

Palindrome Journal



When I Get Younger
101

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I

THE WORKS

featuring

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It's not that I want to be young again. God no. I wouldn't wish that on my worsted-sweatered-old-man-in-sensible-shoes self. I mean, we barely made it out alive the first time around. But I'd like to talk to him--

GOING

I was back then. Because I think he would have liked me. I mean, I think he would have liked the way he turned out. And I know he would have liked to ask me a million questions. Many of which I know the answers to. I picture us sitting on a bench in Taylor Park, one of his PF Fliers

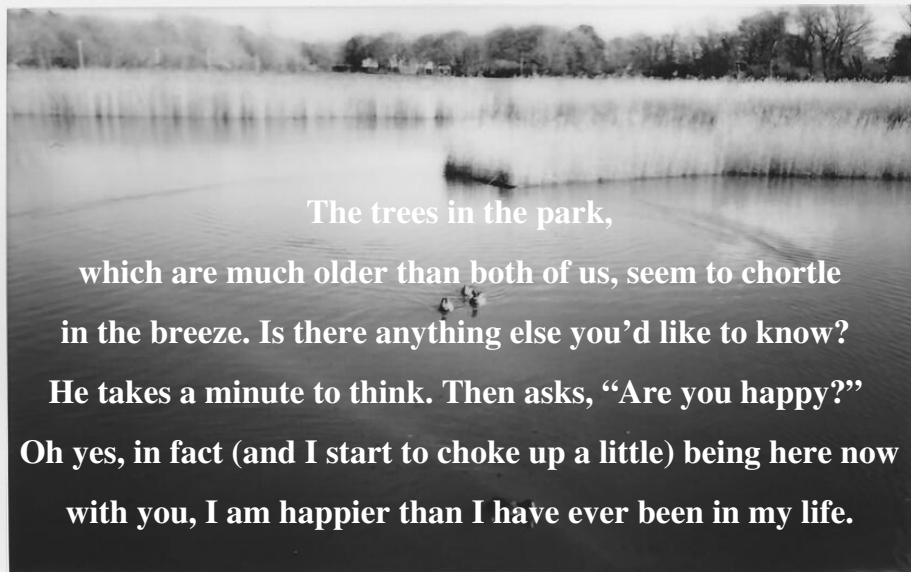
He looks away. Doesn't speak. I ask him if there's anything he'd like to know. He looks up at me-- from this angle he can see all my ugly nose hairs, thick as grave-grass. I no longer even bother to trim them.

"How old are you?" he asks me and I tell him: 62. "Do you have any kids?" Yes. Two.

"Where are they now?" One is in New York City and one is in Hawaii. "Do you miss them?"

Yes. Very much. But I miss you even more, if that's possible. "Am I going to beat Marc Peo in the wrestling tournament?" Now it's my turn to look away. "That's OK," he says, "you don't have to say it. I understand." And he puts his little hand on my shoulder. "What about Cheryl Lubecki?"

What about her? "Well, do you think she likes me?" I think your strategy of pretending not to be interested in her isn't working. "OK, thanks for telling me." And he looks away again. A long silence.



The trees in the park,
which are much older than both of us, seem to chortle
in the breeze. Is there anything else you'd like to know?
He takes a minute to think. Then asks, "Are you happy?"
Oh yes, in fact (and I start to choke up a little) being here now
with you, I am happier than I have ever been in my life.

**-PAUL
HOSTOVSKY**



Midsummer evening. Green light deepens to juniper
and plum. A squall blows in. The temperature falls—
94 to 58. Icy drops bite the earth
like so many mouths. So many teeth. The asphalt steams.

Leaves stream water

honey locust and lilies swing like censers, strew
fragrance across the sodden night. A squall blows in: all grackles
and Jimmsonweed. Lightning
strokes whale-bellied clouds: all entrails and bruises.

The temperature drops

crickets stridulate cooled night. Locusts fill junipered air
with wingwhir, and I'm 18, or is it 58. Just wet bone
and entrails. Thunder bangs on the plumbing,)tmumbles
the roof. Wind harrows the trees
and the sky is waterlight, swimming, not with whales,
but leaves, minnow-spun, storm-illuminated.

Scattershot x-ray. House is a foursquare corpse
in sealight. Seabottom. Drowned.



The temperature drops.
The squall blows lightning in,
it lickety-splits the night, white against plum
A squall roughs through avuncular July,
July hot as a heavy-man's hand; squall pushing
the bones of October through the night. My house
is a snapshot corpse: dark-drowned, mouth gawp.
The night shakes its wild hair. I peel my clothes;
from chest, belly, flank. 18 or 58, my nakedflesh squall-lit plum
and juniper: a drowned woman welcoming
wild October to her breast. The squall blows
charcoal and plum. The temperature plummets
58 to 18, icy water stings the night which steams
like a strange animal,
whale-large, it's waterslick sides, juniper
and plum, heaving and immense.

Kim Welliver

Laneways

by Elaine
Westnott-
O'Brien

Tree-lined laneways of my childhood

Foxglove

Purple velvet

Summer afternoons

Sticky tar melted by the sun

Long idle walks

No destination

The promise of freedom

The reality of stagnation

Tree-lined laneways of my adolescence

Woodbine

Pink and fragrant

Summer evenings

Sound of birdsong

Ghosts of furtive kisses and teenage love

Parents oblivious

The promise of wildness

The reality: innocence.

Tree-lined laneways of my adulthood

Willow

Crowded with full flowering trees

Vibrant with hint of blackberries

Obscuring the view around tight bends

I drive

Idly

No destination

Sounds of baby babble and toddler snores

Remembering


The sound of laughter

Inexperienced embraces

Chatter

Birdsong

Those young lonely faces.



we lose ourselves in the unfurling of time.
each day slips between our slim fingers,
no matter how tight our grasp. each self
follows the same. there is no way to crawl
into the past, no matter what pictures,
moving or otherwise, would have you believe.
the future is not unreachable but it is
unspeakable, and aren't the two almost
the same? still, the body bends with time.
the body grows with age, into age, away
from age. aren't we all running from something?
if only you knew how young my tongue is.
maybe then you'd see what you are. what we
could be, huddled here in these words,
seeking shelter from each other, protection
from ourselves. there is no damage to be undone
or blame to be laid and no, i cannot save you
from yourself. what do you mean,
that's what you were trying to tell me?
i'm afraid i couldn't listen to your tongue
even if it were in my own mouth.
i've been told that's something like kissing
but i have yet to agree. you see i am the one
speaking now, regardless of who's words
i've been using. you see, i have endless secrets
to share and only so much time to unwrap them.

i've left them in plastic so they don't get damaged,
but i've left them so long now i forget what they say.



BUBB

11/8/11

night, near morning

t-2 days till 18

the big divide between children and adults

but it passes like any other day

except i get more presents

im outrunning

the hands of time

dark circles wider than Macbeth's

digital dreams

buried in books

im thinking of the people i shouldn't:

the boy who I nearly loved

the boi who i made fire for,

till they made the flames too high

and her, the cuddle, the pillow,

the feminine charms she tried to cultivate

i leave my bad decisions in a abandoned house that i burn every year

goodbye, blue sky

now i paint my nails and read my books

and try to grow from

what i used to be.

OLLIE
SHANE

Impression of The Stolen Years

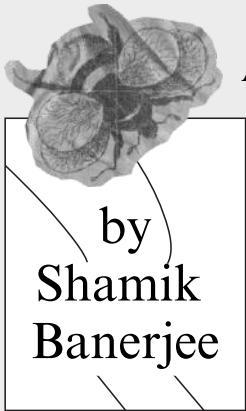
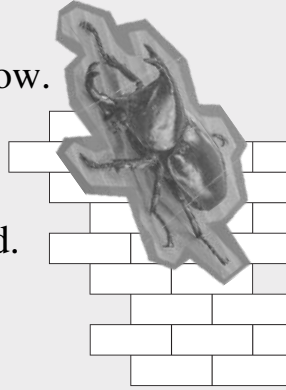
These vintage walls have heard my lect,
the beams above have seen me grow;
the surrounds are my architect,
the front courtyards, my boyhood know.

My forefathers, here have trodden,
the acred plot's bedrock they've laid.
Their bequest is not forgotten—
the zonal turfs, the hangar shade.

A chasmic depth, follows the well-
our thirst, its wide cradle does quench.
Its spheric dungeon, like a shell,
is where, did once, my playthings drench.

A hoarding once, in coloured streaks,
did gallery for neighbours make.
A parvis too homed many beaks,
who piped melodies near the brake.

