fused in red.

# if i know what love is

place where our love entwines.

our bodies criss-cross each other like a geometric patterned cocoon of linen blankets. fusion of soul. hearts all beating to the same soothing rhythm of the waxing and waning moon childyou make my life a clear night sky. in which galaxies of infinite stars are plucked and placed in the love light of your eyes. if I know what love is, it's because you've grown it in the chasms of my heart strings woven together on a life loom -ing in the vastness of our existence and born earth-side to remind me if it's true, that I can only bring one memory with me into the afterlifei will pick our sunday night slumber parties and the unparalleled

## POSTCARD FROM

## **POCCUA**|RUSSIA

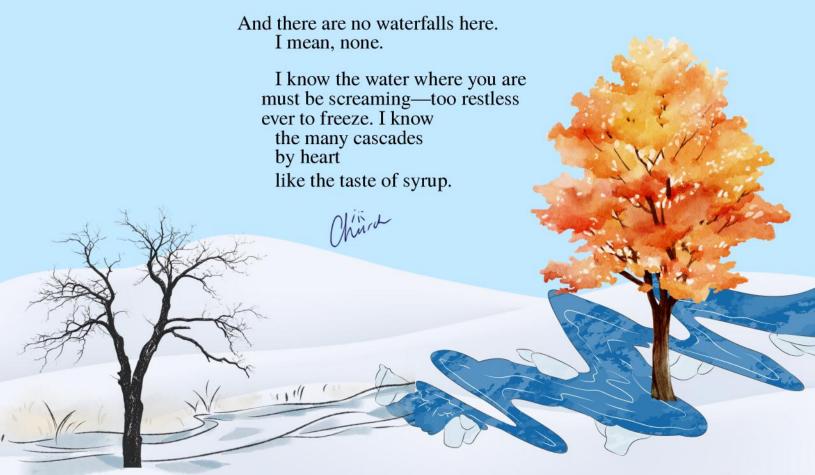
By Allisonn Church

### Mother,

The river is my companion here though she is frozen set in stone lit with electric lamplight cut through with countless bridges

so unlike the river we know ours sandy-bottomed lined in maple-trees whose sugared candies I brought for my host mother.

She loved them—
so exotic to her. It's hard to imagine
never tasting maple syrup,
not worshiping, each year,
the blood-red leaves of October.





# Home is a Stopover By Debdutta Pal

I used to camouflage where I'm from just to catch them stutter over assumptions, attempts to shove my generic skin accent, and hair into a forgettable box.

Validate me,
I screamed into storms
tell me I'll never belong
that it's not in my head—
competing to label paradoxes.

A house never belonged to its walls ripples of a river contained by cement an industrial town dropped by destiny where I meandered, a familiar stranger. How could I ever find it?

I breathed fire into icy gasps when my joints protest desperately rejecting the casts they possess.

Work on yourself don't waste your 20s balance the sweet and salt. I soaked in their advice until it smelled like my own and shed tissue like the personality test instructed.

Let it sediment, sat on its sides to admire birds of prey buried feathers in shallow graves because there were too many and my hollow arms no longer created concentric patterns.

# Home is a Stopover By Debdutta Pal

It came with time flashing like unseasonal warmth society's impact on one body through invisible systems they deny exist, in prominent form.

The view's cosmic from rock bottom steam swirling blue, fish don't expect you to perform measured movement in the mundane to remind you, you're evolving too.

What materializes at the end?
I wondered. I feared.
You stop swimming against the tide.
You become it.

When you conjure confidence, exist like you just are—
the loathing you feel is embanked by resolve for yourself, their eyes soften windows shatter into sand and you see your pain isn't isolated.

Home isn't always a place
its tether an intimate scrawl
tracing a line around wild bits of you
idly floating
adding what doesn't make sense
offering reflections of vast worlds,
one person
many dimensions
endless fathoms to plunge into
to discover untouched elements.







