

THE TIGER MOTH REVIEW
ISSUE 6





THE TIGER MOTH REVIEW

A biannual journal of art + literature that engages with nature, culture, the environment and ecology

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The Tiger Moth Review is an eco-conscious journal based in Singapore that publishes art and literature engaging with the themes of nature, culture, the environment and ecology. The journal publishes primarily in English, but also accepts non-English work and their translated English counterparts. We are committed to creating a space for minority, marginalised and underrepresented voices in society.

Editor-in-chief: Esther Vincent Xueming

Issue 6, 2021
ISSN: 2661314X

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Editor's Preface

This issue, I'm thinking of kin-making, across borders and boundaries, visible and invisible. While working on Issue 6, I've also been busy co-editing *Making Kin*, an ecofeminist collection of personal essays from Singapore (forthcoming, Ethos Books), as well as working with my publisher Blue Cactus Press to put together my debut poetry collection, *Red Earth*. As part of marketing for *Red Earth*, I conducted an [eco feminist poetry writing workshop *Entangled Empathy*](#), which made kin with women from various parts of the world, whose expertise and backgrounds ranged from publishing, visual arts, education to the military. Despite our differences, we came to the workshop with a shared purpose: to explore the entanglements in poetry, nature and the environment, and the role and place of the woman within these discourses.

Kin-making typifies environmental work, and reciprocity is the guiding principle by which the natural world operates. Through cooperation, interdependent species are more likely to survive than if they were to go it alone. The symbiotic relationship between tree roots and mycelium, also known as the mycorrhizal network, is one such example, where interdependence is mutually beneficial to both species. Similarly, in recognising the interconnections between ourselves and others, we are more likely to be able to imagine and work towards more democratising and inclusive visions of what a sustainable planet looks like, for all stakeholders, including our human and more-than-human kin that inhabit this earth.

Two documentaries I watched recently that foreground this sense of interbeing are Netflix's *My Octopus Teacher* and *Seaspiracy*. While the former has inspired in me a greater love of the wild, of wild places, plants and animals, the latter, in spite of and perhaps because of its controversy, convinces me that we cannot claim to devote ourselves to nature without considering our human nature, that is to eat others in order to survive. Mary Oliver writes about this "other-creature-consuming appetite" in her chapter "Sister Turtle", and while I am a long way from turning vegan (let's remember that plant life is just as sacred as animal life, as plant medicine will teach us), I'm more conscious about my entanglements with the lives of others that I recognise are bound to me in one way or another.

Issue 6 is our largest issue yet, with works that honour wild plants and flowers in the poems of **Meenakshi Palaniappan** (Singapore) and **Maria Nemy Lou Rocio** (Pangasinan-Hong Kong), as well as the photography of **Heather Teo** (Singapore). We enter forests with **Tanvi Dutta Gupta** (San Francisco-Singapore-India) and **Zen Teh** (Singapore), leaving a bit of ourselves behind each time in its encompassing arms, we marvel at the moon's music and magic with **Sofia Wutong Rain (Beijing-USA-UK)** and **Lauren Bolger** (Illinois, USA). We navigate sorrow, grief and loss with **Thomas Bacon's** (Sitka, Alaska, USA) "Currents" and we grow old with **Cassandra J. O'Loughlin** (Newcastle, Australia). The bilingual poems of **Fran Fernández Arce** (Santiago, Chile-Suffolk, England) and **Joshua Ip** (Singapore) take us to the fields and rivers of language and dreams, while **Danielle Fleming** (Louisville, Kentucky, USA) dreams her speaker into memory, tree and elephant song. After **Verna Zafra-Kasala** (The Philippines-Guahan (Guam)) questions the habitability of home in "After the Fires", **Lauren Lara's** (Angleton, Texas, USA) *Make Space* offers us a way of making home hospitable to others in our midst.

As you take your time with this issue, I invite you to meditate on these lines from **Theophilus Kwek's** (Singapore) poem, which reminds us of the omnipresence of the other, whether we are aware of it or not: "and all /around us the river radiant everywhere".

Esther Vincent Xueming

The Tiger Moth Review

Two poems by Theophilus Kwek

Pasar

on the clearest nights from the tallest floors
you can still see the dragon's tail of it
laid out against the night's extravagance

swaddling the old church river of light
a thousand small fires dancing on the gas
see the first red roof of the neighbourhood

raised above the swamp where pastor nga
used to tell the story of his lost left shoe
swallowed by the earth before all this land

was piled firm enough for them to build on
houses to hold every one of us
corridors stacked right into the sky

how we loved those long and endless railings
taking our first steps high up in the air
the new grey stone still sticky underfoot

till the earth pulled us to the ground again
brought us back out on the hottest nights
aunty hasmah with her fresh bowls of ice

her kerosene lamp a lighthouse above
our heads the crowd pressed behind and all
around us the river radiant everywhere

Allegory of Rain

GE 2020

Theophilus Kwek

After silence, heat. And after heat it falls,
falls; will not be held against its will, drains
the sky blue. Gone from the air, its weight
takes new shape from cracks in the soil,

blunts blades of grass, by swelling in places
moves the brown earth to make a way. How
gladly it runs underfoot. Listen. On another
island which has come to silence, they say,

be like water. Here, where we once thought
the rains were scarce, we sit at round tables
and await each coming party, their clean
smiles, cameras eager as promises. What

we know, we know. Not from this sound or
fury, but a wisdom in our hands: how water
put to boil, makes the charred grounds sing.
How suddenly storms come to dance on zinc.

Two poems by Meenakshi Palaniappan

Mushrooms in the Rain

If I stand here by the curb
all day long in the rain,
will I see mushrooms sprout,
and spread open their caps?

I've been watching my kids
near ten years now.
I haven't been able to
catch them at it,
yet here they are,
one, almost at my height.

Maybe this magic
happens only at night.
Invisible threads
tug at fingers and toes.

Perhaps we are not meant
to see this change unfold
lest we grab hold,
unwilling
to let their baby fat vanish,
along with the wonder
their eyes express,
at dew drops on leaves.

We just go about our days
reminding them
to brush their teeth,
pack their bags, and
drink their milk,
until, suddenly
they are reaching down
to comfort us.

While we can't hold on,
we can hold fast
each fleeting moment
as it passes

so at least we notice,
there are mushrooms here
where there were none before.

The Grass Grows Wild

Written as the end of the circuit breaker loomed

Meenakshi Palaniappan

The grass grows wild
like my son's hair
during the lockdown,
curling and tumbling
wantonly.

Bees, butterflies,
grasshoppers,
they flit among
the dancing lallang,
and rest on
dandelions.

I dread the end,
when this lush
paradise will be
manicured,
the wild grass tamed
so no wildflowers can bud
in this perfectly greened city.

Field Guide to MacRitchie Forest

Kilometer markers: 5 km / 6 km - 6 km / 5 km (Golf course to Ranger's station)

Tanvi Dutta Gupta

5 KM / 6 KM

It's when you have to leave briefly that you realize how the concrete traps the sun, how the buildings toss the heat back and forth. How the people—you—slowly rotate within the microwave of the city, plucked and left to cure like pork jerky. So it strikes harder when you re-enter, taking the path past the lake into the trees. The way the coolness hits your cheek with physical sensation. This isn't just hiding from the sky: the dark green leaves let the heat flow off like water. The vines exhale vapor and pull the hard hotness from the air. All the edges soften.

So far, I have walked with at least ten people who have told me *MacRitchie doesn't feel like Singapore*. To me, this is all that feels like Singapore. My skin slick, the branches thick. Nothing to nick me but rocks and the rock-still gold of the whip snake's eye. I slip into its embrace. The slit at the centre like a keyhole; here, I feel whole. My body held by breeze. With deep breaths, I swallow it. Mouth open, I wallow in it.

5.5 KM / 5.5 KM

Can you keep a secret? I gave my first kiss away here. In the rain, our hands tight in each other's, his mouth opened to mine, and I thought, *I didn't know this was possible*. And I knew after all the years in the forest where fewer people came, where benches stayed dry, where the large trees grew for you to hide behind. For a moment I sensed it was wrong to use the forest in this way, a tool rather than a place. But it faded quickly. Later he told me *I can't remember anything about the forest* and I was sad because there were parts of MacRitchie I had wanted to share. I remember that sadness every time I walk past that bend in the path now.

My glasses fell off somewhere in the haze of lips and fingers and hair. They must still be there, metal and shattered glass cutting the leaves. Another line on the list of things I've lost in the forest.

6 KM / 5 KM

I will recite the names of plants even if there's no one to tell them to. Listen: these are prayers you never forget. The *simpoh air*, the *terentang*, the *macaranga*, the *giant mahang*. Here, this plant has ants that live in its hollow body; they'll come out if you tap it; they're called *heart-gaster ants*, you will look for love wherever you go. And this plant has flowers as pink as the palm of your hand and the flowerpeckers land on it and suckle so delicately it makes you want to cry. And with this plant, there, at the corner of the path, if you see it you know the forest has died once and been resurrected regardless, come back up to surround you, ground you, find you.

A Familiar Forest

Zen Teh

Set in an urban space, *A Familiar Forest* by environmental artist Zen Teh is an immersive art installation that replicates the ambience of a natural forest in the night. This interdisciplinary blend of art and science is a response to the complexities of human-nature relationships in the context of urbanity. Medical research has established a close correlation between human wellness and proximity to nature, but what does it mean to be connected to nature? Human activities are affected by the constant power shift with nature as urbanism continues to shape our environment. Loss of local knowledge and deteriorating perceptions of normality in environmental conditions over time pose challenges to human-nature relationships. As the state of human and natural landscapes change rapidly, how can we understand human-nature interconnectivity?

In this exhibition, we present a replica of a local forest. This is also a manifestation of our imaginations and desires towards nature as urban dwellers. Scientific research on the therapeutic effects of nature by Dr Ching Jianhong (Duke-NUS) complements the installation, presented as 34 images of Singapore's parks and nature reserves, artificial soundscape and concocted scents. Human beings have become better at extracting aspects of nature for our sustenance and ambition, devising ways to mitigate challenges arising from the continual depletion of natural environs. However, will our efforts and efficiency ever fail us? Will replication ever be enough?