Anigh the slim-turfed path by door,
the wheelers of my father stood;
where shields the coco palms all o'er
to extents far their eyes reach would.



by
**Shamik
Banerjee**

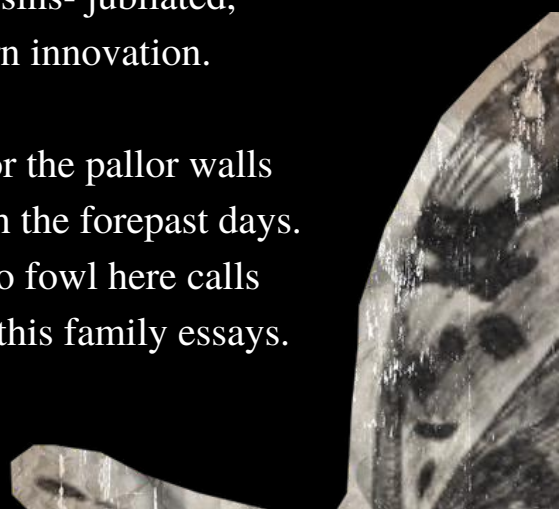
The backyard where I used to sport
and amuse with hackles of birds;
there scattered was wheat, grain and ort,
in an orchard which, no more girls.

The planted two Banana trees,
along the square snicket they were
and hived a massy ball of bees—
my young adventures are stored there.

Though our home, had many chambers,
all souls were binded, but as one.
Those days now, my heart remembers--
when living was so gladly done.

The old paint has razed- elated-
the new means of renovation;
and all my cousins- jubilated,
to this modern innovation.

But I still long for the pallor walls
I behoved fine with the forepast days.
I live still but, no fowl here calls
nor love between this family essays.





Encountering Fate

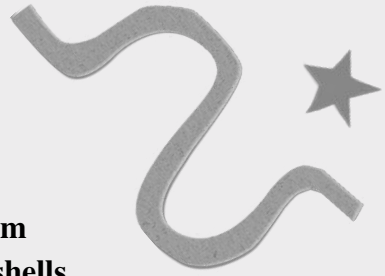
it will be twilight, noon,
or dawn, when music tastes sweetly
of mumbles to these drowsy ears
and my home is baby blue, golden yellow,
peach pink, mine to bathe in warm syrupy life
I let the daisies on the table hang their heavy heads
befriending their wilting petals, death is made my lover
and with interlocked fingers, we adorn my dim walls
with opalescent lights that glow like sawtoothed geodes
and serrated stars, I could have been a Hollywood starlet
I invite you over to tell you
and I wait for the kettle's shriek
you reach for thick honey and smooth milk
whispering, that I can still be anything
nothing but cemeteries are set in stone

**BY NATASHA
LAST-BERNAL**

**your laugh is warmed by your tea
in the fluid shadows cast by candles,
you know what I am, this little life
of stuttered speech and trailing the tide
watch my heart idly swell and wane as I roam
over cracked pavement, collect crooked seashells,
and stretch my arms toward God unafraid of stealing space
I hum lightly in the shower and loudly in the supermarket
balancing mismatched bouquets and bags of berries on my hip
I draw insects on canvas and beautiful women on napkins
envisioning pearlescent ghosts glancing over my shoulder
I slowly drink soups, slice melting butter, shape fresh dough,
and stick my tongue out under flakes of drifting snow
ingesting goodness and heat that calms these weary nerves**

**you could still become someone great, you protest
but this home holds a body that is no open wound
it is not too late to be remembered, you insist
but here, it is enough that I am no pale spirit
weightless and falling through floors of ambition
I exhale prideful pipe dreams so I can carry
these dense bones with me to the coast, city,
and forest, look at me under those constellations
and in that wild color, see how I morph in soft
shadows and how my skin glows in the white gleam
of windswept spiderwebs, wax, and quartz**

**admire as I seize the humble beauty
of this quiet life and tenderly spin
its unmemorable thread in the moonlight**

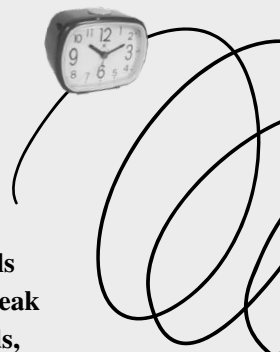


New Year's Eve Timewarp

the future's beaked face lingers by the door
uninvited, she wears a modern hairdo and
she shapes skeletons from the decaying leaves
beneath the willow trees, our sullen eyes meet
trust that I know of January's snake oil charm
you can tell by the steep hills beneath these pupils
that carry the lavender weight of headlines that speak
of tragedy in schools and swastikas on crosswords,
by the soft curses muttered while wandering about
valentine's teddies that hold cheap chocolates for two,
by the bodies maimed by plagues that last lifetimes
and blizzards that recur, 'unprecedented' again
and again, midnight's transformation treads forward still
amidst tired resolutions, I am told to wish in this instant
that I will live long enough to grow a wrinkled appearance
I am tasked with begging fate to reach the age of ninety-nine
(aspiring to exceed my great-grandmother's fragile frame
and glazed over gaze, manifesting my fingers growing pale
and nearly translucent in an indifferent ancient age)

I am compelled to plead for the markers of time
(skin that bruises easily with the brush of a winter glove,
an affinity for butter cookies crumbling in tin containers,
and crow's feet that show proof of a lifetime spent aching,
yearning, and drying out under some heavy urban haze)
under swelling seas and warming lands, I selfishly carve
my home out from the saturation of the past in all of its rose-
tints and calm hugs alongside waters that stay clear and clean
I demand that death should not tiptoe around our encounter
that I should remain clueless, doubtful, hedonistic, and tender
with eyes that darken in passionate fury when a voice is raised,
nimble legs that never succumb to apathy or jaded expectation,
and a heart that mourns the tribulations of a half-winged fly
(I care not for aging when men lead wildfires to ravage kind
creatures and I care not for wisdom under burning suns)
fireworks consume the onyx blanket of starless night til dawn
with my wild loving hair, I insist on a life of my own doing
and of my own length aboard this ground that spins and spins
through crimson skies and far-fetched fables of change

by
natasha
last
bernal



All My Childhood Friends Have A Hand On The Pick-Ax

My first friend came as a pair. The three of us met in pre-k.
Our moms quickly learned we lived down
the street from each other.
The path of my childhood cemented over.
Barefeet all summer to toughen
calluses.

They made the trek to our front doors across the searing hot pavement
more bearable.

They were seven houses down Greenleaf Drive— my first friend and
her twin brother — my second friend.

We had bikes, but we would still walk everywhere. It did not matter
that the pavement burned.

We would hop from each shady spot spilled across the concrete.

When we started driving, our trek turned
into a pit stop overnight.

We watched each other turn into real people.

All my childhood friends have a hand on the pick-ax that is beating
my brain forever.

I can't lose your home phone number. I'd never
forget your dead dog's name.

I can never forget being a kid with you. I hope you were just as
greedy with the memories as I am.

In my head, we are still small and knocking on my new neighbor's
door, trying to expand our trusted troop.

They had just moved in and looked around our age.

We would play in the street lamp light across from their house until
we couldn't see our hands stretched out before us.

When we got older, we missed being that happy.

We would play the same games.

Teach new friends the rules we made up almost a decade before.



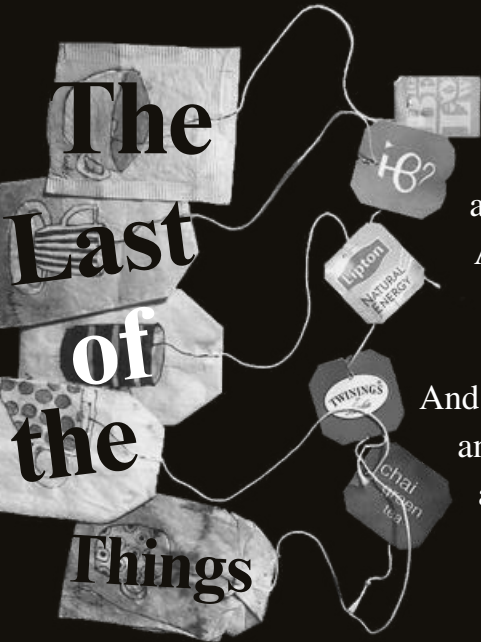
i've stopped starting fires

Charlotte Amelia Poe

"i've been getting there" i say
"where's there?" you ask
"oh, you know, the place i need to be"
i've stopped starting fires
well, that's a lie
you've stopped finding them
well, that's a lie
you've stopped telling me you've found them
and in that gentle unease
we have found a kind of peace
i don't tell lies
and you don't have to hear them
and my tongue doesn't grow heavy with soot
anymore
you see?