## A DOG SALMON (KW'A'LUXW)

By Jozef Cain



since i was a kid, cross-legged in the basement with a bong encased by my lap surrounded by sess circles, i have heard talk of chakras, where one of my friends told me to drop my rhymes, then "bless!" he said, as another held cannabis flower trimmed like pinecones up to her forehead, "open up your third eye" she said "the brahman pours shakti over your crown where it cascades down and meets kundalini as brackish spirit which flows through your spinal column to the base of your sacral space and spirals back toward your face—it's something you should embrace." "radical, dude," i said. it was psychedelic. like pelicans selling adidas at a market in new delhi for the paws of a black bear wearing red lumberjack with a hat to match in a city skyscraper felling... but i'm not a kid anymore. and i don't smoke anymore. and the futon wakes me with a slap in the face at the door, and i gotta go win the bread for the day forevermore, i make time every couple days, every now and then, to stop after work at this place where the ocean meets the englishman river bend. it has an indigenous name i can't pronounce, and i think about what the point is. so, what's the point; is the point this? does my life mean anything? is life anything but mean? or am i just a mistake that was made in a drive-in theatre—which is now a ruin of the nineties? i asked a.i. to recite me the history of this estuary because i avoid connections with humans because i don't want to feel uncomfortable or make them feel like i'm entitled to their time because i know i'm not. so i write drivel after my drive and make myself really little after a mental dive and take my time to let myself fizzle into my rhymes and break my brittle mind until i begin to count sheep as i climb into my privileged bedsheets in the pines of a big old nest of thistle and thorn and vine and i whisper to myself "we have survived."

## The War Goddess Gives Up AND GOES TO THE BEACH By Lauren WB Vermette

Yes, the crows are at it again: cawing, clawing air through their gravelled throats accompanying this battle-field cacophony is the tiniest violin weeping harder than a willow in a windstorm: that's saying something because willows are professional mourners and my heart could use the weight of sorrow,

hope's scaly entrails if only to teach these heavy bones the way of sky, branch: how the gaps of sky seen through uncut switches are the same, different as bloodlust,

childbirth— how strange to be dry-eyed on this salt-stung shore swept of mines full of families grilling hamburgers,

hot dogs; how strange that succor tastes both sweet, smoky while peace

clings like a fishbone in the back of my throat.



## OUR RECESSES

BY STEPHEN MEAD

Flow out, that backwash of blood, guts & fear with a tinge of acidic slime just to give the gleam enough threat except sometimes what gushes comes from deeper streams complete with the best spirit having shed all else, & then we are porous gorges, our gorgeous suns having survived equinoxes ad infinitum.

You know that sparkling cavern here now in a lake of your own making where tributaries too gain new mouths, & open back so wholly gladness feeds gladness enough.







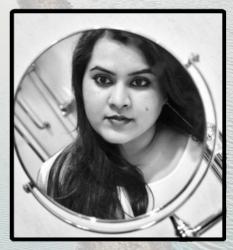
Alex Jenkin is a musician and poet from Victoria in Australia currently making work poetry, music and sound art under the name Drip Fed Sun.



Alma Muminovic is a
Bosnian-American writer
exploring consciousness,
behavior, and mapping the
psyche through symbolism
and ritual.



Allisonn Church, author of Sunlight
Leaking (Bottlecap Press, 2023) and
Feathered Throat (Crooked Circle Press,
2025), lives and writes in rural New England,
She has been mentored by Grant Chemidlin
at PocketMFA. More at
www.wildchurchpoems.com.



Debdutta Pal would rather be watching Netflix, but her brain demands some conscious decluttering. Her work can be found on Medium and Substack.



Elzada James is an autistic poet exploring the intersections of neurodivergence, motherhood, and disability. Her work has been published in Poetry & Purpose Magazine, The Groke, Big Fat Toad, and elsewhere. Find her at www.elzadajames.com.



