

MOTHLIGHT LITERARY PRESENTS

METAMORPHOSIS



VOL. 1 • SUMMER 2026 • FICTION & POETRY



MOTHLIGHT

LITERARY
MAGAZINE

PRESENTS

METAMORPHOSIS

1.0

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Cover and inside art: Kai Cukier, "Lunar"

PAGE 7
EDITORIAL TEAM

PAGE 8
FOREWORD

PAGE 13
DEAD GLORY
A POEM BY SEONGWOO JANG

PAGE 17
HAIR
A SHORT STORY BY ADRIANA ISABELLA
FONSECA GOMEZ

PAGE 21
IN MY GRANDMOTHER'S KITCHEN
A POEM BY RUEBEN ANDERSON GILLIS

PAGE 25
JUSTIFICATION
A SHORT STORY BY RICHARD MATUSZEWSKI

PAGE 31

LINGUISTIC EXERCISE

A POEM BY KAIA HOSSAIN

**TRIGGER WARNING: ALLUSIONS TO VIOLENCE & GORE*

PAGE 35

LUNAR APOLOGY

A POEM BY MASUMAH HUSSAIN

PAGE 37

REVIVAL

A POEM BY ALEXANDRA SORIANO

**TRIGGER WARNING: SELF-HARM*

PAGE 39

SUMMER BEES NESTED IN MY BODY

A POEM BY RUEBEN MOSS

**TRIGGER WARNING: MILD BODY HORROR*

PAGE 43

THE RED DRESS IN THE SNOW

A POEM BY BY GULSEREN DENIZ

PAGE 45

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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FOREWORD

MOTHLIGHT PRESENTS: METAMORPHOSIS 1.0

Our team is thrilled to present our first-ever themed issue, **Metamorphosis 1.0**. This collection explores the many dimensions of transformation—moments of becoming, unbecoming, and the delicate spaces that exist in between.

The pieces brought together here approach change not as a single, defined event, but as a continuous process that unfolds across emotional, physical, linguistic, and imaginative landscapes. At its core, Mothlight is driven by a commitment to cultivating a literary space that is both inclusive and artistically ambitious. Our vision is to amplify voices that challenge, unsettle, and illuminate—to create a platform where emerging and established writers alike can experiment, take risks, and be heard.

We are guided by the belief that storytelling, in all its forms, has the power to connect, transform, and endure. Our mission is not only to publish compelling work, but to foster a living, evolving creative community—one that extends beyond the page through conversation, collaboration, and shared experience. In doing so, Mothlight strives to remain a place where diverse perspectives are welcomed and where each voice is valued for its originality and depth. Metamorphosis, as a theme, invites us to consider not only what we change into, but what we must leave behind in order to do so. It is both a shedding and a reaching—a tension between loss and possibility. In these pages, transformation appears in many forms: in identity reimagined, in grief reshaped into language, in bodies and landscapes altered by time and memory.

Some pieces embrace transformation as renewal; others resist it, or question its cost. Together, they reveal metamorphosis as something deeply human—messy, uncertain, and necessary.