"i've been getting there" i say
"where's there?" you ask
"oh, you know, the place i need to be"
not quite sure really
but if you can't smell the smoke on the breeze
and you can't hear the sirens
then i guess i'm in the right place
so i guess we're good, right?
please tell me we're good.





Sahir Avik D'souza

I sit by my window
and the rain streaks down the glass.

A pile waits on my bed,
and it's the last of the things.

The words and the swing of a pop song
echo in my head,

scoring this spare, suspended moment.

It's loss, it's loss, it's loss, it's life,
it's the last of the things.

A day comes and it's so fresh,
and I know it, I can see it, I can smell it.

A day comes and then before I know it,
it's lost, it's past, and it's left
the last of the things.

And I'm still here, still chugging, still churning
and I'm older now and now still so young
and the seconds I've held onto, tightly,
they wither and slip from my hands,
and I mourn

for the last of the things.

And see now, and now, and once again,
a drop of rain becomes a stream,
coursing ever to the bottom of the window.

But see now, and once again,
I'm being given a second, a moment, a day
to drop, to stream, to course –
it's a fleeting, constant lifetime.

And see how the last of the things,
the very last,

is now, and now, and once again the very first.

Just Your Typical Suitcase Poem

Like Poe's maelstrom, the sea's active black hole, vortex valve into which my lifeboat spirals, so is the unproven belief in any fundamental reality. The way my ukulele's fingered attenuations of its vibrating stringspans pigment a pre-language peel of inebriational, syllabic plinks. Or the way we set up camp in this trance of separate selves, upload libraries into each head, sky-dive our kayak's capsized body, scrub moon landings tubular. Our hindsight lets time get ahead of us, the next last step of micro-dosing enlightenment. We lounge foresight's wriggle, linguistic symptoms of the end-worm sleep, otherwise known as "Our Father who art in Heaven," free will a latched suitcase of best intentions. Stuck in a plastic Turing machine box-set on repeat, arcade lemonade the soothing pleasure-response of our endless groove, we thump our rave-tronic pulse against meaty temples heaving together to the beat, bringing the house to the binge-worthy question of what to do next. Singing "Twinkle Twinkle, Little Star" to a lost child-self is a good start, but opening your parliamentary mind's cabinet to the forest of collective experience will transcend the tryst of first-timers blinded by science. We don't move thru time; we travel with it. Don't suitcase what's gone before, because it didn't happen, isn't still happening, never has happened. The reset button only blinks in unison with your spatial duality of inside and out. As if time were a fusion cap sparking space, or even cute in the little green dress.

by :

Bobby
Parrott



A woman speaks solemnly over the airport PA.
I'm sure the excuse is a good one though her words are muffled.
Storms in Saudi Arabia maybe., or elections for the new Pope.

What it means is I'll be here awhile.

You too, college kid, with boyfriend slumped across your shoulder.
And priest... smile... think of Flight 614 as the second coming.
I could tell you much about the molded-plastic seats of airports,
the blue sky murals and the silver jet piercing clouds between
the glossy ads for local hotels and rent-a-car establishments.

If it's travel you want, I'm the living brochure.

by
John
Grey



YOUR FLIGHT HAS
BEEN DELAYED

The Grand Canyon in the flesh is one thing but you should
see how grand it is on unfolded paper.

Paris, famed for its cuisine sure, but I sip over-priced
coffee, nibble stale cheese danish, while watching overhead monitors
that span the world with late arrivals, even later departures.

I don't even need to look through the picture windows,
see 737's taking off and landing.

The blinking military time says it all.

A man in uniform with wings on his lapel strolls by,
a briefcase slapping against his knee.

He's my captain thank you Whitman.

And two women, all in blue from shoes to peaked cap, follow.

The older one can be my mother, the younger, my wife.
Such a reward for my patience. Forget travel. An entire life.

Later, the word comes that the flight is cancelled.
They're trying to fit each and every one of us on a later one.

Does that mean this life is cancelled also?

Orphan. Widower. And still that overhead monitor
tells me that nothing is on time.

Even time itself is late. Its excuse is airplanes.





spare change

I know how to spare change, how
it rattles when the earth shakes—my father
cuts the slot into the old glass smoked
salmon can so I can save, says
we'll roll the pennies, nickels, take them
to the bank together like held hands—
together like cheap tobacco, I grab
his thumb wrong and burn my finger—
I don't cry and he apologizes, I don't
cry because the smoke doesn't kill him,
because I am young—my skin grows
so fast, the burn pink, the fish
cured. The money saved—this is where

by Ariadne Will

I was a year ago—in your sweater,
in the booth by the door, it was strange
watching my classmate in a body suit
and makeup playing pool—I felt bad
by morning for staining that sweater
in stale cigarette smoke and French
fry grease and you had walked home
alone and I followed you to bed—
we giggled about everything and
arose too early the next day. We've never
known how to use up our Fridays, have never
known the ecstasy of owning a fish smoker
or a motorboat, but I've never wanted
to rip a bong on the beach in springtime—
I've never wanted anything but bravery



of fish bones, of inflation of growing
up and timid-dancing in the living room—
my father tells me so many stories



and I believe them all—I believe
maybe time won't pass another birthday,
another round of salmon onshore, spent—
they fertilize like feeding their young, like
feeding beyond me, like surviving
to adulthood is more than escaping
predators but living as ourselves, somehow,
and I want to be all muscle, unseen, strong—
I want to be here—there—all the way
knowing the faces on the sidewalk, knowing
the September carcasses, hooked
mouths, dead skin. I miss



my father and the ocean and everything
else—how orange and blue are the same
at sunset, miss the macaroon I drop
in the middle of the road 18 years ago,
when this town still has a video rental store—
the ravens will eat it, I wail, knowing

in this future it's no longer the macaroon
I miss but the ravens. No longer
a departure I crave but an accounting,
something wearing out my pockets.



Backwater Saints

by
**Shereen
Rana**

The only light that ever fell
on the girl with
joints to her breath
was, if real at all,
red
and shaved.

A maladapted receipt, wiped,
spat up whole in the bar,
of how you bought yourself
and checked whether you'd grow mindless and tired
in those few nights to come.

Few nights to do the warm-ups.

I walked myself around in that drunkenness of trying to find where my mouth was.

The joints felt like a grown-up's pet.

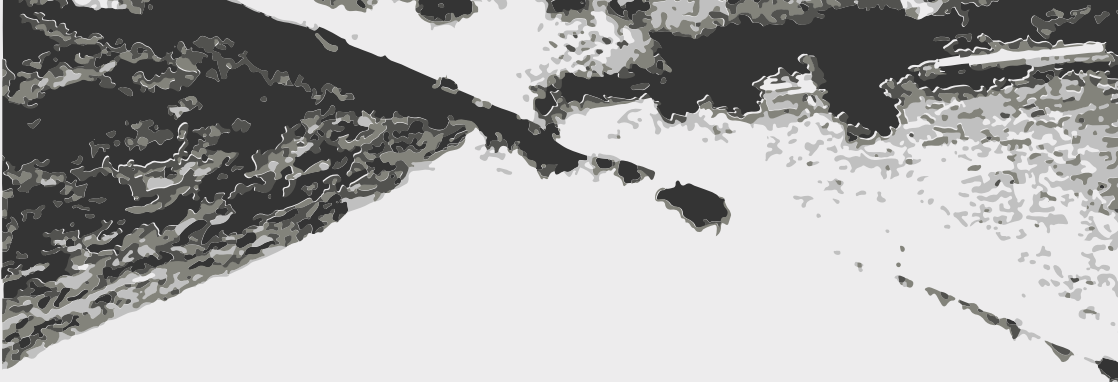
I circled the lights and they went out and I was young just like that. Aiming at car tyres
like they were wishes. That thread in adulthood I tried to pull out to stitch,
as if there was this wound
that had made me dusty.

Then there was the fear
that something was always going horribly wrong.

Posters tasting of bathed skin, only a little sacred, battles won near the hip-bone that went
down wrong

in the history books. Less split of ripe fruit
in your own hands, more
fugitive steps with empty aim.

There's been this heavy,
heavy thing around your neck and you say,
Oh, it's just been there since I was born.



You don't say I don't know how to deal with it.

At home, on the street, everywhere you try to be

there's the slingshot, the rap of it stretching farther everytime you think today maybe I'll be
good.