A Familiar Forest is an extension of a solo exhibition by Zen Teh entitled *Sensing States: Healing Spaces*, presented at the Art Science Museum in 2015. This was an Art and Science Open Call initiative by The Substation. Dr Ching Jianhong was the scientific advisor to this project since its first presentation. The artificial soundscape was created by Brian O'Reilly.



A Familiar Forest

© Zen Teh



A Familiar Forest

© Zen Teh



A Familiar Forest

© Zen Teh



A Familiar Forest

© Zen Teh



A Familiar Forest

© Zen Teh

The Language Stump

Conner Fisher

I am swallowing the language stump. I am following its mother-traces
along the axis of wheat. It sulks in my brother's little kingdom.

He is as mute as a painter. He kneels in mud like an ox and snipes the
mountains from his steaming harbor. His borders waver and break

like ice, concealing the questions softening underwater. The
language stump doesn't know we exist. It's prolific as a mycelium spore.

It's prolific as a genius of the inquisition, as a child with
the calloused skin and black eyes of an illuminated tramp.

*

I am swallowing the language stump. Its broken path is endless.
A speech tentacle manifests its blunt repertoire. I gargle with

cephalopod mouths. Translucent as an insect wing, I unscrew myself
from the spruce affliction. Like the curdled fabric of a real body, kneaded

by oars until fluid dribbles out, I am descending the seven
rungs of the black ship's belly, where I will noiselessly eat flame.

Shipwreck

Sarah Degner Riveros

Every few hours my body becomes
a ship, keeping watch over the darkness.
When the morning dawns over the water
crashing and tossing amidst the waves,
our lifeboats unmoor and sails tatter. Then
we'll both know that this ship has sailed.
I squint across the ocean of sheets between
us; I scan the horizon for a lighthouse,
blips of hope from the mainland. *You*
risk forgetting what it was like
to be held in what was left after.
We embody the boundaries
that divide these waters. There is
no topographic body map, only the
geography of our earthly survival.

Note:

Lines in italics are used with permission by two poets in *The Joy Workshop: Writing Beautiful Poems in Hard Times* at **The Loft Literary Center**, with poetry instructor Chelsea DesAutels.

“Every few hours my body becomes” is taken from the poem “Magical Thinking” by Ellie Rogers

“You risk forgetting what it was like to be held in what was left after” is from the poem “Forgetting” by Paula Reed Nancarrow

An Olfactory History of Cantaloupes

Dot Armstrong

Cantaloupe sprouts smell like fully-formed cantaloupes when I water them. The air in the greenhouse is already heavy with moisture; the thermometer says 90 degrees by 9am. Water hits the rounded leaves and I smell it, soft and mellow, the scent of ripe melon. An orange dreamsicle, twin rockets melting to white on my hand. Cubed cantaloupe at breakfast, served in shallow yellow bowls beside plates of toast or bowls of cereal. My mother prepared the melon before we got up in the morning, cutting the wet fruit into uneven pieces, squaring the circle. On special occasions and some Sundays before church, she left the melon in fat wedges with the thin, bumpy rind still on and the tan seeds scooped out. A seed or two stuck like barnacles on boat hulls. We braced our hands on the sticky prows of the little gondolas and dug in. Spoons dripped with sweet juice. I loved paring away the creamy meat from the mottled shell. Even the strange rind tasted delicate: soft orange faded to crunchy green in one scoop. Vivid empty cantaloupe coracles joined the seeds in the compost pail after we finished our excavations.

The catalogues came in the mail. Pages of glossy color photos showed prime specimens with names like race horses. Ambrosia, Bush Star, Emerald Gem. Hale's Best Jumbo. Healy's Pride. Hearts of Gold. Petit Gris De Rennes, Pride of Wisconsin, Minnesota Midget.

The name *Cantaloupe* refers to a papal estate in Rome. Cantaloupo, allegedly a place where wolves gathered to sing, was the site of the melon's arrival from Armenia, around 1739¹. These lupine fruits are, in fact, muskmelons masquerading: cantaloupe, Australian rockmelon, South African spanspek, and sweet melon are all variations on the *Cucumis melo* theme. Two major differences exist in appearance. European cantaloupes (*var. cantalupensis*), have gray, ribbed hides while North American cantaloupes, (*var. reticulatis*), bear the familiar doily-decked look, all tan and pebbly. Regardless of texture, *C. melo* varieties fall into the family *Cucurbitaceae*. They are in good company with cucumbers, squash, pumpkins, zucchini, calabashes, bitter melons, and watermelons.

Choosing a good melon is essential. Too ripe, and the flesh is squishy and half-rotten; too firm, and it's bland and dry. At the produce section of the local grocery store, Mom explained the technique. Hoist a likely candidate to check size and weight, then press your ear to its roundness and—knock. Yes, knock on it with your fist, as if it's a door. A ripe melon echoes roundly, with firmness and depth. When I was little, I liked to hold the melon in my skinny arms and pretend it was a baby, or a pregnant belly. Feeling the weight. Once, when my sister was caught in the swift updraft of a panic attack, she sat at the dining room table and put a cantaloupe on her lap. The heaviness grounded her, she said. Later, someone bought her a weighted blanket.

Advice from the Farmer's Almanac regarding cantaloupes².

“Dry weather produces the sweetest melon.”

“Don't be discouraged when the first blooms do not produce fruit.”

¹ Fact. Trust me as far as you can throw a melon.

² Fact, pruned for relevance.

Something about adversity and perseverance. I will be in the greenhouse all day, all month, observing incremental alchemy so small and fervent I must use all of my senses. Water, heat, cloud. Chlorophyll, nitrogen. These sprouts hum with mute energy. I am their servant and progenitor. I protect them from heat and drought and neglect. I watch and wonder as they unfold. My charges, becoming more of themselves every moment, grow up. Sturdy stems stand in the humid air, producing soft orange smells I remember from my own childhood. Soon, the fragrant plants will produce tendrils and start climbing. Then, flowers; then, doors to be knocked on, weights to be carried, delicacies to taste.

Advice from the Witch's Almanac regarding cantaloupes and their curative properties³.

“Place six seeds, dried in the noon sun, underneath your pillow to ward off bad dreams.”

“Rub cantaloupe rind on afflicted skin under a full moon to rid yourself of warts and blemishes.”

“When anxious, grasp the melon with both hands. Count thrice and lift. Caress the surface as if stroking the face of a lover, or your own face in the mirror. Feel the nubby texture; sense the hollow middle, the heavy moisture inside. Sit down, preferably on a chair that your grandmother sat in. Place the melon atop your thighs and wait. Breathe deeply, expanding your whole belly. Sit thus until the world slows down.”

When the fruit comes, it comes on fast. Melon season lasts many weeks: the warehouse overflows from mid-July until late August. The harvesters bring in bin after bin and I learn to recognize the varieties by their grooved hides—deeper furrows and a slight football shape means the sweeter, more flavorful kind. All my children. By the time we planted them, I had forgotten their names. I fantasize as I wash them and place them in boxes. This one looks like a Sweet Granite, or a Schoon's Hard Shell. A crossbreed rumor; a genetic anomaly, fragile and full-flavored.

On a summer's day in 1620, the Bishop of Rennes spotted a grey hue on his crop of cantaloupes. Curious, he knelt and peeked under the leaves. Three days later, the melons were ripe. He served the fruit at his birthday banquet and saved the seeds in an envelope labeled “Petit Gris De Rennes.” In 1886, W. Atlee Burpee opened a package from William Voorhees. Inside were twenty seeds and a letter, which extolled the virtues of a melon variety with a rich green rind that Voorhees had grown the summer prior—he called it the Emerald Gem, claiming it was “altogether unapproached in delicious flavor and luscious beyond description⁴.” Legend has it that Neil Young christened the Hearts of Gold variety while on tour in Michigan. After a set at Northwestern University, he played on a farm near Benton Harbor owned by Crazy Horse's cousin's stepdaughter. The farmer could only pay him in melons⁵.

Morning and afternoon, at break time, I slice open orange miracles. I carve the seeds off the flesh with the tip of my knife, making the little boats clean like my mother did once. I pass my coworkers the half-moons running with juice. We sit on our haunches in the weeds, dripping. We sweat and grin and devour, exhausted and sunblind. We toss the rinds behind us, dust to dust, compost on site. By September, I will no longer crave the taste. By November, the scent will be a memory.

³ Fiction. A wayward vine growing from the compost pile. Would you try these things if I said they were true?

⁴ Fact. A quote from the Seed Savers' Exchange catalogue.

⁵ Fiction. A name carved into a melon rind. Did you believe me?

CSA pack is on Tuesdays. With one hand, I shove the waxed cardboard along the conveyor belt; the other scoops brown paper bags of russet potatoes, heirloom tomatoes, and hot peppers from harvest totes. I need both hands for the cantaloupe. The sticker listing the contents of a stranger's box calls for one melon: I rummage for the largest and nestle it between the red leaf lettuce and the eggplant. As I fold the box closed—left, right, tuck, tuck—and sign my initials on the side, I think of my sister pulling her chair up to the table.

Sources:

[Cantaloupes: Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Cantaloupes & Muskmelons](#)

[Petit Gris De Rennes Melon](#)

First published in *Tiny Seed Literary Journal*, 2020

September as Afterthought

Harvey Mountain, Columbia County, New York

Rachel Cloud Adams

On Harvey Mountain, far north of here,
snow is seeping into rock crevices
bordering the path, and lichen
is lining the feet of a denuded pine,
its root system upturned,
open to the air, an unbuilt
house's foundation.

The snow foams into pools,
popping open and re-forming
as embers of sharpening sound.

What we left on the mountain
comes to me in secret,
in the chambers of a squirrel's nest
concealed by leaves,
in liminal time between
summer and autumn, before
the cold packs itself in.

We listened to the mountain
with our teeth, with the cilia
in our noses, through the exposed
spaces between glove
and thick coat sleeve.
The mountain warbled back to us.

This fall is quiet, abstracted.
In the silence, Harvey Mountain forms
like an indigo wave in the darkness,
guards us at night.

Mountain mahogany

Oakley Ayden

amongst mountain
mahogany my daughter

plops found rocks into an
emptied instant coffee crock—

like me she learns the woods
will tenderly fill each void

you bring her,
sans query.