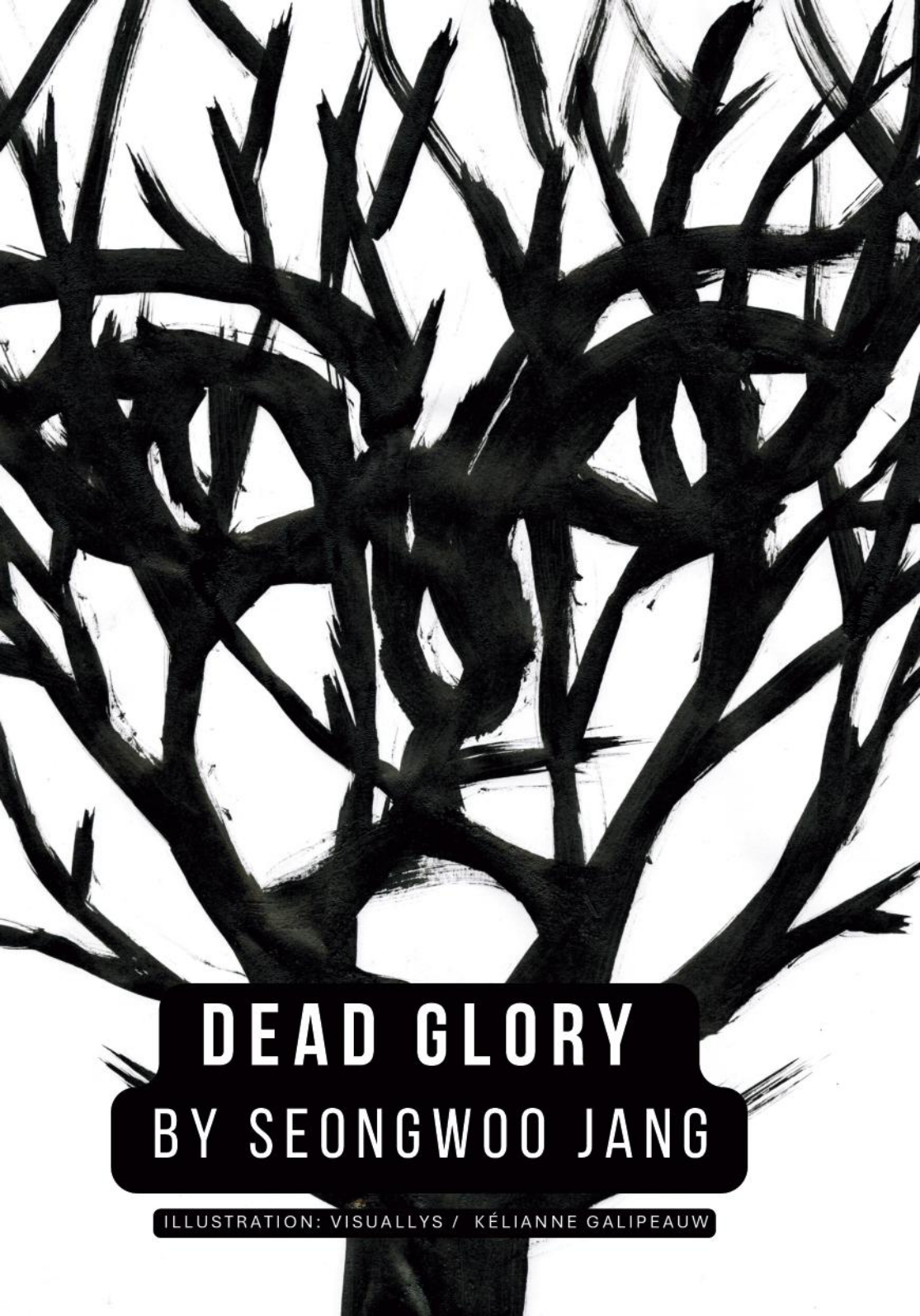
This issue would not exist without the dedication and care of our editorial team, and I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our managing editor, Grace Peressini, for her exceptional work in managing the team with thoughtfulness, clarity, and vision. Her leadership has helped shape this issue into what it is. To our contributors: thank you for trusting us with your words, your stories, and your transformations. Your work continues to define the spirit of Mothlight. And to our readers, who support us not only by engaging with each issue but also by showing up—by attending our events, by listening, by participating—you are the living pulse of this magazine. Your presence sustains this creative community.

As we move forward, we remain committed to upholding the creative vision of Mothlight: to nurture a space where emerging and established voices alike can be heard, and where each piece is given the stage it deserves. We promise to continue fostering a platform where writers and artists can share their unique and beautiful voices without hesitation.

Thank you for being part of the Mothlight Family!

ARGIRO MAVRAKI, EDITOR - IN - CHIEF

**FICTION
& POETRY**



DEAD GLORY
BY SEONGWOO JANG

ILLUSTRATION: VISUALLY / KÉLIANNE GALIPEAU

Dead Glory

Devastated desert, where resides the empty

Lands in tears, flowing across foggy reminiscence

The glory of the past, the glory of the dead

The dead glory, gone with the winds blowing on these lands

On which had lived happiness

Eyes closed, I could imagine, and maybe,

Even see utopia, a world in the arms of peace

A world that wore a green sweater

And the winds kept their silence, fearing to be the protagonists

Eyes open, I quickly realized that the sweater's color was brown,

The world was ravaged by drought

And the winds were blowing with the intention of murdering the unkillable

I will accompany your journey

Though I know that utopia won't await for you

At the end of the road

Since you still believe in utopia

I will believe the lies, and keep your company

Until we reach the dreamed lands,

Now hidden under layers of sand
Where I had started to dream
The lands that gave me a dream
Where I had expected to find my utopia
Like many others who thought so, and still do
Your imagination could plant trees
And hence, knit anew a green sweater for the world
Your voice could call the clouds of inclusion
To finally hydrate the dead lands
And I will, maybe, offer a new life to my dream
My juvenile dream which I witnessed being murdered
I could finally dive into its arms again