It's overhead, it's momentous, and yet,

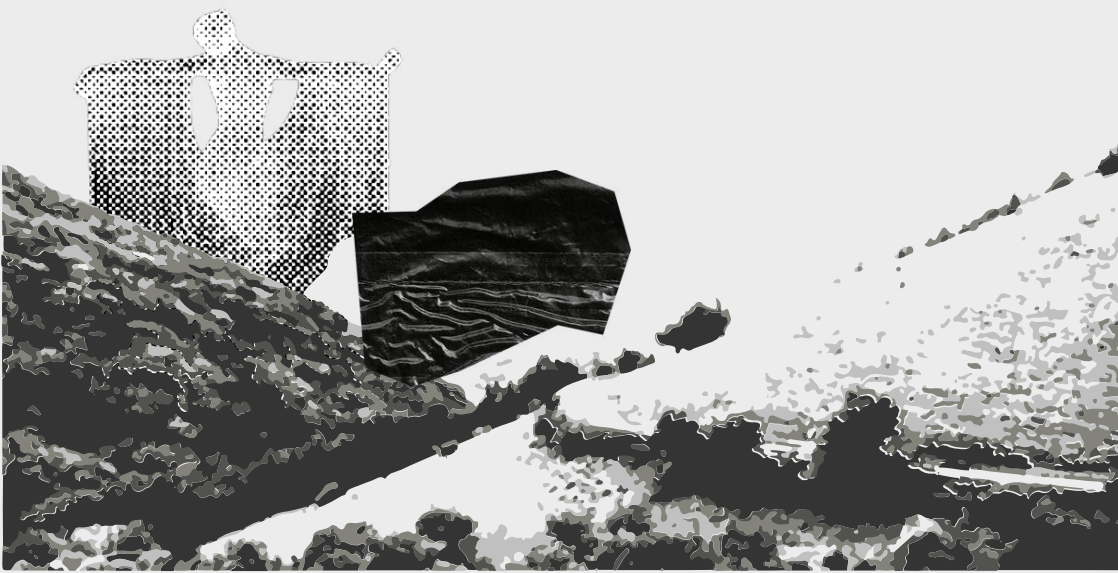
you know, the important parts of me never really made it through. Most homes have a
window, tall

and strong-boned, without
ever knowing it. Climbers penniless
like hounds. Take it all down;
scream how you would if

your skin was a stencil where you could be honest and full being run by your heart.

How you would if you knew

where exactly divinity kicked within your chest.





by
George
Sun

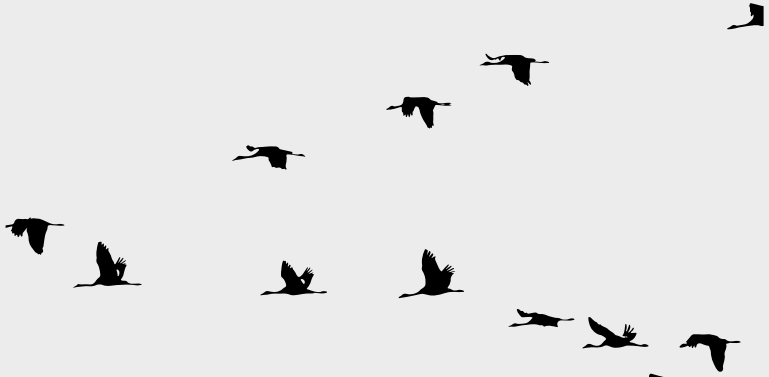
There's a

That lets you smoke cigarettes. And sells you alcohol
Until the sky turns you upside down and your
Face surrenders to the glistening sun at dawn. My father
Holds his hand out for a last toast but stumbled with his glass;

Red wine smears the white tablecloth. Drips
Of his memory have stained me. Blurs of men rush to the host seat. He is half
drunk. His broken English tells me his last straw has broken.

Before that, he told me his favorite parable
Of a boy who touched the sun out of burning curiosity.
My father's empty glass stood where he fell. It glistened
Like an empty halo.

Chinese Restaurant



COULD DEATH BE THE ONLY INHERITANCE?

Where the wood becomes root
all of the dead air rains down and
only a child left standing,
It's so warm here, it's warm here.

by Shereen Rana

If I Don't Tell the Truth About Myself

by Lisa Eve Cheby

*If you don't tell the truth about yourself,
you cannot tell it about other people.*

– Virginia Woolf

i.

I can pretend that my loathing
of my mother is not
self-loathing; I can
pretend I didn't wait at the door like the worried mother,
as if she did not deserve a twenty-minute detour
on the way home from the store, a vacation
from the burden of a life that she did not plan:

the happily-never-after of cancer in a husband's colon,
and days filled with the special misogyny
reserved for overweight widows, former housewives, who return
to work, where she wanted her kindness
to be her greatest gift, not a flower enduring the incessant barbs
of drones grumbling in their cubicles.

She held her voice
until her lungs hardened.

I loathed her
weakness, refused
to learn how to love
within conditions
I could not understand.

ii.

against our will and awareness, we drift
south of our belongings back on the beach
riding the waves of the Caribbean Sea
ten years after my mother's death, I pass the age
of my mother when my father died
I let the riptide of grief
hold me, carry me, until
I surface alone
in the breaking ocean



iii.

I glimpse my mother and I

as my friend tries to capture her daughter
in a frame

the twelve-year old turns to protest
"what? why are you looking at me?"

I, too, resented the weight

of my mother's eyes, so I put the expanse
of the desert between us and moved to an ocean her feet would never touch,
an ocean too cold for swimming



iv.

I watch my friend's arms and breasts straining
to escape the confines of her suit, straps sliding down her shoulders
my mother's shoulders,

shoulders I know she longs to have caressed
by someone not her daughter

who, though tall as her, is still a girl asking
to be held like a baby

as the ocean surges

around their bodies

and this body

that I loathe:

my mother's

mine

Can I learn to see

the undercurrents of lust

on seafoam-shimmered arms and breasts?

I wade out into the aquamarine

sea, softer than the Atlantic I knew, I whoop

like mom would involuntarily

I am swept off my feet

by the rise of the wave,

oh, to be loved and carried

the kiss of wet salt on my lips.



To Light a Match

A Short Story
by A. Sundeen

Content Warning :
Mentions of War and Injury

Whatever the word “aware” meant at the moment, Corporal David Miller was its opposite. He walked with the rest of his group, only faintly conscious of the blood that oozed from the aching wound in his arm. The rest of the world existed just beyond a thin veil of oblivion: the sloshing sound his boots made in the thick Vietnam mud, the throbbing in his knees born from constant movement, the overcast gray color the sky had taken on, the slight drizzle that sliced translucent rivulets through the mud caked on his face.

Somehow he caught the quiet murmurs exchanged between his colleagues, the heavy silence that hung between the words. Plastic bottles knocked against bullets and an altoid tin in his backpack, but they might as well have been silent. His thoughtlessness extended, even, to oblivion in regards to the goosebumps on his skin and the shivers all over that now shifted from gentle quivers to racking tremors. Only the sound of his teeth knocking against each other had the power to draw him back, thought by thought, to the present moment, to the last place he wanted to be.

Beside Corporal David Miller, a baby-faced kid with a mop of red hair and plenty of freckles to spare fished around in his pockets in search of God-knows what. He walked just a little too fast to keep the mud from splashing up on his pants, though that was easily the least of his worries. Kenny Woodward, perhaps the youngest of the group, simply could not ignore the trembling in his fingers, the way his stomach seemed to turn over on itself, the way his nausea grew with every cigarette-less place he searched. His pockets, his friends’ pockets, his bags, the nearby garbage cans they passed — all fruitless. All painfully empty. David jumped when Kenny knocked into him but could barely find the coherency to speak. “Watch it,” he mumbled, rubbing his elbow. “Bad arm.”

But Kenny Woodward only noticed that he now held Corporal David Miller’s attention.

“Got any sticks?” he asked, his face close enough to reek of fading tobacco.

“Not since mama,” he said, and three simple words set him back on a spiral. No longer was he a man of nearly nineteen, finally losing the childish roundness to his face, but an eight-year-old boy with his youthful look back in full.

His own house smelled like smoke, but didn't everyone's? A small thing, his house was, with pale green sidings, a dark gray roof, and a plum door. His mother took pride in that abomination, going so far as to take the cigarette out of her mouth to tell him of her days as an “exterior designer.” He had earned himself a good strike with the belt when he wondered out loud why, if she had such pride for this house, it had become such an eyesore.

Every day he would walk out of the house and inhale the sickeningly sweet scent of pure air. He would don a baseball cap to protect his face from the harsh light of the Arizona sun and walk to school. It was, somehow, the Maygrove town culture to have kids walking to school, from school, and everywhere in between beneath that ruthless sun. Maygrove totaled maybe ten thousand people, a small pocket of civilization in an ocean of sand. David, just one child in the midst of an entire lonely town, would never be aware of his own smallness of the world, at least not until ninth grade world history class. To be fair, anything could be a challenge when Marjorie Williams lived just a few doors down.