Reunion / Respite / At Solstice

Notre-Dame-des-Bois (Quebec) / Canada

Joan Hofmann

too soon over / the short day ends
as late afternoon / spoons into night
they appear / from snowy pine forest
complete in tableau / mid-field silhouette
on brown mound of / prepared cornmeal

when I arrived / how thirsty I was
for a long slag / from my well of being
for prepared indulgence / long-awaited
I gulped you down / starved / two

deer standing arched / heads bowed
eating steady / a feast interrupted
by sight of movement / heads up
they turn / to stare down threat / dare!

sometimes / at winter's late-day
shadows play / obscure / cast doubt
of what's being seen / or seeing
yet / in the dim / I swear I saw
the pair leap / as to fly boundless



© Joan Hofmann

Ode to the Moon

Sofia Wutong Rain

Today, the moon is a tenor
in a fury of sulfur
sings a song that cannot be captured
Moon! Philosopher's stone
guide my way a million distances away
for once I was your fern
I would sing for you in a thousand birds

Today, the moon plays a harp
in a citron crescent
to steal my heart
Moon! Of arboreal loneliness, of satin glee
fill me with joy, with forgiveness
for once I loved what you love, I saw what you see
in your palm I beat...

Today, the moon is a sun
in a skater dress, down a burgundy alley
when the clouds blind your eyes from behind
lifting those frills, showing the little white feet...

Moon! Pillow moon, balmy moon
in a moony globe, in a moony dome
I melt into a happy pool for you, of you
I sing a solitary ode...

Moon as a Pinhole

Lauren Bolger

I wish I could be closer *with* (not to) the moon.
To reach it from inside me. To see, and feel, (not lost) but held
in its staggering, reciprocated gaze. I'd have to play up
our similarities. We share trace elements. Oxygen, magnesium.
You're finite? Me too... But me, much more so than you.

Instead, I stand alone in this dark chamber and recall
how I'm bound to be six feet further away.
I allow myself to think too hard. Then, quickly,
forever—the Word becomes forever—the Feeling.

What is it about the moon? Like someone opens
a trap door every night, lets in the light. Light that
penetrates. Illuminates my quaking soul. Brings it
to the other side.

Shows it... What?
That which lives in the black space between stars?
The place I'll be going when it's my time?

All I can hope is to be bold enough
to bask in your glow. To hold you on my skin.
To take your borrowed light and with it, build a shadow.

By morning time, I'm gone. Nothing left.
My impression combed flat in the straw-like grass.

Re: Re: Winter

Russell Zintel

What is longed for when the hearth in your belly
Gets a kink in its blue line
The one, hotter than the hottest vein
Linking it to coals you know to be steady:
My sight tunnels into writing over a field I cherish
One lined with barbed wire
Presuming nothing of other fields
This one, as it turns out, is a mirage
Poisonous, temperate, alighting a medicinal steed
The mirage reveals a nostrum
Image of a real place, poorly remembered
As not a nostrum, not leaving the steed
Chestnuts on an emptied island
There amid the horse's circle of bent straw
Subdivisions, a field this longing forgot
Interrupted with canopies of 20,000 years of sleep
Yearned for & not infinite, not like the alfalfa of old grazers
Haunted in photographs
Collapsible farmhouses
Grounds scattered with proud fruits
Proven too burdensome for their prickly spines of summer
What loosens the kink
Besides twisting the vein
The one that trades good meals
For clean chimney fumes in February
The season from bleachers, forest of innermost fires
& keeping up with basics, like cooking
Elderberries before eating
Remembering our hands before the walnuts are shelled
Eating summer's sweet punctuation raw & in spirit
Choking in effigy on the resin of the rind
Which, once fallen & absorbed
Kills most growth beneath the canopy
Here, I am only asking, what species
Of the mind, besides the satisfaction of everything
Grips the color of what should flood the vein
To keep one's head from cracking

Against the ground
Into uncountable seeds

Two poems by Christian Yeo

Mars

‘Mars will come to fear my botany powers.’
—Mark Watney, *The Martian*

Despite its redness,
Mars is a cold planet.

We cannot return now, not
when our planet is burning

with male apologies, floods
spilling like shared intimacy.

Do not mistake the silence
of our forests for comfort—

they died with things unsaid,
branding their throats with bile.

Mars is still bigger than I
imagined, the anthropocene

distant, thought experiment left too
late for the timeliness of empathy.

With notes of mutual longing, my
children play in an extemp sandbox,

the clarity of our slow burning
extraction too astringent for their

innocence to bear. Even so, I
cannot ask you to take me back.

The last gardeners

Christian Yeo

New one in the garden today,
talking silt to the old one.
In every Monday, Friday,
clearly an inept addition.

Unused to the wetness
of used soil, the hole at the
bottom of the watering gun
dribbles through tape.

Only in fragments:
after the old one teaches
boldness, he waters
me with gatling rhythm,

batters my lemongrass
so that they grow into
their metaphors. I have seen
the old one, I have seen him.

I have felt his fingers curl up
gently beneath my skin, his sweat
dissolving into my fibres.
He feeds me by the granule,

arranges them as pebbles
in the soakspray of sun.
Boy, listen to the earth.
I feel the new one's ear,

pressed like he's eavesdropping.
Rolled eyes, trembled cheeks.
The old one's sleight of hand:
I loosen in verse, knowing

the rituals of my own wake.
Feel the fresh pivot of palms,

know their grief before I see
it, roaring for dams to burst.

Love yourself

Julie Ann Tabigne

The sounds of the waves
Is just like music to my ears
Inviting me to set my foot in
To my surprise I was captivated
By the current of calmness.

The ocean undresses my insecurities
Slowly dissolves the anger in my heart
And the lump of guilt stuck in my veins.
I close my eyes and open my arms wide
To indulge these newborn feelings.

I know I am on the verge of being idiosyncratic
So before it gobbles me up
Munches me into pieces
Digests me into the hole of my own illusion
I will set myself free
Because I know no one will, except me.

Then comes the realization
That accepting who you are
Is the road of unending happiness
It doesn't necessarily need praise
Or recognition.

Agitate

Gayathri Warriar

Agitate is a series of photograms that explores the seemingly imperceptible effects of human actions through the transience of water.

While we are aware of what happens when we interact with water, we are only really capable of seeing the largest and slowest of its movements. By removing the middleman (the camera), I was able to capture the indiscernible moments as they occurred on the paper itself.

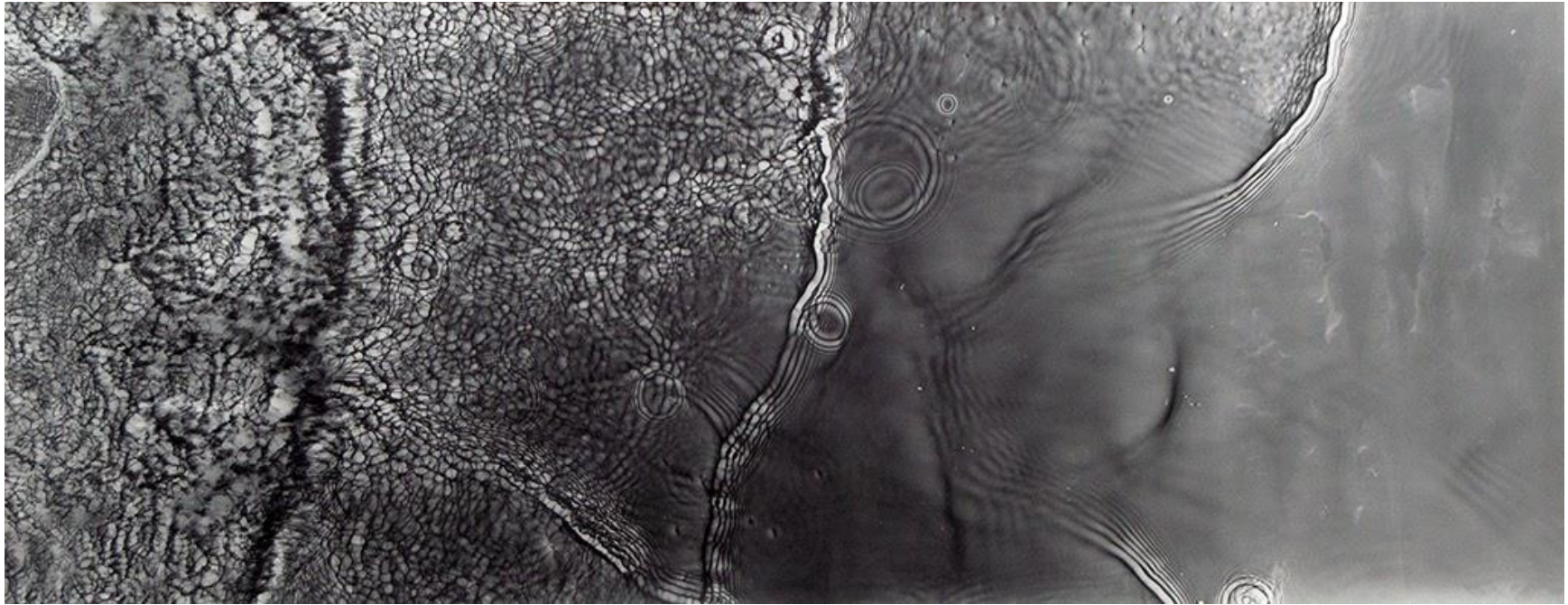
I was drawn to the photogram technique as my interaction with the materials left results that were immediate, irreversible, and often completely unexpected. Although the intended disturbance of the water was slight, the ripples and waves created were extensive, intense, and somewhat turbulent.

At a time when many of us are increasingly removed from the consequences of our actions, especially in relation to natural resources such as water, this method asked that I stay mindful and present. Various human artifacts, such as fingerprints and lines, also remain, serving as a reminder of the significance of each minute action and touch.