For now, tears keep streaming

On the face of the traveler

I will find you at the end of this journey

Since the lies were beautiful enough

I will believe them, for one last time.



ILLUSTRATION: AFRO.DIED, T.
/ ROZEAL.

HAIR

BY ADRIANA ISABELLA
FONSECA GOMEZ

HAIR

The hair on my head has grown so long I can braid myself a dress. It shall cover my breasts and any part I need to hide. I will drag it behind me, the weight of my own creation making my head ache.

I wonder where hair comes from?

Are there bundles surrounding my brain?

Like veins swimming between the folds, controlling my every move.

Does the hair travel behind my eyeballs and down my throat, pushing itself out through my groin and out my legs?

Hair so long is hard to maintain.

It takes me two hours to wash and condition, longer if I add a hydrating mask to the routine. The hair dries slowly, which gives me time to apply heaps of styling cream and gel. I comb it with a special brush that neatly separates the pieces into ribbons. Each a different misbehaved curl, struggling to find direction, tightness, and uniformity.

I meticulously separate them from the rest, twist with my trusty instrument and let it fall down my back. Again and again until it's time to blow dry. My arms are now toned from all the combing and styling. My hair takes forever to dry, and I cannot use warmth, or it will be angry and burn.

I do this all because I want to.

I do this because curly hair that is not styled looks ugly and frizzy.

But this is what I inherited from my mother. My eyes, my nose, my lips, my height, and my hair. Though

my eyes are crooked,

my lips thin,

and my height below-average,

my hair is the only thing I *must* and *will* change.

Countless hours of my childhood spent surrounded by toxic chemicals that burned my scalp to achieve straight perfection. So I follow the routine, even if everyone loves my straight, long hair. Mother had drilled into me that straight is beautiful and curly is unsightly. She pushes the

bristles deep into my scalp, wondering where these curls are coming from, as if her own hair has not been burnt to a crisp from the scalding iron. But we are happy, for I look like everyone else and

my transformation is complete.

But when I wake up, after hours of rolling around in my hair, I feel it wrapping itself around my neck, my wrists and my legs. I am bound to do what it wants. I am a slave to perfection.

And so I cut it.

The pain is not physical, for there are no nerves in hair. But my mother screams, and everyone around is shocked.

Not only is it curly again, but it is short. Shorter than it ever could be. And I'm free.

**IN MY
GRANDMOTHER'S
KITCHEN
BY RUEBEN MOSS**



**ILLUSTRATION: COUNTRY KITCHEN
/ NAN LURIE**

In my grandmother's kitchen

the peatlands are coming back.
the stainless steel sink sports lily pads
eelgrass stretching up to water's surface
leeches latch on if you put your hands in too long
pond fish bob against glass cupboard doors
collected pebbles form their nestled bottom.

the mud follows you as you walk in
filling in your footsteps like etchings
moss decorates corners, spreading from black fungus splatterings
like wallpaper, a freeform pattern punctuated by fruiting bodies
on the stovetop there are pots bubbling with hot springs

she wishes she could have known the prokaryotic extremists that live
there
chemosynthetic bacteria feeding itself in the anoxic depths
the kitchen tables used to hold up terrariums that emptied—
spread to the chest of drawers, now each one is like lifting up a rock
worms squirming out of eager fingers and beetle larvae curling white
segmented bodies into balls

one side's drywall has chunked to the floor in pieces and ants'
winding tunnels are exposed, high traffic pathways tamped down
by millions of feet, twisting from floor to ceiling.
in her bedroom the grasses grow tall from the mattress, perfect
hunting territory for mantises from England

the radio is always playing, it's a birdbox which houses different
families year over year, holding fresh eggs softly in the hay,
birdsong drifting out the hole.
the roof is punctured by great strength so the sun can stream in
when we get there she says *would you believe the weather today?*
let's open a window!

her arms stretch out as branches past the sill
her hair furls irreverent leaves
her smile is crooked into all crevices of bark
she is both inside and out, she is proud
my grandmother, the evergreen



JUSTIFICATION
BY RICHARD
MATUSZEWSKI

ILLUSTRATION: UNTITLED / MARK ROTHKO

Justification

This is a recording of my actions on Earth. All measurements in this report will use human standards.