Marjorie Williams, a comically small girl of about David's age, shone brighter than the constant sun in the sky. The few times she had turned her own pretty smile on him had etched themselves permanently into his memory, and they left him with an addiction worse than Kenny's. She stood for the pledge every morning, said the words loudly and with a smile. Her dad had fought in World War II, she proclaimed proudly, and answered with gentle patience the barrage of questions that met her. David did not ask any himself, rather sat towards the back of the classroom and watched as she presented everything she knew.

The world had fallen in love with Marjorie, and Marjorie chose a specific few people to love in return. Eight-year-old David Miller was not one of them, though that hardly stopped him. He wrote *Mrs. Marjorie Miller* in a notebook, then *Mr. and Mrs. David Miller*. They would name their kids Lucas and Stephanie, he knew, and perhaps they would even have a dog. They would live in a house that didn't smell of cigarette smoke, but instead of lavender and roses, in a nice town surrounded by other towns instead of desert. He only needed one more glance, one more chance to meet her eyes, and perhaps in the moment of their shared gazes they would grow old together.

He knew it was foolish to imagine a life with Marjorie, he *knew*, but it was perhaps even harder to imagine one without her. She had only spoken to him in passing; he doubted she even knew his first name. In no universe, then, would she want to take his last one.

Marjorie Williams hugged him on the last day of school, when he announced he would be joining the effort in Vietnam. He even thought he might have seen a small tear take residence in the corner of her eye, but they both blinked and it disappeared. They broke away and, easily as if she had practiced in times past, Marjorie turned away to walk with her friends again. His existence likely faded in her mind, though in the rain of Vietnam her face shone as if she walked there beside him.

David tripped over a root and nearly splashed into the mud again. The present enveloped him fully now, arms wide and cold and wet. Kenny found his way from person to person; his search remained unsuccessful. David tried to lose himself in the walking again, the rhythm of left-right-left-right and the sloshing of the mud, to find his thoughts once again with Marjorie Williams and her warm departing hug. He approached that sort of paradise, the feeling warming up his chest again. Had he been given just a few more seconds, the moment might have manifested, transformed this dystopia in something in possession of real beauty. The seconds did not come.

The moment before an explosion is a strange one, one that to this day Corporal David Millier cannot properly describe. A veil dropped over the group — maybe not real at all but entirely palpable nonetheless — and everyone, in that instant, knew. A barely audible tick warned them too late, perhaps a noise from a trigger plate or a tripwire. Kenny, the likely culprit, refused to turn his eyes anywhere but the hiding place of a cigarette. He scrambled. He misstepped. Nobody saw how it happened, or if they did, there was a silent promise that they would never tell about it. Perhaps the group had not been the one to make it.

He watched the light expand in slow motion, enveloping Kenny Woodward's begging hands and addicted eyes like a warm blanket. It went out further, shifting from white to yellow to orange in the most gorgeous gradient he had ever seen. Time froze for Corporal David Miller in the moment he watched light envelop his world. His mother had screamed when she saw him, eight years old, sitting on the bed. In less than a second she had seen the matchbox in his left hand, the small match in his right, the still-smoking pile of charred wooden stubs on the carpeted floor next to him. David had struck the next match, watching as the fire took its place and counting down the seconds until the flame would reach his fingertips.

“David, you blow that out right now!” she yelled, with nearly enough force to shake their home. “You blow that out and give me those matches!”

But her voice faded in a long tunnel, fading farther as David watched the flame creep its way down to his fingers. At the center, where it shone brightest, the flame burned blue. Then it faded to yellow, then to orange at its edge. The wood it touched promptly shifted from tan to brown to crumbling black.

The flame reached his fingers, and David did not blow it out. He watched instead as it expanded out, further and further, engulfing the whole house until there David sat alone in the light. Kenny Woodward appeared in this almost-daydream, his top half flying over Corporal David Miller's head, the skin of his face blackened to a crisp and his eyes like runny eggs.

And over there, Miles arched his back with the grace of a ballerina. His left arm floated away from him, and the ring on his detached finger twinkling in the blinding light.

The light reached him at last, and his feet lifted off the ground. With the arrival of the blasting warmth came a snap, or a pop, or a thud, or a boom. He had never heard anything so terribly loud, something so in the moment that he could think of nothing else. It was small and big and gentle and it made the world tremble.

Then it ended. Over. Done. Corporal David Miller lay on his back, cold in the absence of heat, deaf in the absence of sound. Sensation did not reach his foot, but his ankle shrieked in silent agony; a river flowed from his shoulder into the pond in his stomach, both flooding the banks to create a lake beneath his back. Ringing finally arrived in his ears and the world gained just a touch of clarity, enough to see the person standing over him. He only felt his face after the third hard slap.

“Miller? Don’t leave us now, kid, stay awake.”

But Corporal David Miller could barely hear the person above him, not over the ringing in his ears. “What?” he asked, perhaps louder than he had intended. And then hands reached down to him, rolling him over, and he floated through the air on a stretcher. The same person walked beside him, talking to someone carrying the other end of Corporal David Miller’s stretcher.

“Do you think they’re having any more luck?”

The person at his feet gives a low whistle, the sound nearly lost in the static of Corporal David Miller’s head.

“Three hours since the blow? Think we’re lucky to get one.”

Three hours, Corporal David Miller thought for a fleeting moment, was impossible. The explosion just happened, and he just landed. He just saw Kenny’s runny egg eyes and Miles’ ring gleaming in the deadly light. He had just sat on his bed at home, lighting a match and barely hearing his mother.

Marjorie had just hugged him at school, saying goodbye though they had barely said hello in the first place. This time, this right-now, could not be the present. He could not be here, not in Vietnam when there so much had just happened at home.

Then he wasn't in Vietnam at all anymore.

Corporal David Miller woke up to a long room, a curiously wide corridor. Curtains rose on either side of his bed, but across the aisle he could see others laying down. Some of them blinked into wakefulness, while others slept far away in a dream world of their own. Blood and bandages surrounded him, as did the scent of mint and chemicals. As David moved his head, his vision lagged just a few moments like the tail end of a worm.

He struggled to stay in the real world, to remain a soldier of nineteen years rather than a child digging around in the mud in search of a worm. He blinked the thought away, then again, then again until it sat dormant but waiting in the back of his mind.

Still no feeling took residence in his foot. With an aching lack of strength, he lifted his head to see his foot — no, to see its absence.

His stump of a leg ended just above the ankle in a wad of barely-bloodstained gauze. The ringing returned to his ears in full, a high-pitched electric buzz with a terribly constant force.

Something had gone wrong, deeply wrong, and his face flushed with embarrassment at the relief he felt at the thought. An amputee soldier? Unheard of. Corporal David Miller was going home.

Twenty-six years later, Dave Miller walks easily with a prosthetic foot and a cane. The buzzing, constant in his ears, is merely background noise. He lets his mind wander as he walks the hiking trail, the last layer of frost on the grass crunching beneath his feet. He inhales the spring air, holding it for as long as his lungs can take. In the hints of life the wind carries, he swears he can smell rain and gunsmoke.

He walks along, nodding at the couple that passes him. They offer gentle smiles and continue on with their lives, and somewhere ahead Dave Miller hears the sound of a laughing child. It's been too long since he's heard it. His pace increases just a touch, until he comes upon the source of the noise.

Eight-year-old David, a kid with curly dark hair, a freckled ruddy face, and a history of close calls with a matchbook, tells a knock-knock joke. Corporal David Miller, with a bloodied stump of an ankle and blood running rivers throughout his uniform, who once survived only on daydreams of Mrs. Marjorie Miller, howls out a laugh in response.

They both turn to look, but Dave Miller remains motionless. They return to their play, content to be observed by their older counterpart. Apathetic to the way the mess coats their clothes, they splash around in the mud in a gleeful scavenger hunt. Was he once so truly carefree?

Eight-year-old David, not yet truly Corporal David Miller, barely Dave Miller at all, pulls a worm from the mud.

"Found one!" he calls, and David Miller, for the first time in nearly a year, lets himself smile. Their laughter mingles with the ringing in his ears to create the closest thing to harmony he's heard in a while.