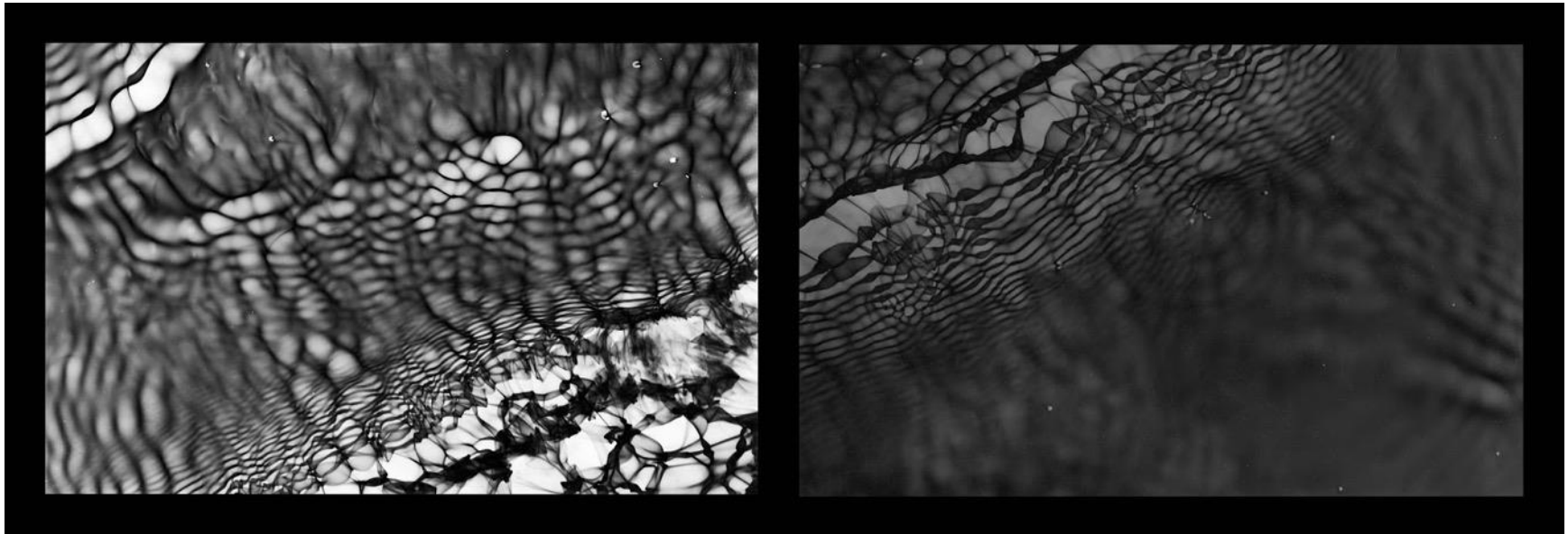
Agitate

© Gayathri Warriar



Agitate

© Gayathri Warriar



Agitate

© Gayathri Warriar

Currents

Thomas Bacon

1

Gathered ravens mock my solitude
of driftwood, abandoned floats and brittle shells,
the rain washing the rain,

as gray light filters green scents
of cedar, spruce and hanging moss
and the wind compels

the tight curl of waves,
the soft sway of kelp.
Mist over the river,

steam from my coffee cup;
I am caught in clouds.
Who I've been

or who I may become—
strong currents of a steep mountain stream
plunge over a precipice, pulled toward the sea.

2

When my daughter died
Spring bruised bright
and blue across the sky.

How quiet,
quiet enough to hear an angel sing,
but turning around

only a thinning cloud
drifts up the hillside,
then fades

as sharp-eyed eagles soar ever near
and frightened gulls swirl up in flight,
confusion hiding the morning rainbow.

3

Weathered derelict washed hard aground
deep inside a rock-bound cove
I watch the shapes of late day sunshine

slip, splash and shimmer
where the rising surf breaks white,
a drift of tangled shadows,

spruce needles and alder leaves
patterned at my feet.
Persistent gusts carry yesterday

deep into the forest of memories
woven in folk truth and myth
as I taste the river salty at the sea,

some sips of sorrow, some
moments of happiness, the eddy's slow twirl
becoming the change of the tide.

Half Tiger

Sara Barnett

And I will deliver it like baby.
Swaddle it, cocoon, and then let rip for butterfly.

(We humans are not living for one day.
Though there may be a chart with the proper correspondences of time.)

But ask me not to raise it—

For out there is low green and the precious bud and proper lightings.

I will pull the shade. And remember her when moths will come upon me, reading others
Late at Night.

Observe their delighted quivering thorax, and wonder if she too is striped.

Of Crows and Chrysanthemums

Jasmine Gui

vi.

And so, the songs buried
in the sludge of the city
bruise black and yellow in your mouth,
a trampled field of sullen reeds,
snapping against desperate fingers.

Overhead, while birdcall summons a cloud column,
on the sidewalk, meticulous yet forgetful,
you wane doleful as a cluster of mums.

ix.

A tree flustered by wind showers you with furious
raindrops from a terrible yellow sky.
Meanwhile

you yourself are past being stirred.
The careless steam from a full teacup
burns your lips a surprised crimson.
Meanwhile

you yourself are out of care's reach.

xi.

*So who will shoot
the sun burning at the ragged rip
of your shoulder?*

The black bird lifting
a stone at the edge of the water
looks over at you, saying nothing.

You in return, say nothing.

In fields

Fran Fernández Arce

Where do rivers go when they forget themselves?
Do they dream of a rough touch, of granular beds passing
them by under their backs? Do rivers dream if dreaming
means creating, moulding, and knowing
in words of extinguished tongues
bored on the soles of long ago? Do rivers have bodies
and, by bodies, I mean end nerves? Do you think it hurts them,
like scarring tissue slowly sealing itself into new cells,
to grow old when your arms and legs are made
of nothing but you? And what happens when you are
not enough for you are too much of everything else?
What happens when rivers cannot recognise their tail ends
from their heads? Well, I suppose, nobody has to look
them in the eyes before draining, drinking from their flesh.
Where do rivers go when they go to sleep?
They go where water goes to die a selfless death.
They dream in fields.

Campos (Spanish translation)

Fran Fernández Arce

¿A dónde van los ríos cuando se olvidan de sí mismos?
¿Acaso sueñan con asperezas, lechos granulares recorriendo
sus lomos? ¿Acaso los ríos sueñan si soñar
significa crear, moldear, saber
con palabras de lenguas expiradas,
perforadas en suelas ya desgastadas? ¿Acaso los ríos tienen cuerpos
y, por cuerpos, me refiero a terminaciones nerviosas? ¿Dolerá envejecer,
como cicatrices sellándose lentamente, formulando células nuevas,
cuando tus brazos y tus piernas están hechos
de nada más que tú mismo? ¿Y qué sucede cuando
no eres suficiente porque eres demasiado de todo lo otro que puedes ser?
¿Qué sucede cuando los ríos no pueden distinguir sus extremos
de sus cabezas? Bueno, supongo, nadie tendría que mirarlos
a los ojos antes de drenarlos, beber de su carne.
¿A dónde van los ríos cuando se van a dormir?
Van a donde el agua va a morir una muerte desprendida de ser.
Van a soñar a los campos.

Under a Swollen Baobab

Danielle Fleming

At night I dream of elephants under a swollen baobab tree
scoring through red bark in thick ropes.
Following vibrations, they march heavy-footed, singeing
tracks indelible into the earth. The matriarch lifts
her trunk towards a grim reminder of time. A skull—
sunbleached and sandblasted, another fractured death
burned into memory. Drying and stripped of bark,
I became that tree. The upside-down tree with roots
deep, branching out like capillaries burrowing
bottomless paths through time, splaying out underfoot,
connecting us to the veined routes of elephants. Men guess
at ages, examine multitudes by reading spiraling rings
growing faint, fading wild. The elephant, like the tree,
never forgets. I am a young girl tracing each bend
and whorl of my fingertip, remembering scratched bark
and the sound of grandmother's footsteps
before the elephant trumpets.

The Natural Heritage of Singapore

Jillian Cheong

The Natural Heritage of Singapore draws attention to the hidden secrets of Singapore's natural heritage, celebrating the beauty and diversity of animal species in Singapore. My paintings aim to evoke in each of us a sense of wonder and kindle a desire to preserve our native fauna.



Noisy Neighbour © Jillian Cheong

Acrylic painting on A2 gallery wrapped canvas

The Oriental Pied Hornbill is one of the most charismatic local bird species. Yet, at one point in time, their numbers had declined to the point of local extinction. Thanks to sterling conservation efforts, there are now regular sightings of these birds, not just in our nature parks but also within our residential estates. They are bold and noisy, making their presence known with loud calls and screeches. It is a joy to know that we have found a way to co-exist with them as neighbours.

Painted with permission referencing a photo taken by Bertram Lee shared on Nature Society FB page.



A Future © Jillian Cheong

Acrylic painting on 20 x 20 inch gallery wrapped canvas

Life: fragile and precious, treasured and protected. A new generation carries the promise of a future for the Raffles' banded langurs in Singapore. Will this promise be fulfilled? Can we make space for them to continue to live and have a home?

Painted with permission referencing a photo taken by Kelvin Leong shared on Nature Society FB page.



Eye of the Beholder © Jillian Cheong

Acrylic painting on A2 size gallery wrapped canvas

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. I was amazed by a photograph taken of one of our local Sungei Buloh saltwater crocodiles. The emerald green of its eye stood out against its alien contours, a gem that gleamed in a landscape of browns, blacks and greys.

Painted with permission referencing a photo taken by Trevor Teo shared on Nature Society FB page.



Look Out © Jillian Cheong

Acrylic painting on 30cm x 30cm gallery wrapped canvas

The lesser mousedeer is the world's smallest deer. Listed as critically endangered in Singapore, this shy and timid creature can be found within our nature reserves. To see one of these elusive creatures, one must deliberately be on the lookout for them. Patience rewards the quiet and observant. Caught like a deer in the headlights, this startled mousedeer turned to look at the photographer at just the right moment.

Painted with permission referencing a photo taken by Steven Cheong.



Inflorescence © Jillian Cheong

Watercolour on 27 x 35cm 300gsm paper

Flitting between the flowers in the trees, the tiny male copper-throated sunbird is easy to miss amidst the abundant clusters of inflorescence. But if you stop for a while to look, you cannot help but admire the sapphire gleam of its iridescent feathers, nature's tree ornament.

Painted with permission referencing a photo taken by Kenneth Cheong.

Mountain Lion

D. H. Jenkins

Golden leaves float in halos of sun
as I hike with a full backpack alone
on a track only Muir and others
like him had known.

Clothes tattered, boots well worn,
I've searched these wild places
for years to find what has survived.

The red squirrel, the Mexican wolf—
gone. But the eagle has returned.
And the lofty bighorn sheep glares
down in the all quiet of noon,
aloof with Ice Age eyes.