I had set a neorta to activate within sixty minutes in the outskirts of a large human city. This was my fourth visit to the planet in the last two hundred years. My plan was simple: use the neorta to transport a black hole of approximately the same mass as the Earth, annihilating it in the process.

The device emitted its usual low hum as it charged. Everything I've done, even before the activation of the neorta, has been strange. I understand its use as a tool for disposal, and yet I pointed it towards sentient life. This is the first recorded use of it as a weapon¹.

I turned to leave and return to my vessel in order to observe Earth's destruction from a safe distance, but when I did, I noticed a human staring at me. I was not sure how long it had been there as all my senses were focused on the neorta. It was a young male with dark skin and thick clothing. Its body was paralyzed in place, stuck deciding its next action. I observed it closely, knowing I could render it unconscious if necessary. Instead of fleeing or attacking me, it spoke. It questioned my sentience as it studied my form.

"Hey! The hell are you?"

It said in English, one of the many Earth languages I studied. It spoke like many others in this metropolis, towards its northern hemisphere. Quickly and sharply, skipping some words and emphasizing certain syllables.

"You listenin'? Can you hear me?"

I questioned whether I should answer. Should I imitate its manner of speech? Its tone and the slight breaks in its voice—common in adolescent human males? I hoped that it would flee, but it didn't. Something inside of it knew we didn't share this planet as a home, and so it stood firmly. I thought of attacking it again, not as a response to

¹ *Weapon* /'wepən/ *noun*: A human invention. Something made with the intention or that can be used to cause harm.

violence, but as a means to end this encounter. I felt aggressive towards it. I told myself that it would have been merciful. I knew better. Upon activation, the neorta would consume it and the Earth faster than it could perceive. Its consciousness was irrelevant. It sensed my contemplation and tensed its muscles, gripping its hands into tight fists. Its eyes began to dart between me and the neorta.

"S'that behind you?" It asked its fourth question without receiving a response to the first.

There was no reason to speak to it. I had made my decision. I was stubborn, too curious for its own good, but admittedly, so was I. We were all instructed to study Earth life from a distance, told not to interfere with their growth or their eventual downfall. I told myself that this would be the last chance I would have to study them. I spoke back to it, choosing to answer its latest question.

"It's beyond current human comprehension." I chose to speak in a neutral-sounding English. That disturbed it more than my appearance. It looked at me like it didn't understand me. It looked around me for the source of my voice. I considered changing my accent to something similar to the one it had, but that might've worsened the situation. I continued.

"I can understand you. English as a language seems intentionally confusing, but I've studied it well."

It took a moment before answering. The words trembled as they came out. "That thing—behind you. What is that?"

It pointed at it too, to make sure I understood, even though I confirmed I could already. Despite its question, I knew based on previous studies that it didn't want me to explain how the neorta functioned, just what I intended to do with it. I thought about lying, but calling it a harmless device wouldn't convince it. It could feel the air and ground vibrating. It knew something was happening and assumed the worst. I considered attacking it again. I considered—I'm still not sure. There was an urge to tell it the truth. As another sentient being, it deserved to be aware of the situation it was in. But there was also a part of me that wanted it to feel some sense of dread.

"In very simple terms, it allows for the instant transport of a region in space to another. It can easily bring a black hole from one side of the galaxy to another, which is what I intend to do here."

I waited for its response. How would a human respond to the knowledge that it would die? How would it respond to this knowledge coming from a species not native to its planet? Humans have threatened each other all throughout their history. I, and many of my peers, have studied this. In theory, it should not be too dissimilar to any other threat to their lives. It almost spoke a few times, only for it to stop before the first word. I knew it had many questions. A trait common amongst young humans. It tried looking for my eyes. When it could not find something recognizable, it focused on the neorta.