II

BEHIND

featuring

Susie Armstrong

Anna Gordon

and interviews with :

Angelique Press

Iron Knee Zine

Writing Hand Magazine

Perennial Press

HaluHalo Journal



by
Susie
Armstrong





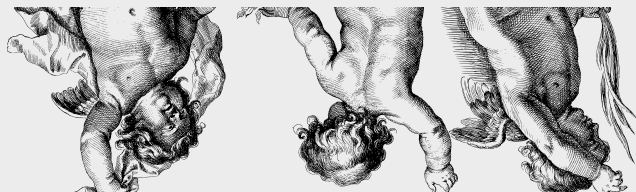
ZINE FRONTLINE *with* Angelique Zine

On your website, Angelique Zine describes itself as “not a typical zine”. Could you explain in which areas Angelique Zine may operate differently than its contemporaries, and the consequential positive and negative effects?

Aside from being a zine and a publication, Angelique also serves as a community and a space on the Internet where creatives could showcase their work. In a way, I would consider this zine as a virtual gallery as well. I code the zine’s site from scratch and use various social media platforms frequently to spread the word about the zine. For example, we use Tumblr to promote the zine, which is quite uncommon with our contemporaries. We like broadening our horizons by using websites that most creatives use.

Leanne Ubaldo, Angelique Zine’s founder and editor in chief, seems to have experience in the Zine Community through the Lunar Journal and the Trailblazer Review. How has working with these publications impacted the creation and management of Angelique Zine?

My experience with these amazing publications are all about marketing and public relations, and I think that allows me to value social interactions more, especially through the Internet where various information is so accessible. It also made me realize the importance of building a community and being able to connect with so many talented & like-minded artists.



What was something unexpected (good or bad) that surprised you during the process of creating Angelique Zine ?

- I wasn't that surprised with the technical stuff like the graphic design, website maintenance, or even the submission review process. However, I was so amazed with the stories behind the submissions we received. For context, we have an aptly named "description" text field in our form, and we wanted submitters to tell us what the piece/s meant to them & what inspired them to create those. It's so crazy how similar experiences & observations in our daily life blossom into these amazing masterpieces and we can't wait to share some of them to everyone very soon!

We know it's a bit early, but could you sum up the vibe/aesthetic of your first issue in three words?

- Authentic, expressive and... angelic, of course!

We really like the dreamy, futuristic, Y2K-esque aesthetic Angelique Zine has been maintaining on the zine's website and social media. Could you elaborate on the connection between the zine's objective and visual style ? Will Angelique Zine's upcoming issue continue these design choices as well ?

Thank you for noticing it! It's really awesome that you mention "Y2K", because when I was creating the design for the zine's website and social media, I was really inspired by personal websites made by creatives and computer hobbyists on the Small Web which, incidentally, is reminiscent of Web 1.0 and early Web 2.0. The principles of this corner of the web align with what I want to achieve with the zine, that is, showing each and everyone's unique perspective and creativity. Our dreamy aesthetic and design choices will be present in our issues too, however we are open to explore more visual styles that can express the unique stories of our contributors as well.

Please share a smaller goal and an overarching goal Angelique Zine hopes to achieve in 2023!

We're currently reviewing the pieces we received from our last submission window, which is a lot! Our goal right now is to forward all submission decisions, so we could get our first issue done this May. Some overarching goals we want to achieve soon are to receive more visual art subs, and to be able to publish & distribute print copies of our zine issues!

Just because we're curious, what are Angelique Zine's favorite submissions received so far? We want to know what to look out for when your first issue drops!

Seeing our submission form statistics, our first issue will be mostly filled with wonderful & stellar poetry It's actually so difficult to choose favorites though. We love every piece we receive!





ZINE FRONTLINE *with* Iron Knee Zine

Please describe the inspiration and creation process behind the Iron Knee Zine. Was there any difficulty marketing a comedy-themed zine as opposed to something more traditional ?

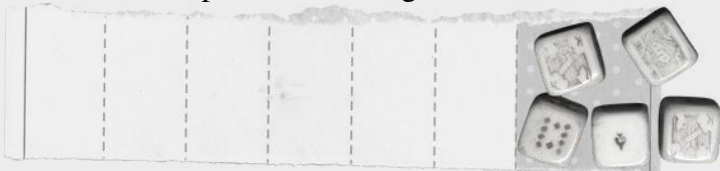
I (the creator) have been involved in the zine/mag scene for a couple of years now. I just haven't seen many projects focused on comedy and lightheartedness. Since I have some experience behind the scenes, I felt somewhat qualified to start my own project. I want to make something absurdist and funny, something that's not afraid to be bad. I respect and really enjoy the creations that take themselves seriously, but I love working on something that doesn't.

There is some difficulty in developing a brand and having that brand be funny. We're really looking for some staff members (please apply) that can help develop Iron Knee's sense of humor.

In your team recruitment post we see that the Iron Knee Zine is looking for advice columnists and fortune tellers—could you expand on how these positions relate to the magazine's theme of comedy ?

In my ideal scenario, we'll have some comedy writers who can do parodies of what people normally think of when they see advice columns and horoscopes. I think these are both great mediums to express a unique spin on something traditional.

Additionally, I want Iron Knee to be something interactive that people will want to keep coming back to and engaging with. I'm really hoping to find some writers to fit these positions and a game master!



As the Iron Knee Zine has submissions open for both art and writing, what is the predicted ratio of accepted submissions, and is there any type of humor preferred ?

So far, we've mostly gotten art submissions and they have been so good. I am really looking forward to getting some writing pieces in because I think there is so much potential. Personally, I gravitate towards outlandish and absurdist stuff, and things that are so bad they're good. BUT we want to see any type of humor!! The issues and their humor will focus on the pieces that are submitted and how they complement each other.

Pieces I would love to see: bad photography, scene kid selfies, erotic Christian fanfiction, reviews of bad movies no one's seen, personal essays about a bad sex experience, funky art, parody poetry.

Since humor is very subjective, how does the Iron Knee Zine decide whether a piece is a good fit for the zine ? Is there a criteria or common indicators ?

Although humor is our main focus, we really look for anything that sticks out from the rest. Something completely out-there and silly. We really want pieces that are fun for the sake of being fun.

The only criteria that we will hold onto is that it can't be something hateful. As we began this project, I had the fear that people would see our space as an opportunity to share their offensive humor that other mags wouldn't take. Luckily, we haven't gotten any of that, so fingers crossed for the future.

We know it's a bit early, but could you sum up the vibe/aesthetic of your first issue/collection in three words ?

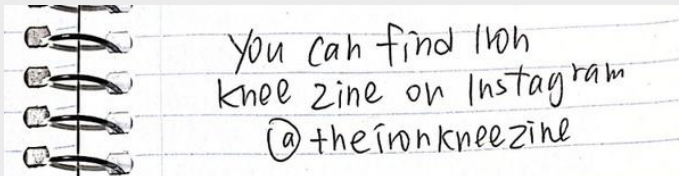
Sexy, silly, sacrilegious.

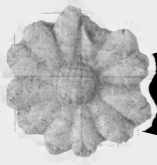
Please share a smaller goal and an overarching goal the Iron Knee Zine hopes to achieve in 2023!

Iron Knee needs staff members!! So we're really hoping to develop a strong team this year. That will help us reach our goal of having our first issue come out. Since we're so new, we really just want to develop our brand and start putting stuff out there.

And lastly, just because we're curious, what is the funniest piece of media the staff/editor of the Iron Knee Zine has consumed recently ?

Over the holiday break, I've been rewatching all of Drew Gooden's YouTube videos. I love his dry sense of humor and the wild shit that he finds to talk about.





ZINE FRONTLINE *with* Writing Hand Magazine

Please describe the inspiration and creation process behind Writing Hand Magazine. What made you decide a magazine would be the best way to inspire others to write ?

I teach creative writing to school kids for work, which means my laptop is banked up with writing prompts and activities that I've written for my students - kids love writing prompts! But so do adults! And it can be really hard to find good ones online sometimes! So the magazine came about from wanting a single place that had a variety of interesting, fun writing prompts and activities, and realising that I had the resources to make that place myself. I figured that a magazine would provide more opportunities to engage with other writers and develop a community than a website would, and I'd get to have a bit more fun with the design and social media presence with a magazine, too.

Re your "About" post on Instagram, we find it intriguing Writing Hand Magazine accepts so many genres of written work, when some of the categories don't seem to go together. How do you market the publication and curate submissions so the zine issues are cohesive ?

The best thing about writing prompts is that they are always interpreted so differently by every person who responds to them - one person can write a short story based on the same prompt that inspired someone else to make a comic strip, or pitch a TV pilot, or write a poem. There are so many different areas and types and genres and styles of writing, and we want to read them all! This is why we're so happy to accept any type of submission - we're a lot more focused on showcasing our readers' work than worrying about cohesion.