Windless days, bitter nights in a flannel
sleeping bag, dreams of coming home,
I've given myself over to an older quest.

Although I've not seen her yet, I know
she lives: I saw her paw prints in the snow
last winter as I gathered wood.

I imagine her frosted striped face,
those fine dark rays of eyes,
her careful gait, that sleek motion
over blood-orange rock, a creature
living cautiously on the razor
edge of the wilderness.

Locals claim the last one died
long ago, has gone the way of ghosts,
or can only be found in the zoo.
But I've felt her presence
in the aspen's autumn leaves,
on the heated rocks,
and in the gusts of wind.

Trees

Rema Tabangcura

Every day, I am greeted
by a fresh breeze you provide,
enjoying your magnificent greenery
that sways beautifully
along with the gentle wind.
Birds gracefully dance and happily chirp,
jumping from branch to branch.
Your shadows lend comfort to every creature
who longs for it, sheltering them
from the sun's harshness.
Viewing the scene reduces my negativity,
filling me with positivity.

You're like a Mother who bestows love,
care and blessings.
You never let anyone fall,
treating us like your own soul.
You give everything that you can give.

But we end up taking you for granted.
Humans treat you rudely,
cutting you up for settlement,
building houses, destroying
you in the name of development.
Ravaging your virtues in the lap of luxury.
Polluting Mother Nature
has made you broken and withered.
Resisting the unending turbulence of life.

The time will come and you will thrive again.
You will stand tall and strong
in your own solutions,
in the power of rejuvenation.
The power to heal yourself.
You are a curer, surviving without us.
But we cannot live without you,
for you are an intrinsic part of us.

Two poems by Ow Yeong Wai Kit

Eucalyptus

I too am
oil-smothered.
As you
spread
my seeds,
I dissolve
your sniffles.

Like you,
my evergreen
leaves
bow
gently
in acquiescence
to gravity.

As your
senses
burn,
I too have
survived
the raging
blaze.

Go on.
Take my
timber,
ignite my
bark,
tinder-dry
for love.

Quokka

Ow Yeong Wai Kit

I am face to face
with the happiest animal in the world.

Look how he comes close,
so curious, so trusting.

The little furball hops over,
intrigued by this human stretched out prone.

He sniffs at my hair,
eager to nuzzle.

He has no fast food,
yet he munches leaves with such joy.

He has no smartphone,
but he knows the wisdom of the woods.

He has no words,
so he will not judge before he loves.

He is still wild.
I know we should never touch.

But how can I resist
when he gives my cheek a Quokka kiss.

The Voyager

Ellen Chia

In its past life, it might have
belonged to any of these—
a bowl, a vase, a plate,
a teacup or an urn even,
objects fashioned by men
for utility, emerging from
the furnace pristine, glazed.
Then used, expired,
shattered into shards,
offered to the sea,
forgotten by men.
But Nature pursues
her own designs,
inscribing her signature
on things left to her disposal.

Wave-tossed, wind-licked
and sun-baked, this pottery shard,
a tiny fragment
of its distant past—
an inch-wide trapezium,
white with half a china blue
peony motif, has emerged
at the end of a sea voyage,
inconspicuous
amongst the debris.

There it lies in its new skin,
matte, chalk-smooth
with an altered disposition,
its edges now curvy and benign,
exposed still to Nature's
perpetual perfection,
bearing witness to the design union
of both man and the elements.

Run

Heather Sellers

My neighbor the composer, in his pink parka, walks down the path, singing. He says if he can't memorize the words easily, they aren't the right words.

I hike through the woods, knowing dog ticks and deer ticks no longer take the winter off. My friend picked thirty ticks off her body last night in the shower. Must have hit a nest, she said.

The forest is my nest. But my ankles itch. I use but do not believe in my friend's homemade concoctions, her orange bug spray that is drinkable.

Taste the black birch bark—wintergreen. Chew chew.

In the clear cut, where Cornell is trying an experiment to get good new trees to grow, the feeling is of a dead planet.

Run has 625 definitions, the neighbor tells me, and it's only three letters.

But usage, I want to tell him, isn't the same as definition.

Two poems by Joshua Ip

the comments

how thick these grassy comments
that sprout and wilt in season.
wild banning leaves a remnant
revived by the next breeze
old narratives overgrown
dry threads sprout forth fresh shoots
and when an old friend leaves
how lush the lallang—

赋得古原草送别【唐朝：白居易】

离离原上草，
一岁一枯荣。
野火烧不尽，
春风吹又生。
远芳侵古道，
晴翠接荒城。
又送王孙去，
萋萋满别情。

Joshua Ip

over the PIE

it's howling, and even this high, i still hear monkeys
or mynahs, swooping through water-fledged wind
or the rainforest raining forest edgeless
or the ceaseless highway rumbling, rolling on

most nights i sleep rough here, at the island's far end,
and in the autumn of my life i climb this overpass
the toil and tuberculosis bleaching my stubble
to toss my full Tiger at the relentless traffic

登高【唐朝：杜甫】

风急天高猿啸哀，
渚清沙白鸟飞回。
无边落木萧萧下，
不尽长江滚滚来。
万里悲秋常作客，
百年多病独登台。
艰难苦恨繁霜鬓，
潦倒新停浊酒杯。

Note:

These are two pieces from my manuscript of contemporary translations of Tang Dynasty Chinese poems—*translations to the tanglish*—forthcoming with Math Paper Press in 2021. These translations re-situate ancient Chinese poets in a modern context, with Bai Juyi's famous reflections on the nature of grass reanimated as commentary on social media, and Du Fu's meditation on the view from the heights over the Yangtze relocated to a pedestrian bridge over the PIE.

Two Poems by Richard Spilman

Rosy Maple Moth

On the façade
by the garage door,
a fleck of color—
yellow head, pinkish
wings sheltering
in plain sight.

All day I've dug
the rocky clay
of our hillside,
planting arbor vitae
where the pines
fade to brush.

It's a shock after
hardscrabble,
this little splash
of brilliance, this
luxury flowering
on pale brick.

Exuberance has,
even here, a place,
a moment to
offer, no matter
the risk, its brief
shock of joy.

Spring in the Northern Rain Forest

Richard Spilman

We walk delicately on the year's
new graves, witness to the havoc
of spring in a frigid jungle where
every breath is a ghost in the dark:

Birdsong and insect ululation.
the river protesting its new
boundaries, leaves like morning
rain souging hymns of praise.

A bracket fungus, fallen overnight,
lies covered in frothy mold.
Even where the path remains, it
sucks at our shoes, as we pick

our way, always on the verge
of slipping into snow-melt runs.
In the dusk of old growth
we pause, look past the tall

tortured trunks of red cedar
into canopies weighted with moss
and lichens, growth upon growth.
Even the air seems burdened.

Then light breaks through.
A hundred-year Sitka spruce,
downed in the January storm,
has cut a wide swath in its fall.

Nearby, an older catastrophe
crumbles decorously, carved
by larvae, six young daughters
rising from its disintegration.

Trees grow smaller, ferns rust
and the river flares, seeking

the shingled sea. Where the old
banks were, alders swoon,

awaiting the death knell
of another storm. We pick
through the detritus of spring's
cruel housekeeping: tumuli

of muck bordered by brush
heaps, islets stripped of all
but the gravel beneath,
rocks ripped from their rest.

Every year, the river destroys
what it once obeyed, flattens
every bank and bar in a rage
to smooth and straighten.

Oceanward, an orange sun burns
on the curve of dark waves
that thunder ashore like storm
echoes, inking the sand black.

We come to make what we can
of loss, rediscovering old paths
and flagging new, pitching
the tent in unfamiliar places,

and on the way, gather tokens
of our trek: driftwood and garnet,
photos and daybook entries
bleeding on dampened pages.

Always with Age Coming On

Cassandra J. O'Loughlin

I went into the garden for parsley and thyme,
what I come back with was fine slant rain,
a nankeen coloured buff in the west,
 white ibis flying over
 silently communicating
intricate ripples and patterns
in the hush before the night owls stir.

The seedlings in their raised bed are a scent
of mulch, a slow leak in the hose.

 The micro-lives are replacing themselves
 in invisible rooms,
dreaming of sweet alyssum or camomile.
 Astonishingly,
 the jonquils piquant aroma
prompted a life re-entered.

Whatever it is I lost all those years ago,
and find traces of in this flower,
whatever I have longed for,
 are untamed, gentle things,
 their small bright eyes
mysteriously following me,
 delicate beings
 from the lost world of my childhood.

Maybe they're gifts
to aid transformation into old age,
 knots
 tied in the cord of my being
to mark a trail back
 to what I incompletely remember:
the lumbering and pungent peppercorn tree,
my borrowed snug at the butt
and junction of its rambling branches;
 a doll
left naked and unblinking in the cold;
 a child

stumbling through the tangled grasses,
wed to the gazetteer of the ground,
feet loving the dampness. A puddle a mirror
touched and brought to life.

From visions of childhood,
words are blown seeds,
falling leaves
leading me on to where the shifting sounds
and gestures of earth echo an endless cycle
of growth and absolute decay,
how at any moment
the present might end,
with me right here, unable to comprehend
the changing shape of things
—a shoal of fish in a shark's wake
or a murmuration of starlings—
my vicissitudinous body
retaining an imperfect likeness
of my former selves,
as one thing follows another
in relentless succession.

Even now, when everything is cause
for uncertainty, the jonquil of my memory,
having reached perfection,
content in the promise of frost,
is perished,
the details blurring and dissolving.
Once again the winter wind
wraps its slippery whisper around
the gaunt and lopsided poplar,
the nude wisteria.
Gone are the people who walked these same paths
stopping to finger the rosemary and lavender,
those whose lives
passed
under the same stars as we
who will be lost to the future as to the past.

Singapore in Black & White, 1994

Paul Ruta

I spent most of the 1990s in Singapore, working as an advertising copywriter and creative director. My three kids were born in Mount Elizabeth. But in 1994, when I took these photos, I didn't know I'd be in Singapore that long – or, more correctly, I didn't know I'd be back within a year and stay for another six. So these photos, among others I'd taken around the same time, were intended as a kind of going-away present to myself, a simple way to remember the lush perma-summer of Singapore after I returned to Toronto, land of the maple tree and the wind chill factor.

These pictures are the product of a single day of wandering around with black & white film loaded into a manual Pentax, a camera I've owned since I was a concert photographer in the seventies, and is now tucked away in the back of a closet.