"Why?" It asked.

The aggression returned, stronger than before. I wanted to strike it. Not out of mercy, but because I believed it should know better. I knew. We all knew the dangers of studying life on Earth. It was the most volatile place in the galaxy. A densely packed group of highly reactive elements, narrowly, or sometimes, willingly colliding with each other. Each time closer and closer to causing one final chain reaction that would incinerate the planet. A star was born in their home. I tried rationalizing it. As I planned, I considered it to be an act of benevolent foresight. I told myself, "I would rather end humanity than to let them continue on." But, as mentioned, I've been acting strange.

"I dislike you. All of you." I told it, plainly. "I believe you are a threat to yourselves, and worse, possibly to the safety of others in the galaxy." I did not lie, but it also wasn't the entire truth. It was just enough to make me feel like this was right.

It looked at me, even more tense than before. I knew then that it finally understood me. It spoke now with more confidence. Defiance. Like a child speaking to an adult when it realizes that not everything the adult says is true.

"What the fuck do you mean 'you don't like us'?! What did we ever do to you? Who the fuck are you to kill us just 'cause you don't like us?"

It breathed heavily through its nostrils. It barely blinked. With eyes wide, it was ready to fight me. It must have noticed my body tensing. I was ready as well. I was, and I still am, angry. Why didn't it understand that? I had told myself many times of the reasons behind my position. I answered it again.

"I am a xenobiologist, tasked with observing and studying foreign and underdeveloped life."

"And you decide which planets to blow up?" It said, venomously. "And why the fuck would you tell *me* anyway?"

None of my answers satisfied it. They felt unusual, even to me, the moment I spoke them out loud. Still, I think about the child's questions. At the moment, I could not understand why I had plotted to erase an entire planet's worth of life. I just knew I should. I knew that was what they deserved.

"No. This is the first time I've attempted to do this. It's the first time it's been done."

I'm sure that if there were a species with a behavior similar to humans, then it would have surely been documented. No one in their right mind would leave them like this. Free to spread and evolve through a cycle of self-mutilation, ripping themselves apart until nothing remains. It's a terrifying concept. They kill themselves and we all watch. The entire galaxy believes that something should be done, and yet, all we do is watch. It looked at me. Somehow, despite the difference in our forms, it found my eyes. I felt defensive.

"I answered because you asked. This is also my first time interacting directly with a human."

It leaned forward, then took a step closer. I moved back the same amount, and something primal in it activated. It saw my moment of fear and seized it.

"You tell me that we're a problem and that we need to go, cause you said so, and you never even talked to us?!" It shouted.

Despite our difference in size, it seemed larger, much larger. I don't understand what it did, but I knew it could stop me. They are made for conflict. It must be written in their genetic structure. It has to

be. I answered it quickly. I had to. In a way I had never answered before, stubbornly and with a need to impose myself, I answered. In doing so, I went against my reasoning. My own words! No thought was given to them as they left me either. It was as if another part of me seized my vocal cords and spoke for me. I realize now that I was infected by them. "One of your wars² killed my partner, and I *hate* you for it."

I knew the word. Hate. We, all of us who studied Earth, had read and documented what it was. A highly contagious emotion that spread through the harmful interactions between humans, which, in most cases, led to retribution. It flowed through me like a wave, churning and crashing inside me, ready to spew out again.

It stared at me with pity. Not only for what its species took, but for what they gave me as well.

It loosened its body, letting out a shaky breath. "I get you," it spoke quietly.

It took a step back and sat down on a doorstep. I waited a few moments before leaving. It did not try to stop me. It barely moved at all. It just stared at the space between its feet like it chose a comfortable position to be in for the time it had left.

I am currently in Earth's orbit as I finish this recording. I still have time to evacuate to a safe distance and watch the black hole consume the planet. I still have time to return to that alley and disarm the neorta. I hoped that in writing this, I would find a reason to do either.

² *War /wôr/ noun: A human state of conflict between opposing sides.*



LINGUISTIC EXERCISE PERFORMED LIVING

BY KAIA HOSSAIN

ILLUSTRATION: PAINTER'S TABLE / PHILIP GUSTON

Linguistic Exercise Performed Living

I've lived long enough to know
a word matters even after
it slips through the gaps between
teeth, syrupy and see-through,
thin honey held in the mouth
then hung from the lips.