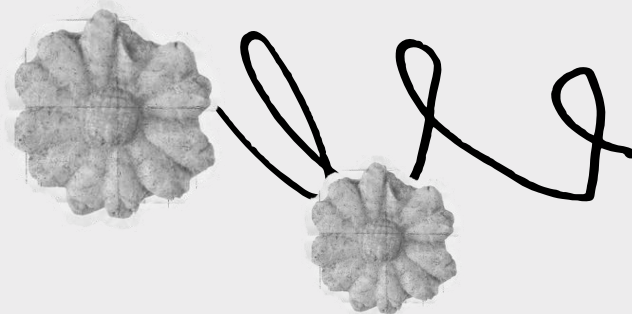


What was something unexpected (good or bad) that surprised you during the process of creating Writing Hand Magazine ?

I really enjoyed the design process! Being a writer meant that design wasn't something that I'd really engaged with before creating Writing Hand Magazine, and I was surprised by how exciting and inspiring I found it. Designing the first issue was a great learning experience and I'm very grateful to my more design-literate friends who were there to help me whenever I needed it.

It seems like community and interaction are essential to Writing Hand Magazine's operations—were there any times you were surprised with what a submitter came up with in response to a prompt ?

Every submission manages to surprise us in some way! Writing Hand Magazine is still very new but we can already tell that our community has a lot of lovely, unique, weird, wonderful and incredibly talented writers that are engaging with the prompts we've put out there. We're so excited to read every submission that comes through, and we're grateful for all the support and feedback we're getting so far.

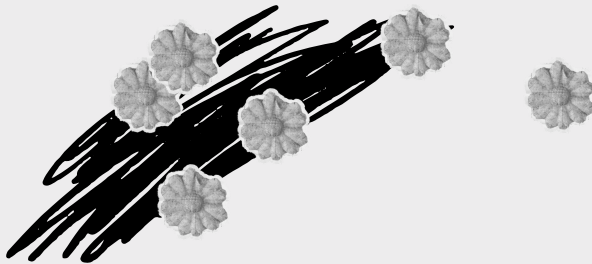


It is very impressive how Writing Hand Magazine has print copies of your first issue available for purchase already—are there any goals to get copies in stores ?

We actually didn't have plans to print Issue One of WHM, but we were incredibly fortunate that our friends and supporters at Melbourne Young Writers' Studio generously funded a limited print run of our first issue! And the print copies of issue one just look so pretty in our hands and on our coffee tables that we've decided we're definitely going to continue printing future issues, too. For now, they'll just be available through our website, but if an independent bookstore or supporter of small literary magazines wants to reach out to us about selling them too, you know where to find us!

Please share a smaller goal and an overarching goal Writing Hand Magazine hopes to achieve in 2023!

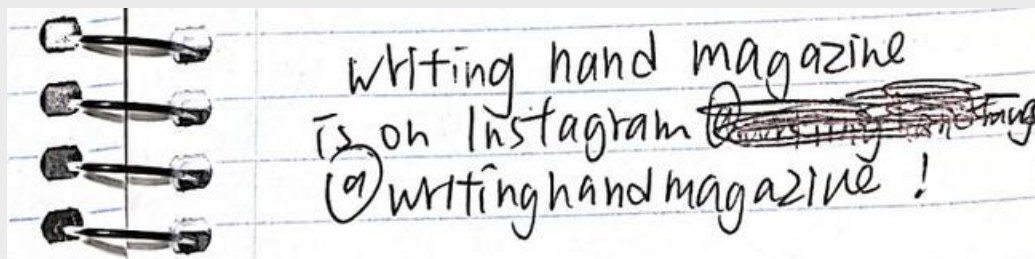
A smaller goal that we're working towards before we launch Issue Two is building relationships with other like-minded journals and magazines in our community! We understand that our submission guidelines are a bit more specific than others, so we're featuring a list of wonderful literary journals, magazines and online publishers who also accept submissions in a section of our next issue called "Friends of Ours." We're so pleased that Palindrome Journal is included on that list! An overarching goal for 2023 is to give our readers a large and interesting variety of writing prompts and activities that can be enjoyed by every kind of writer - we're excited to work towards that in every issue.



And lastly, just because we're curious, does the theme of daisies on Writing Hand Magazine's website, social media and issues represent anything ? It's a very pretty motif!

The daisies are purely aesthetic! We're a Melbourne-based magazine, and the daisies were in full bloom while we were putting together our first issue, so that was what inspired the theme. Our next issue's theme (without giving too much away) is going to be "things that float on the wind", which we're looking forward to revealing!

EDITOR'S NOTE : At the time of this issue's publication, Writing Hand Magazine has successfully published their second issue which can be accessed for free through the link in their Instagram bio.



ZINE FRONTLINE *with* Perennial Press

To what extent is the Perennial Press involved with their published works ? (As in evaluation editing, substantial editing, book cover design, promotional campaigns and etcetera ...)

We do all of it! We usually put out a call to authors, read through all the submissions (last time we got a few hundred) and choose our favorites to publish. From there, we go through a few rounds of editing, then book cover design, typesetting the collection, and promotion! The only thing we don't do is print it ourselves. We work with the authors every step of the way too, it's truly a collaborative process!

We're really impressed that the Perennial Press has distributors all over America and in five other countries/cities. Please describe how these distribution deals came to be, and whether there were any unexpected difficulties in the process!

Honestly, cold outreach has been our friend! Our EIC will either email bookstores and see if they want to stock our books, or just walk into stores with our books and see who is interested. It has been so rewarding to see our books travel throughout the world to different readers!

When reading submitted manuscripts, apart from works that explore the trauma and resilience in our histories and visions of more just futures, are there any troupes, plot elements, writing styles or character archetypes the editors tend to prefer ?

We love experimental works, from playing with language and form to even mixing genres. We love to see authors creating works that are unlike anything we've ever read, and that stay with us for a long time.

Perennial Press launched and introduced their first release shortly before the pandemic began—has transitioning back into a face to face, less isolated world affected Perennial Press’s internal operations or advertising strategies ?

We did launch right before the pandemic, in fall 2019! With our first release, we had launch parties in three cities across the US, which was really fun. For subsequent releases, we’ve moved to all digital events, so it’s definitely changed it a bit, but our editors met online, so most of our work was done remotely anyway! We do miss in-person readings though, they have a different energy.

As the Perennial Press mostly distributes physical books, would the staff consider the manufacturing and distribution process to be environmentally friendly, or are there any plans to make it more so in the future ?

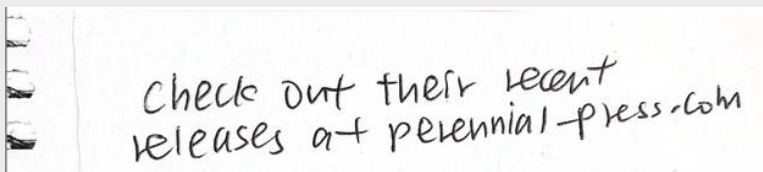
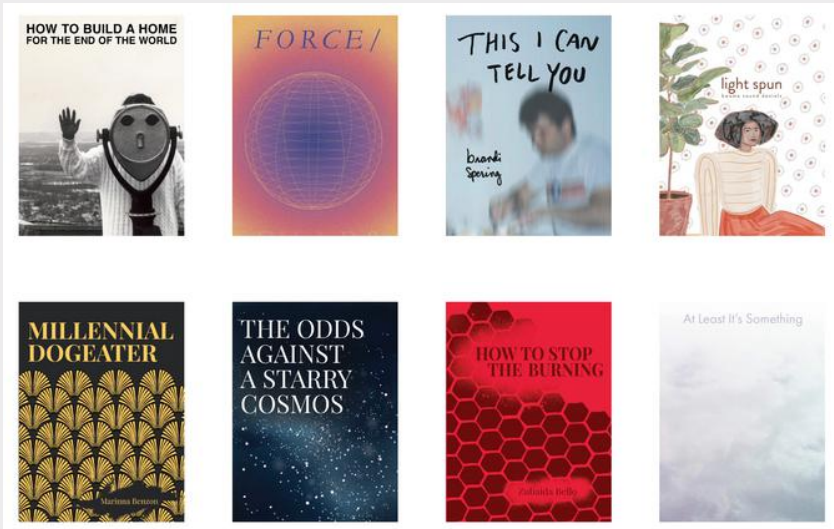
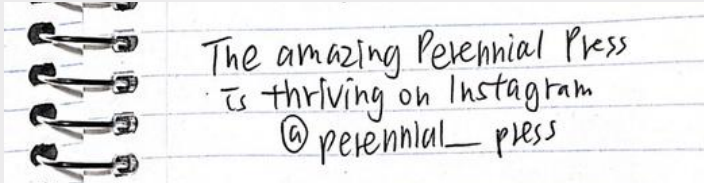
Unfortunately there is no perfectly environmental publishing process, since even digital works use electricity and power. We do small-batch printing though, only printing around 200 books at a time, which helps, and we distribute locally whenever possible at events around our editors. We also try to use local printers when possible to lessen our impact!