Photographing classically beautiful things is not my thing. Let someone else spend their film on flowers and sunsets. I'd rather document places teetering on the edge, where mankind and nature continue their tug-of-war. Mankind always wins these battles, of course, but in Singapore, where nature operates at jungle speed, it's fascinating to watch her put up something of a fight.

Left unattended, every manmade structure will decay and in time will crumble. Nature, ever the optimist, works in a state of constant regrowth and self-renewal. That's true even in such an improbable location as Bras Basah Road, where, in the nineties, a neglected building would quickly become little more than a fancy trellis for a colony of climbing plants.

I don't look back at these photos and feel outrage that certain trees in Club Street had been chopped down or disappointment that Duxton Plain Park has lost its ragged appeal. Because I know that Singapore, more than most places on this blue planet, always finds clever and elegant ways for nature and humanity to coexist in the core of the city – even if it's increasingly corralled in places like Gardens by the Bay and buildings with vertical gardens.

The only guarantee is that in another twenty-five years or so, Singapore and its relationship with nature will be different again.



9 Bras Basah Road

© Paul Ruta

The Rendezvous Hotel now occupies this site at 9 Bras Basah Road, engulfing these original buildings. Trishaws were a common sight in this area in the early nineties. Today there's a 7-Eleven under the arches at ground level. The climbing plants are long gone.



38 Club Street

© Paul Ruta

38 Club Street looking toward Mohamed Ali Lane. Not long after this photo, the building was restored to become the headquarters of Insight Guides. In the late nineties I worked at an advertising agency at that address. The trees had already been removed by then.



Duxton Plain Park 01

© Paul Ruta



Duxton Plain Park 02

© Paul Ruta



Duxton Plain Park 03

© Paul Ruta

To the best of my recollection these three photos are from the stretch of Duxton Plain Park between Kreta Ayer and Neal roads. Part of the General Hospital complex can be seen rising in the background of one photo. Today, Duxton Plain Park is a manicured urban trail.

Are All the Past and Future Loves in My Poems Real?

*After Aimee Nezhukumatathil's "Are All the Break-Ups in Your Poems Real?"
and Terrance Hayes' "American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin"*

Livia Meneghin

If by real you mean as real as a ladybug
climbing up your shirt with six badges
dotting determination on its back,
or as real as the tattered eyes of birches
lining a lake, watching—then yes,
every last page is true, every line, image,
and confession. Every *she*. Every *green*.
But they aren't factual, no. Imagine
spending so much time in love, all those
trees and long walks, collecting violets
to fill vases of petals as bees and butterflies
come out from hiding spots, being kissed
from sun up to far past dusk, when finally,
the little red beetle reaches your lips.

Wild Flower

Maria Nemy Lou Rocio

She is born
To grow in the wild
To withstand
The harshness of the wind
To endure the fierceness
Of the sun

She may bend
But she will never break
She may wither
When seasons change
But she will bloom
Again and again

She is rooted
Despite an uphill battle
One has to face
To see her beauty
Despised by the city
But conquering the wilderness

She is wild
An untamed prowess
The mistress of resilience
Trampled and stomped upon
And yet, she's still
That beautiful wild flower

The Unwild

Heather Teo

'The splendour of the fields, the glory of the flowers.' The irony of the houseplant?

The houseplant presents a bit of a dilemma. A microcosm of nature, you do wonder if a wild thing can still be beautiful if its wildness is so reigned in, manicured, pruned. And yet, it is. The bougainvillea is still as purple, the ficcus still as verdant. The butterflies still come – tiny little ones, but butterflies nonetheless – and so do the bees. You can uproot something entirely, place it in new, unfamiliar soil, and it can still thrive. A supermarket seedling will never unfurl violently over rolling fields, or creep persistently across the forest floor. It isn't free. But here in this flowerpot it can still lean towards the sun, and eventually its flowers will do a slow and gentle dance as they open and shut with the passing of the day.

And then there are the things that grow unbidden. Moss on brick, a lone daisy creeping out of a crack in the cement. They invite you to come close, scrutinize. It's the garden in No Man's Land.

This series pays homage to the unexpected, the unfree, the unnoticed. The magic of life tiny, and the wonder of life tall. The precious, majestic, and irreplaceable unwild.

Photographs shot on film on a Nikon FM2 between Singapore and London from 2012 to 2016.



The Unwild
© Heather Teo



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The Unwild
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Two Poems by Jonathan Chan

friday evening

Blessed be the light upon the tiny dark plains.

—Leonard Yip, *Edgeland Visible*

bless the light that drapes upon the trees, glistening as a golden gossamer.

bless the roots that cause the earth to crumple, spilling down the walls of concrete drains.

bless the scampering of the monitor lizard, darting into grassy cover.

bless the arias that map the treetops, sparkling into scattered flocks.

bless the edges of blue and pink, the blending into ocular paint.

bless the dance of wilder grasses, the serrated line along the footpaths.

bless the leaves that kiss the forehead, curling over calloused concrete.

bless the cathedral formed of branch and frond, covering a tarmac aisle.

bless the balmy breath of emerald, rustling through a tattered mind.

and bless the calm of afterglow, coalescing in a wisp of prayer.

shabbat / nuakh

Tuas, Singapore

Jonathan Chan

i.

rest is a matter of attention:
the gaze sharpens just long enough
for podcast intimacies and rustling
leaves to settle, carved into impression,
then definition. being supine takes
an intercessory shape, words
floating like incense, trembling
through the thickness of drywall.

ii.

heels dig into an enjambment of
sand, draped in vines and weeds,
the burst of unfurled petals
and burnished beans. leaning
into attention, the spillage of bud
and ripening fruit breathes a
spiritual patience. the sidewalk ceases
to be our final layer, folded upon
by wilder grasses, gentler canopies.

iii.

the sand, once reclaimed, frenetic
in its journey, learns again to rest.
it is held in place by an obstinacy of roots.
beside: the grains expand into boulders,
mounds. they wait to be shaken, rumbled,
and shaped. there are no crevasses
permanent enough for seeds to grow.
it is those that are abandoned who become,
again, the earth's matter of attention.

Two poems by Cheng Him

tekong

past refrain, where we tread is indelible, stained in each grain of sand.
when i upend my boots to clean them, out comes the history of sand.

it begins in Angkor Wat, where the bomb craters and the bullet holes
tell the story of how coppered the world was when the forest turned to sand.

now, standing on what used to be the sea, i am in her throat, at the strait,
where it smells of salt, of iron, the colour of industry and the graft of sand.

i know how we learn to defend our country: on the back of a poorer one.
has it always been this way, this noble appropriation of foreign sand?

what do we protect? not the Khmer whose rivers are uprooted into the sea.
our guns bay for their banks, so they dredge their waters to sell us their sand.

i watch as the sea surges past Tekong, as a crown of sandflies rise from a
saltwater puddle. this is hardly natural, nothing grows on this self-salting sand.

my tongue dissolves, like the shores the derricks spit on. it is easy to swear
fealty to mud, recite an oath, but the truth is that all this is nothing but sand.

when tomorrow comes, it will rise with violence. if you press your ears to
the dirt south of Dogra bridge there will always be bombs bursting in the sand.

but for now, there is only the silence of capitulation. forget what Robert Yeo said,
this mud on my face cannot be mine; even the dust in Tekong is stolen sand.

mata puteh

Cheng Him

a day mumbles to itself. a tree learns to slant, and a puteh sings inside its cage.
listen to its song, it trills, it sings of roundness, of the world that is the cage.

i like to think that i am good at this, this act of living and watching
the world, as though i too, am a puteh sticking its head out of its cage.

the puteh, white eyed, sings clear as evening after a storm; is it privy to the
secrets of the earth? of water, air, and light, these things outside its cage?

how sad then, to hear its clarion song. it leaps about the park, over the heads
of mimosas, ixoras, angsanas, each a verdant wind blowing past its cage.

the other putehs, far away, have come to orbit their entrapped cousin,
as though to bring all the corners under heaven into its rattan cage.

even now, i can almost feel their wings dusting the corners of my heart.
imagine that! the world in a puteh's beak, turning on a wheel inside a cage.

inner hebrides, august

J. Freeborn

how many inches
does the quiraing landslip move
in a year hewn by a series
of mass wasting rifts buffed from the sou
sou westerly wind
roll down gold moss
to the humming sea keep trails and name
the formations needle table
prison ask
to taste knowing past language

mearstapa

border walker go betweener used to
explain the monster grendel loping
from pool to moor to rend
belief from the hall
of man empire of patient
violence are you tired

rise

mark time
for an eyeless race dissolving some
things are slow
some things are

at the faultline

stand on the lip put an ear
to the belly call
up her exhale and cherish
illusion into space carved
by forgetting

Loving Presence

MiLisa Coleman

There is clay under your toenails
From a morning of earthing
Cold still left on your soles
Quelling the sadness to come
With rosewater sips
Your face a blanket of uncertainty
As the sun recedes
You also retreat
I pause at the threshold of a decadent partition
I am enticed by the gentle coaxing of faint warbling
Emanating from behind the faded linen
A vestige of nature's perfume tickles my nose
Igniting empathy in my nerve endings
"Reclaim your color", I heard you sing
Transported into your hideaway
I wish to be reborn into this looming to keep you company
One with the process of growth like sown seeds tossed by billowing winds
Patient to witness
Your blossoming

Affirmation

Joralyn Fallera Mounsel

As I opened my eyes
I looked above the skies

I saw pictures of yesterday
It gave me hope to face today

The future is not certain
Persistent, I must contain

At times, my life may seem tough
But I promise to play enough

When life gives me burdens
I'll create a garden

I will grow my faith
And fasten my state

I will plant a goal
And tighten my hold

I'll grow my strength
With enormous length

I'll sprinkle it with love
Weeds of fear I will shove

I will live with motivation
And strengthen my affirmation

Because life is a rope
That swings us high through hope

Three poems by Aevan Gibson

The Fortune-Teller

I was a boy when the palmist
Said I'd be someone. In the cut, oaks lie felled,
Years among them. I'm still here,
Serving coffee.
I am in love with our delivery man and his coat,
The nap of the suede so smooth.
Knolls surge beneath the grass where I lie.
The body soon to wane, as molting leaves;
Then I am all things,
And no one.