I've witnessed
art pieces painted with
flicks of the tongue, spit
flecked on a face, breath
sputtering and wet. The inside
of a mouth often tastes bitter
and acrylic. I cup water in my hands,
bring it to my lips
dampening my brush.

I can't hold a word in my palms,
a poem between my fingers—
skin on skin. I can't say *I love you*
then hang the words in my living room to dry
or paint over their accidental smudges

before they're someone else's
somewhere else.

Question: *How long does it take to live?*

Answer: *Boneblack, long scar, how how how?*

I've wanted
to be vocal
my whole life. Detach
a syllable from
its body like a seed from
a fruit and plant it
elsewhere.

I've wanted
to take a noun and
excavate its soil, pull
on its roots and see
if they flake, feed it
adjective, adverb, adjective,
adverb.

I've wanted
to hunt a verb and

cut it in half. See
if its ribs will break.
If its brain, colour of blush,
melts on the tongue, mush
fatty and porous with salt.
I want to see if its chest is hollow.
If there is meat there.

A bird sings in the morning
by the tree in my backyard;
A man says a slur at the table
next to me in the library; Later,
my partner holds my face
in his palms and says,
I love you.

ILLUSTRATION: MOON, PLATE FOURTEEN FROM ODA A LORCA
ANTONIO FRASCONI



LUNAR APOLOGY

BY MASUMAH
HUSSAIN

Lunar Apology

If the moon could talk,
She would say
she holds the weight of her absence,
Apologizing for every night she arrives in pieces.

For hiding
for showing up late
for letting clouds take the blame—
when it's really her
needing time away.

But she never stays gone for long.
And when she returns,
she doesn't make an announcement—
No fireworks, no speeches.
Just light.
Soft, worn, quiet light.

I've started to forgive myself
for the same things:
for the nights I go quiet,
for the distance I create,
for needing space I don't admit.

Learning that dimming
doesn't mean disappearing.
That fading doesn't mean failing.

Being full was never the point.
Even a sliver of light is enough.



REVIVAL

BY ALEXANDRA SORIANO

ILLUSTRATION: VISUALLYYS / MATYS OUIMET

Revival

i have died
maybe once or twice
maybe more, i can't recall
i don't know why
they keep bringing me back
like i've been restored
fully
whole
new
reborn
what a waste
save the medicine, doc
i've done it once
so i'll try again
i like the challenge
it's what i do best
same time next week?
as you deny my request,
i'll still try my luck
till there's none left



**SUMMER BEES
NESTED IN MY BODY
BY RUEBEN MOSS**

ILLUSTRATION: PINTEREST / ARTIST UNKNOWN

the summer bees nested in my body

I first noticed
a hole
in my forearm
tending plants
observed a bee
wiggle out onto skin
stepping knobbly
over fine hairs
I let it be

heat of the greenhouse
they flew drunkenly
missing water
I held a pool
in my mouth
open
let them gorge

day of death
buzzing in my thighs
babies nursed in my bicep
I poked,
new holes sprouted
little heads
with gentle gazes
looking out
they did not drink my tears

honeycomb-
fragile inside
blood replaced by amber
thickness I was
walking sluggish
sandbag-limbs
dragging