Laura Catanzano is a wife, mother and poet residing in New Hampshire with her family. She writes mostly free-verse poetry with influences from nature, her experiences through motherhood, and her recovery journey from generalized anxiety disorder and OCD. Through her poetry, she hopes to spread light to others who have ever struggled with their own mental health.



Jozef Cain is a dude from the Pacific
Northwest. He is one half of Saccharum,
alongside his partner, Sylvia Kalina. Writing
from a "dirty surrealist" perspective, Jozef
combines the mundanity, and dark tones, of
dirty realism with the figurative tapestry of
psychedelia. One Love.



Lauren WB Vermette is the 14th Poet
Laureate of Portsmouth, NH. Her work
has appeared in Rat's Ass Review Journal,
Sledgehammer, Solstice, and
Underground Writers Association,
among others. Her first collection of
poetry, And The Form Falls Away (2018),
was published by Bee Monk Press.



Lee Summers is an English language development teacher and poet. He was born in San Diego in 1995 and grew up in Virginia Beach. His poetry explores everything from the flora and fauna around him to the echoes of memories from his multi-racial, neurodivergent, queer life.



Marianne Daigh lives in North Dublin, where she works as a family carer and writes. She has a background in theology, and also practices photography. Her work has appeared in Ragaire, Swim Press, Channel, Belfast Review, and Drawn to the Light. You can find her on Substack @mdaigh / insta @mdaighwait.



Lisa Sammoh is an African poet currently writing from Vancouver, Canada. Her works appear in Dust Poetry, Sublunary Review, The Kalahari Review, Olúmo Review (nominated for the 2024 Best of the Net Anthology), and elsewhere. They touch on the intersectional nuances from back home.



Oreoluwa Chloe Temenu (Ore) is a
Nigerian researcher writer and poet
exploring the intersections of memory,
identity, and transformation. Her work
examines how personal, ancestral, and
spiritual relationships shape reality. She can
often be found playing in nature, musing on
the metaphysical or laughing loudly at her
own jokes.



Stephen Mead, resident artist/curator for The Chroma Museum, artistic renderings of LGBTQI figures and allies before Stonewall, is a retiree whom, throughout his employment still found time for creativity.

Occasionally he even got paid of this.

Currently he is trying to sell his 40-year backlog of unsold art.



Traci Neal is a neurodivergent poet residing in Columbia, South Carolina. She shared her late diagnosis story on Newsweek and Thinking Person's Guide to Autism, to name a few. Her poetry has been featured in many publications in 2025. Neal utilizes poetry as a tool for advocacy and to raise awareness worldwide.



Sylvia Kalina writes at the confluence of poetry and metaphysical inquiry. Her work often seeks to explore beyond one dimension. Sylvia is cofounder of the community collective Saccahrum on Substack where her work has previously appeared.

## The Faoileánach Team



Angel Williamson (they/them) An Arizona native, therapist, parent and artist. They draw their inspiration from nature and personal life experiences. Their fascination with life, death, and the human psyche is reflected passionately in their art. They own a small business (Lunar Flare Studios) with their husband Jason out of Tucson, Arizona.



Melanie Cole is a writer and poet from Tacoma, Washington. Her work has been published in Grit City Magazine, Dandelion Revolution Press, PHIL LIT Journal, Creative Colloquy, and The Masters Review, among others. Her debut book, "BALDWIN," was released in October of 2025. She is currently Co-Editor of the Faoileánach Journal.



Jessie McCarty is an Irish-American writer from the South and information professional. Their poetry, in English and Gaeilge, uses depictions of the American South and Midwest as memory tools. They are Co-Editor of Faoileanach Journal. Their full-length debut, Pretty Punks, is forthcoming with Magra Books in December 2025 (ed. Sean Pessin, Paul Vangelisti). Previous collections include The Bovine Huff (Track and Field Studios, 2021) and the self-published artist book, Our Fairy Diary (2023)



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