Ventura Homecoming

Aevan Gibson

All the birds cry fire,
And the mild sky is a gown tearing
From a slip of thigh as it shows.
Well, God forgive me, I'm a lark
That moves like the sun bends to my wing.
Who is given the time to weep?
On this morning,
When from some awning, you emerge
To smoke or maybe to drink
A little water,
Its coolness pleases the throat
That says nothing of its want,
That dares not sing.

Norman's Suite

Aevan Gibson

A king to a knight
Said bring me the heart of this country,
And he traveled unreturning through years of fog.
I saw you last in a field
Where your skin was reddened, and the bare day
Speckled gold on your clothes.
I miss you like fire.
But I would not see you now as you are,
Indoors-pale and searching,
In a room, searching.

Two poems by Mike Cole

Junction Butte

*—where the north and middle forks
of the San Joaquin River come together*

Down washed out rock strewn switchbacks
through shoulder high rhododendron and ceanothus
sweetening every breath, tiger lilies flaring above ferns,

to a knoll, beyond loggers' reach,
where twin sentinels,
a ponderosa and a sugar pine,
have stood since a time
when nothing that wasn't wild
moved, or grew, or flowed here,
follow the heavy columns
up to sunlight flaring
in their crowns,

down to the snowmelt rumble,
water so cold it numbs and reddens flesh.
Squint against the stinging glare,
then rest in shade beneath the metal bridge
arched above this place where shepherds
coaxed their flocks across.

Take up the backpack again, climb
the high stone steps of the Mammoth Trail.
At a cedar marked by rusted nails
find the faint depression in dry grass of a path
that rises to the top of a ridge.
Stand above the canyon of the middle fork
of the San Joaquin opening so deep and wide
the distant view urges flight.

Two more hours sliding down
pine needles and oak leaves,
then out onto slabs of sun-brightened granite,
side-stepping and slipping across sloughing sand,
crust of lichen, past mounds of bear scat,
wide around undercuts of rock
where rattlers might rest in shade.

Bone deep pain in hips and knees and toes,
step out onto a sandy flat
bounded by the constant thunder
of the two rivers becoming one.

*

In lengthening shadows make camp,
lie staring up into the play
of light through new leaves.

As the day fades,
silhouettes of pines and cedars
rise against the graying sky

like spires of smoke or spirits.
A shattered black oak stands,
two limbs raised like arms

beside the sheared off trunk,
now a head thrown back
to chant warning or celebration.

Beneath the river's tumult,
the heavy beat of drums,
a rhythm that filled this canyon

for nights and days in ages
when those who fell asleep
and awoke to that water sound

like a powerful wind knew
that any talk of a distant sea
or of men with skin pale as snow

was the product of a dream.
Move for an hour unseen
through a dream

of cedar bark houses that tangle the sky
with braids of smoke,
the early morning voices of women,

men's dark hands shaping blades
and points out of stone brought here
from the black glass mountain to the east.

*

Wake again to the rush of the river
toward a sea it can no longer reach,
to sadness and calm that make this a place
where everything has been resolved.
Sit quietly and listen
to torrents falling over rock.
Know all that has been lost,
but know too
that this is the place,
the one place, to wait
for whatever takes flight from the body
to leave for the journey
in which the rivers
always find their way
to the sea.

Tuolumne Campfire

Mike Cole

Phil brings his paintings,
the one from today of the bridge
beginning to dissolve into
a scarlet tinged darkness,
and the one of a mountain
that becomes a nude woman
emerging from the landscape,
and he has his song books
from the Santa Cruz ukulele society.
We wander among Willie Nelson,
Sarah Vaughn, the Beatles,
Johnny Cash, the Mamas and Poppas,
but we can't get Janis Joplin's *Bobby McGee*
to untangle itself so pause
while Phil's friend with the wooden flutes
tells of being in line to audition
for Big Brother and the Holding Company
until Janis's hungry heart
made any other voice immaterial.
He tells how she wandered in and out
of the house where he slept, an ephemera
that like the woman in Phil's painting
was on her way to outgrowing this world,
says he went on to sing
in hashish informed tongues
for a trio of sitars.

We go on to *King of the Road*,
Peggy Sue, You Are My Sunshine,
until the fire dies to a pile of bright nuggets,
the camps around us sinking into silence.
We turn off the lights we needed for music,
tell a few more stories in near whispers,
then dissolve into our separate
rooms of the cold dark.

Icarus

Andrin Albrecht

Look up there: a star!

Hmm...

Why not?

It's moving.

No, look, it—oh. Right. It's moving.

Duh. Just an airplane. You can't see any stars from here.

Oh, all the theories that circulated about what would happen to air traffic! There would be no getting rid of it, some claimed. People had always dreamt of flying, and the only way to fly, sad but true, was by sitting in a metal tube propelled by kerosene: contrails, turbulences, economy and business class, ladies and gentlemen, we are happy to welcome you to Paris Charles-du-Gaulle, please remain seated for another ninety to a hundred and twenty minutes until the aircraft has been fully prepared for disembarking...

Others talked of innovation. We'd be able to fly with solar power, hydrogen cells, or propelled by the clean wind alone. To circle the globe without poisoning the air, to spend the weekend overseas and be just as unproblematic as a cyclist headed for the other side of town.

Oh, we had more theories than the countryside has stars at night. The government would take action and force restraint, impose their ticket taxes, quotas, research stipends and machine guns at airports. The oligarchs would take over everything and monopolize the skies. Fuel would run out, oil rigs would be consumed by rust, and the plains would run on coal or children's dreams, insatiable metal beasts no matter the circumstances...

No one, however, expected that we would simply forget about them.

I wandered lonely as a cloud...

Honey, stop it.

What instead?

What what?

What would you like to wander as instead?

Oh... How about not as a cloud, but across them?

What then?

Whatever you'd want! Just imagine: down here it's raining, but you don't even notice because the rain only starts below your feet; the ground is white and above you it's just purest sunshine. You look around and see these cotton mountains, and in their midst a great city.

A city?

Why of course! We just cannot see it from down here. A city with alleyways and parks, with fountains, onion domes and citizens who've never seen any other than a bright blue sky. You can't prove me wrong; you know? It could be there, right above that cloud yonder...

The first measures were implemented before anyone really believed in the virus. It wasn't worse than your seasonal flu, they all claimed. It was a hoax by the media, a publicity stunt by Big Pharma—hysteria! hysteria!—and nevertheless, the first international routes were being severed. Soon, they only allowed business travel, then only trips for diplomats and foreign correspondents, and finally none at all anymore. The sky was a blank azure sheet. The planes stayed down.

When I was still a child, you could look up at any time of the day and watch the planes pass. The blue was segmented. Sometimes, we imagined the crisscrossing trails were hieroglyphs, and if we'd only be able to decipher it, we'd receive superpowers, or a free flight to Hawaii.

But then came the Pandemic, and the planes stayed down. Pilots made themselves comfortable on their living room couches, the aluminium bowls were repurposed to deliver warm meals for the elderly directly to their homes. Flight attendants spent their time doing yoga, learning to play the guitar or to make their own sourdough. Months passed. The exceptional became trivial. And when the Pandemic was finally over, when we had counted the dead and hugged the living again, we had simply—

—forgotten.

I see them as if it were yesterday: the aerospace engineers, fighter pilots and professors of aviation, standing dumbfounded before a line of parked jumbo jets. The controllers and maintenance workers wiping cobwebs from the vast metal wings; the corporate bosses holding grand speeches about how Heathrow and Tokyo Narita would soon feel just as close again as Heathrow and London Gatwick.

My, the glee of the boulevard journalists when the first pilot sat himself in the cockpit and started pressing buttons at random in mounting despair, like a child who had been asked to conduct a symphony!

We had stayed on the ground for too long—or, perhaps, a prescient part of our collective consciousness had merely decided that it wasn't so bad down here after all? Or... or... There were myriad theories just as there had been before, though not a single conclusive explanation.

The fact was that these colossi of steel and aluminium were standing still all over our airfields, and not a single human being could recall how the hell we had ever managed to get them up into the sky.

Scorn, irritation, then, finally: indifference. We shrugged our shoulders and turned to other worries. Didn't we have plenty of them?

Daedalus spent day after day collecting feathers all over the island. When he had finally gathered enough, he glued them together with wax from a beehive and made them into wings for himself and his son.

With wax? Is that even possible?

Back then it was: that was in Ancient Greece—the laws of physics were different still...

No kidding!

Why don't you tell the story yourself if you don't believe me? Anyway, and as he was finished making the wings, he and his son Icarus rose up above the clouds with them. It all went quite swimmingly—flyingly—hadn't Icarus been such a reckless boy. He flew higher and higher, until he finally got so close to the sun that its heat melted the wax...

But isn't it colder higher up?

No, higher up it is warmer. You're closer to the sun, aren't you? As I said, the wax melted, and his beautiful wings came apart, and Icarus...

No!

Yes, Icarus fell, really plummeted, faster and faster...

NO!

There, there, it's all good! Don't cry, it's all good. He just got a really good scare, but, fortunately, Icarus fell into the sea and was soon washed ashore on a nearby island, where he lived in a hut with a roof of palm leaves ever after, ate bananas directly from the tree and swore to God to never in his life collect feathers again...

The airplanes had become useless, but they still weighed tons. Nobody had any use or purpose for them, so we simply left most of them standing where they were. On weekends, I sometimes drive out to the airport and look at them. A lot of people do that, actually, especially on sunny spring days. It's really quite magical—ethereal. Back in Victorian England, it was in fashion for the wealthy to have a ruin standing in their garden. Master builders specialized in them and erected entire castles of natural stone, with towers and battlements and walkable round paths, only to immediately demolish them in the most realistic way possible, to coat the rubble in filaments of ivy and have it admired on chaperoned walks.

Nowadays, airports have become our English gardens.

An Airbus A380 biplane towers venerably in a field of asphalt that is cracked in intricate patterns. Dandelion and young birch trees push from between the clods. Most of the airplane's windows are still intact; light is refracted in them, and butterflies dance in the scatters of rainbow on all sides. Ivy hangs from one of the primordial wings like a curtain, and you half expect it will lead you into some fairytale world—all you'd have to do is walk past beneath it and let yourself be surprised. The other wing has broken off halfway. A swallow has built its nest in the tangle of electric wires that pours from the fracture and is already raising its third generation of chicks.