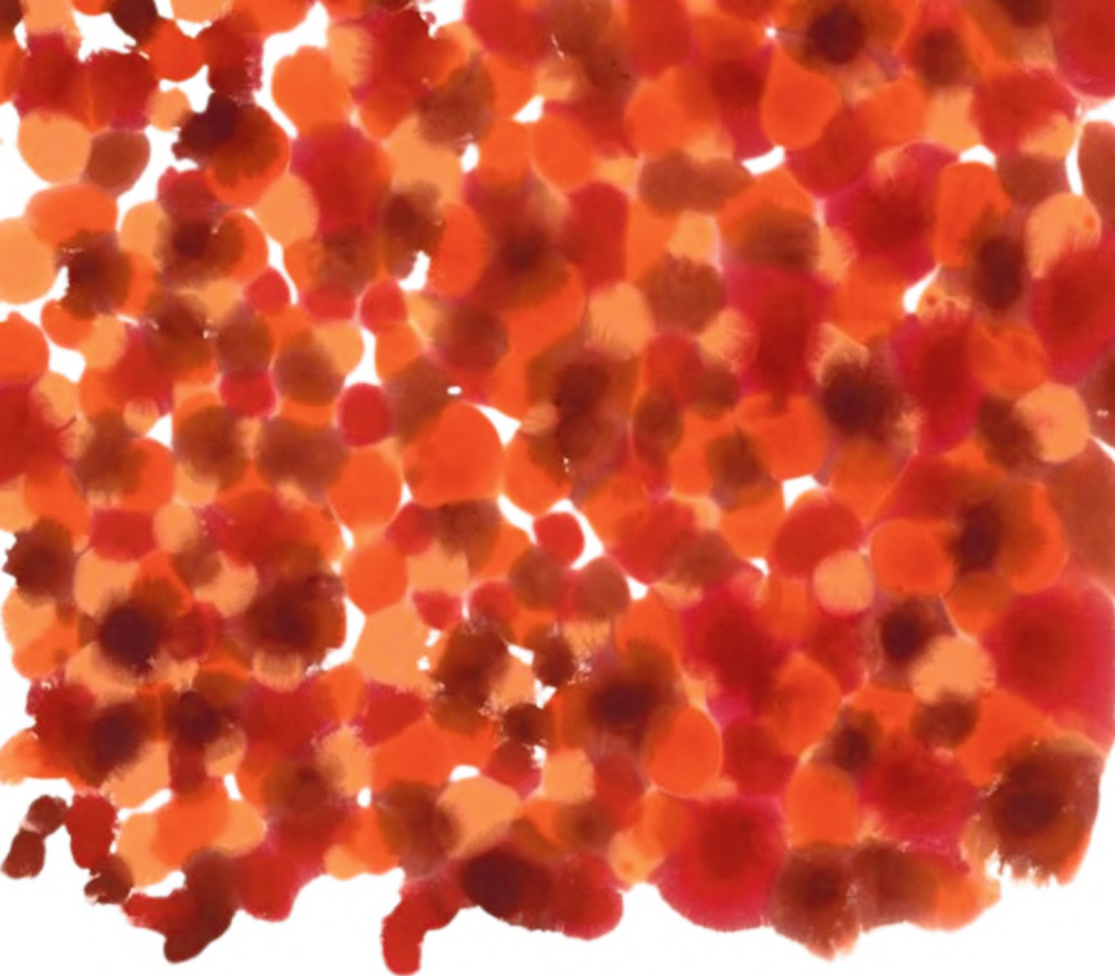
buzzing a
constant drone
from breast to
fingertips

soundwaves
ricochet through
hexagons
can't hear you
eardrums busy

in waking hours
they'd collect pollen
dragging back heavy
saddle bags
squeezing in the space
between me and home
filling it

I learned to taste
without crushing
honey stinging
my eyes
I laid in a flowerbed
to make it easier
I took care
not to disturb
them

end of season
queen left me
mass exodus
streaming from
hole-spotted
body, empty
body



THE RED DRESS
IN THE SNOW
BY GULSEREN DENIZ

ILLUSTRATION: RED DANCE / KENNETH YOUNG

The Red Dress in the Snow

Unsettled souls of Earth,
do you hear my footsteps
on this cold winter night?

I carry a lantern
to ignite the path.
There is no sunlight.
Only regret.

All paths tangle into knots —
nothing I can do
but hide them in a thought.

My hands smell of pine,
or maybe lemongrass—
hard to tell.

Red leaves mark my way.

Snow circles me.
My red dress pulls me down.
So I choose not to ascend.

There are no walls
to build
or hide behind —
only crushing waves
of fog and leaves.

I built a shelter once
from whatever I could reach.

It crumbled.

Now I lie with the land.
Dew on leaves
against my face.
I fasten my belt,
cover myself
in what has fallen.

I stay.

Was your face
not enough
to turn me
from heaven?