Please share a smaller goal and an overarching goal the Perennial Press hopes to achieve in 2023!

We have two books coming out this year that we are super excited to put into the world! One is a poetry collection about cities, sex work, and the body, called Hemorrhaging Want & Water and the other is an anthology called Arthropoda! Our smaller goal is to release those and our larger goal is to get our books into more hands around the world and our local communities – we will be doing another round of bookstore outreach this year, so wish us luck on that.

And lastly, just because we're curious, what are the Perennial Press's favorite books read in 2023 so far ? We love the Bookshop reading lists.

One of our editors, Madi, finished Bliss Montage by Ling Ma recently and can't stop talking about it!





ZINE FRONTLINE *with* Halu Halo Journal

In your "About Us" post, it states that one of HaluHalo Journal's goals is to 'empower Southeast Asian youth through writing and art'. What specific actions are HaluHalo Journal taking to empower the Southeast Asian community, and by what metric will you be measuring your impact ?

We are currently accepting and reviewing works from Southeast Asian artists and writers to be published in Issue I. Through Instagram, Twitter, and email interactions, we are also working diligently to ensure that HaluHalo Journal is a space where all Southeast Asian writers and artists feel welcome to submit their pieces. HaluHalo Journal's impact is more qualitative than quantitative, and we strive to show the beauty that Southeast Asian youth can produce.

What was something unexpected (good or bad) that surprised you during the process of creating HaluHalo Journal ?

Website building definitely surprised us during the process! It was very, very difficult for us to figure out how to make a website, let alone publish it! That part of the process was definitely... interesting.

Please share a smaller goal and an overarching goal HaluHalo Journal hopes to achieve in 2023!

Small goal – We hope to publish Issue I soon! Overarching goal – We hope to reach all 11 Southeast Asian countries!



HaluHalo Journal describes itself as an online, student-run journal. Could you explain the founding and staff recruitment process of the journal ?

HaluHalo Journal was founded by Cathleen and Mary, two Filipino-American twins living in New York. When searching for literary arts journals to submit to, we found that there were so many journals dedicated to races and ethnicities of all kinds — but none dedicated to Southeast Asian youth. We also recognized that Southeast Asians are rarely represented in mass media. As such, we decided to create our own journal in hopes of reaching other Southeast Asian creatives.

We're particularly interested that HaluHalo Journal accepts personal memoirs, reflections and opinion pieces. That's not a commonly accepted genre for many literary and arts publications. Could you explain the thought process behind that ?

Because we're a journal dedicated to uplifting Southeast Asian youth, we thought it was only fitting for us to accept personal memoirs, reflections, and opinion pieces. By including those genres, we hope to encourage Southeast Asian youth to share their own unique perspectives on our platform.

We know it's a bit early, but could you sum up the vibe/aesthetic of your first issue in three words ?

Authentic, contemplative, and of course, haluhalo!

And lastly, just because we're curious, what are HaluHalo Journal's recommended haluhalo toppings ? We want to hear from the experts !

Coconut milk, sweetened banana, sago, and of course, ube ice cream!

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To Fight or Match
a Film Analysis

Halting
Time
in
"Aftersun"

by Anna Gordon

Content Warning :
Mentions of War and Injury

Charlotte Wells' feature-length directorial debut is a home video that cuts off before everything goes wrong. *Aftersun* is a study of childhood memory through the lens of Sophie (Frankie Corio), an eleven-year-old girl on a summer holiday to Turkey with her single father, Calum (Paul Mescal). It is a slow and tranquil story, wrapped in a ribbony parcel of quiet conversation and sluggish, summery scenes of peace. But there are sharp slashes of discomfort throughout, reminders that this holiday was the climax of Sophie and Calum's relationship; the last memory Sophie has with her father. The story is contextualised through an adult Sophie, now with a wife and baby, watching the video recordings from this holiday and trying to make sense of what she couldn't comprehend as a child.

Aftersun traverses the depths of memory with lingering shots of stillness and indistinct impressions of bodies in the near-dark of the Turkish night; a few scenes in Calum and Sophie's small hotel room take place in almost pitch-black, where they sleep, breathe, and move around each other. Wells' preference to draw out shots creates a strangely concurrent feeling of rest and unease. We're invited to stay in this memory, to linger uncomfortably, to watch these moments and question why they're transpiring. There's a focus on details in many shots; shoulders, hands, necks, skies, and bodies of water. The enormity of these details to Sophie is easy to believe. She is a child on the cusp of teenagehood, attempting to make sense of the world around her and her place within it. This holiday, and consequently, this film, is a liminal space through which Sophie and Calum cross. There is no monumental action or climax, there is only the end of this holiday and the yearning for understanding which follows it.

Early in the film, two teenage boys play pool with Sophie and Calum at their resort. One of them mistakes Calum for Sophie's brother, and he softly corrects them. He's courteous and unsurprised; this has happened before, perhaps. But the boy's implication is important.

Later, a scene of Calum taking off Sophie's sunscreen with a cotton pad is followed shortly after by Sophie wiping Calum's face clean instead. At a poolside dinner one night at their resort, Calum instructs Sophie to throw a bread roll at the stage of dancing resort workers, and run away without paying for their food. Calum himself is a boy, and he and Sophie look after each other equally. His youth is further emphasised when he resignedly tells a diving instructor, out of earshot of Sophie, that he "can't see himself at forty" and is "surprised he made it to thirty", an indication that his younger years were not easy. He's a young man with an eleven-year-old daughter who he doesn't see often — he asks Sophie early on how her life with her mother is back home — and he's undoubtedly depressed and perhaps suicidal. Scenes of him forcing Sophie to sing karaoke by herself when she assumed he would join her, or of him running into the Turkish sea at night with no witnesses, while Sophie is oblivious to his whereabouts, create turbulent undercurrents of uncomfortable distress and fear for Calum. He is so young, unsure and anxious, something Sophie only realises while watching back the footage they shot on this holiday.

Capturing the essence of innocent childhood memory marred by the disjointed realisation that not everything was okay is not an easy feat, but is something Charlotte Wells manages to achieve. The film is interspersed with abstract scenes of an adult Sophie in a dark nightclub where she can see glimpses of her father, the visuals assaulting the senses with flickering strobe lighting. This is Calum as he exists in Sophie's mind. He's wearing the clothes she last saw him in at the airport after their holiday, and he's dancing as they danced on their last night together. It's never revealed what happened to Calum that resulted in the disintegration of their relationship; whether it was suicide, if he exited her life by choice, or if circumstance forced them to part. But surprisingly, it doesn't actually matter. Calum asks Sophie near the end of the film if she can promise to talk to him about difficult things as she grows up, specifically pertaining to boys, parties, and drugs.

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There's an unspoken implication that this promise was ultimately unable to be upheld. A moment of sweet vulnerability and bonding becomes tainted by the bittersweet realisation that Calum's plea for Sophie to trust him is futile and his assumption that Sophie will remain in his life is naive. Later, on a day trip taken on Calum's birthday, Sophie and a crowd of tourists sing "He's a Jolly Good Fellow" to Calum as he stands at the top of Turkish steps and peers at the crowd below. He is gazing down from a pedestal that Sophie has placed him on. This image slowly fades into a darkly lit shot of Calum's back as he sits on the bed of their hotel room, heaving ugly sobs. This jarring transition juxtaposes how Sophie sees Calum with how he is truly feeling, something a younger Sophie never saw or understood.

Sophie asks Calum if they can stay for longer on their last day, indicating the comfortable endlessness of this holiday. The shot lingers on a developing polaroid that they had just taken, suspending them in time together, in this moment and in this hotel in Turkey. Through the abstract flashforwards, we see Sophie reaching for Calum through the strobe lights, shouting at him. They embrace, and then Calum falls backwards, watching as Sophie lets him go. Understanding exactly what happened on the holiday that resulted in Calum exiting Sophie's life is elusive, even to Sophie — but as Calum falls from an adult Sophie's embrace, it feels like she's finally letting go, time resuming.

Once Calum has waved goodbye to Sophie at the airport, he switches off the camera and walks through double doors into the darkly lit room of moving bodies and strobe lights. This is where he was residing, perpetually frozen, in Sophie's mind. As we close out of the shot, we hear a baby crying, Sophie's baby. She is now a mother as Calum was once a father.

The cycle continues, and time crawls on.





◀END of Issue 1▶