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

KAI CUKIER

I am a Montreal-based artist in my first year of university, studying Studio Arts and English Literature. My work is rife with themes of transformation and melancholy, most notably through the color blue, which to me evokes feelings of deep loneliness and sadness, but also strength and calm.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

SEONGWOO JANG

Seongwoo Jang is a Korean-Canadian student who studies anthropology and human relations at Concordia University, with a great interest for visible minority groups and their rights. Through writing, he expresses himself literally and hence, attempts to understand his existence within the universe and the life which has surrounded him since his birth. Recently, he also has interests towards cinematographic production and musical composition, through which he desires to spread the voices of those who were forced to keep their silence.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

ADRIANA FONSECA GÓMEZ

Adriana Fonseca Gómez is a Salvadoran author currently pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing at Concordia University. She finds inspiration in discomfiting and dramatic story-telling. Her writing is easy to visualize and easy to relate to.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

RUEBEN MOSS

Rueben Moss is a writer and poet from Nova Scotia, currently based in Montreal. They are working towards degrees in Creative Writing and Ecology at Concordia University. The practice of slowing down and becoming an observer is central to their creation process. You can find them cuddling their cat at home, or walking in their favourite forest. Their work has previously appeared in soliloquies anthology.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

RICHARD MATUSZEWSKI

Richard Matuszewski is a Black writer and illustrator. Richard's work ranges anywhere from alien creatures debating the morality of planetary destruction to the emotions of a father and son dealing with grief in a small town. Born in Toronto, Canada and living in Brazil for many years of his life, Richard now lives in Montreal, Quebec as he studies in Concordia's Creative Writing program.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

KAIA HOSSAIN

Kaia Hossain is a trans, Bangladeshi Canadian writer currently based in Montreal. She is studying English Literature and Creative Writing at Concordia. She writes poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction that is personal and consistently sentimental. Her work has been published in *Arrival Magazine* and is forthcoming in *Pixie Literary*. She is always trying her best.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MASUMA HUSSAIN

Masumah Hussain is a respiratory therapy student, writer, and mother, a woman of color and daughter of immigrants. Her work blends healthcare insight with lived experience, exploring resilience, faith, and humanity through poetry and creative writing.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

ALEXANDRA SORIANO

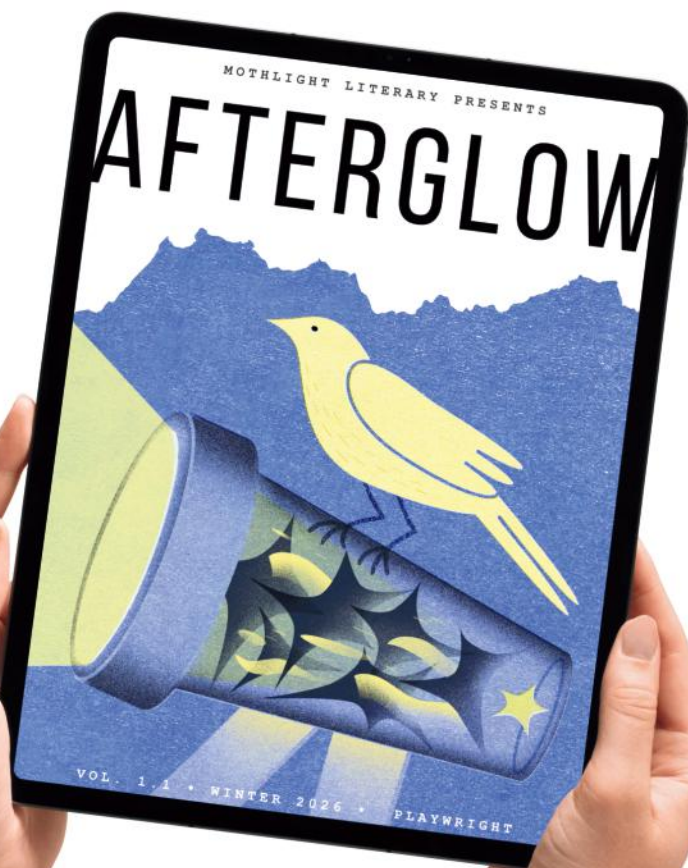
Alex is a student of English Literature and Professional Writing. She has been a member of the Quebec Writers' Federation since 2024 and hopes to become a successful novelist after her studies at Concordia University.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

GULSEREN DENIZ

Gulseren Deniz is a poet whose work explores displacement, passage, and emotional transformation through image-driven, lyrical language. Her writing often moves between landscape and interior states. She lives in Montreal, Canada.

ALSO CHECK MOTHLIGHT
AFTERGLOW
PLAYWRIGTHS





@mothlightliterary.