A little apart, there is a much, much smaller Boeing E74 Stearman: an ancient double-decker, which had only seen ceremonial use for a long time even before the Pandemic. Perhaps a squirrel buried a pine cone under it years ago: now, a mighty fir pierces straight through the yellow-and-blue fuselage of the Stearman. The tree has lifted the entire plain six feet from the ground and fixed it in place with branches bigger than a grown man's arm. There is a kind of feral poetry in the image: it's the closest to flying any of these relics will ever come again.

Just after the gates, you can see an Avro RJ85: a medium-sized passenger plane with the pictogram of a crane on its tail fin. It's the only plane in the airport not smothered by layers of green. Instead, its doors have been expanded, all seats have been removed, and the walls have been painted white. The Avro now hangs full of modern art: every three months a new exhibition opens; there is an original Giacometti standing in the cockpit and watching patrons through the windshield with the indifference of bronze.

They transported some of the smallest machines to the inner city right after the end of the Pandemic, re-lined them, wrapped them in tarps and fairy lights. They now house some of the hottest new bars. On the wings of an F18 by the lake, you can catch Punk bands play every other Thursday.

Something has ended, and something else begins. The word is that an entire fleet stranded in LAX has been re-purposed as luxury condos. In Berlin Tegel, a collective of international artists painted two hundred and forty planes in pastel colors, and in Singapore Changi, they now raise pangolins, monitor lizards and endangered birds in the hollowed steel husks. Cape Town King David was flooded for a reservoir project, and the planes forgotten there now sleep submerged,

almost invisible in the crystalline wet. You can see shoals of colorful fish flit by where they used to sell duty-free booze. Scuba-divers like to have their picture taken with a joystick in hand before they bring a tiny in-flight TV or earbuds with an old airline logo back up as a keepsake.

Merry Christmas! Joyeux Noël, feliz—

Right, right, that's enough...

Come on, get out of bed! Here's some coffee. But hurry up, we're about to do something special!

Today? So early on Christmas morning... It's still dark outside!

Yes, precisely, and that's the point! Come, drink your coffee, then off to the car.

To the car? What now? Where are we going?

To the airport.

It doesn't snow often in these parts, but last night—last night it snowed for real! The car tires scrunch, and the city is white on all sides. White roofs, white front yards, white trees, almost as if they were brimming with blossoms. At the shore of the lake, a white swan pecks at an ice floe with an indignant look.

The snow clouds, however, have dispersed, and the sky instead is littered with stars: countless, speechless, motionless. It glistens almost as white as the world.

He's already expecting us when we park our car in the middle of a former runway: a grinning man with a beard, handing us protective goggles, enormous gloves and feather down jackets to wear over our regular winter coats.

So, you guys ready? The adventure of a lifetime: seeing the world from above?

A hiss, a flicker in the cold, a bright orange light. Behind the man, the multi-colored tarp of a hot air balloon billows out of the snow. His colleague is already at work in the wicker basket, firing up the burner. He waves at us. Off to the east, between the angular outlines of hangars and crumbled towers, a first shimmer of morning blushes against the sky.

All aboard, all aboard! You can stand down here plenty after we're back!

The day becomes brighter, and the balloon ascends. The mechanics of this vehicle are infinitely easier than that of a plane, our pilot explains, so that a select few people still remember it even nowadays: hot air rises, and if enough heat is generated, it is easily capable of lifting hundreds of kilos of fabric, basketwork, four people and four thermos flasks of hot coffee up into the clouds.

The sky turns from black to violet to mauve to green to morning blue. The airport grows smaller, the city grows smaller; our car is virtually invisible.

The air is so cold that every breath you draw hurts.

And everything is so white. I know there should be airplanes down there, lined up as far as the eye can see. Row after row of forgotten machines. Marvelous, marvelously useless ruins of metal—some of them still standing in perfect symmetry, others tipped to the side, broken apart, devoured by patina and rust, overgrown, towed away to other places, purposes, and names.

Right here and now, however, in the cold and the sharp morning light, I can see nothing at all. Everything's white. Maybe there are hundreds of airplanes hidden down there under the snow, like feathers, waiting to be picked up. Maybe there really was a time of different physics,

when not hot air but piles of metal would rise. But maybe—and that seems much easier to believe—there has never even been such a thing as a plane.

After the Fires

Verna Zafra-Kasala

Beasts greet the earth with
hungry mouths, and the dust
collects on their tongues.

The ground has forgotten
the taste of rain, the smell
of air before the thunder's
first glorious crack.

What grows here knows
only smoke and
perdition.

Singed leaves curl
inward like tiny black
fists, shake perilously
in every updraft, look

for those to return home,
but who will come when
home is no longer habitable?

Make Space

Lauren Lara

Make Space is a collection of photographs which shows a few of the animals who have made space for themselves around our house. We usually travel to a national park during the summer to engage with the natural world and remind us (and our children) why it is important to take care of the earth. It can't be replaced. With Covid-19, we were unable to travel last year. Instead, my children and I observed animals in our yard and talked about the importance of making sure we save space for nature no matter where we are located.



Tree Frog on Porch Plant

© Lauren Lara



Bee on Trampoline

© Lauren Lara



Construction Truck Lizard
© Lauren Lara



Rock Frog under Rose Bushes
© Lauren Lara

Fireflies

Biswadarshan Mohanty

on certain summer evenings, fireflies met
on the bael, on the jamun,
on flowers of pinwheel,
on overgrown lantana hedges—
then they hurtled towards ECG-lined
corners of colocasia hearts.
they met in the dark, when
everything else was invisible.
they were beacons for each other and
open-eyed meditations for a ten-year-old.

now they gather in a space
between my closed eyes,
forming constellations
in the shape of my childhood.

Ghost Forest

Heather Bourbeau

In the time before, Thunderbird flapped his wings,
brought storms and rain, fought Whale under ocean,
above fog. Caused waters to rise, woods to tremble,
earth to fall, man to speak this battle into generations

of bands silenced into another history
that forgot waves tall as spruce and redwood,
coasts pulled into sand, remnants of cedar and Sitka
left to shade salmon and albacore, sturgeon and perch.

In the time of now, El Niño arrives like prophet,
drags water back like blanket to reveal sentinels.
Roots and stumps rise like fingers to pull body, grab sky,
sound the sirens as Thunderbird and Whale prepare for battle.

Contributors



Rachel Cloud Adams is the editor for an advocacy association and the founder/editor of the journal and small press *Lines + Stars*. Her poems have appeared in *The North American Review*, *Big Muddy*, *Salamander*, *Dialogist*, *The Conium Review*, *CAROUSEL*, *Memoir*, and elsewhere. She is a Pushcart Prize nominee and the author of three chapbooks: *What is Heard* (Red Bird Press, 2013), *Sleeper* (Flutter Press, 2015), and *Space and Road* (Semiperfect Press, 2019). She lives in Baltimore, Maryland, and received her MA in writing from the Johns Hopkins University.



Andrin Albrecht was born in 1995 in Switzerland. He studied English literature and history in Zurich, Colorado, and, for one semester, at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. In 2019, he won the Targe Centro UNESCO di Trieste for his poem “21 st Century Dreaming”, and his short fiction in English and German has appeared in *The Foundationalist*, the *CMU Literary Review* and *Literaturhaus Zürich*. He currently lives in Zurich, writes on his debut novel, and plays electric guitar in the German alternative rock band TRACK 4.



Dot Armstrong is a queer, nonbinary freelance writer, movement artist, and farmer based in Brooklyn. They received a BA in English Literature and a BFA in Dance Performance from the University of Iowa. Their work has appeared in *The Dance Enthusiast*, *The Daily Iowan*, and *Culturebot*.



Fran Fernández Arce is a Chilean poet currently living in Suffolk, England. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *Pollux*, *Querencia*, *Feral Poetry*, *Aurora*, and others. She writes mostly about art, language, and the weather outside her window.



Oakley Ayden (she/her) is an autistic, bisexual American writer from North Carolina. Her poems appear in *Maw: Poetry Journal*, *Ghost City Review*, *Not Very Quiet*, *Sledgehammer Literary Magazine*, *The Minison Project*, *Brave Voices Magazine*, *The Cabinet of Heed*, and elsewhere. She lives in California's San Bernardino National Forest with her two daughters. Find her on oakleyayden.com, Twitter ([@Oakley_Ayden](https://twitter.com/Oakley_Ayden)), or Instagram ([@Oakley.Ayden](https://www.instagram.com/Oakley.Ayden)).



Thomas Bacon lives in Sitka, Alaska, a small island community in the Tongass Forest. His work has appeared in *San Pedro River Review*, *borrowed solace*, *Tidal Echoes*, *Cirque Journal* and *The Tiger Moth Review*.



Sara Barnett's fiction and poetry, composed primarily in New York City, can be read nationally and abroad in numerous literary magazines, including *Arsenic Lobster*, *The Ginger Collect*, *The Hungry Chimera*, *Harbinger Asylum*, *Anima Poetry* and *Here Comes Everyone*. Her latest pieces, "Asia" and "Holland, Clad in Winter" currently appear in *The Sublunary Review*. Feel free to check her out further at [IMDb.COM](https://www.imdb.com) and [Audible.com](https://www.audible.com).



Lauren Bolger is editing her debut speculative fiction novel and writing poetry when she's not managing a customer service department. She has a short story and poem in the indie anthology, *Beyond the Levee and other Ghostly Tales*, released in Sept. 2020. She is on Twitter as [@renBolger](https://twitter.com/renBolger).



Heather Bourbeau's work has appeared or is forthcoming in 100 Word Story, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *The MacGuffin*, *Meridian*, *The Stockholm Review of Literature*, and *SWWIM*. She is the winner of La Piccioletta Barca's inaugural competition and the Chapman Magazine Flash Fiction winner, and has twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She has worked with various UN agencies, including the UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia and UNICEF Somalia. Her recently completed collection *Monarch* is a poetic memoir of overlooked histories from the American West she was raised in.



Jonathan Chan recently graduated from Cambridge University with a BA in English. Born in New York to a Malaysian father and South Korean mother, he was raised in Singapore, where he is presently based. He is a naturalised Singaporean citizen. He is interested in questions of faith, identity, and human expression. He has recently been moved by the writing of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Wendell Berry, and Ken Liu.

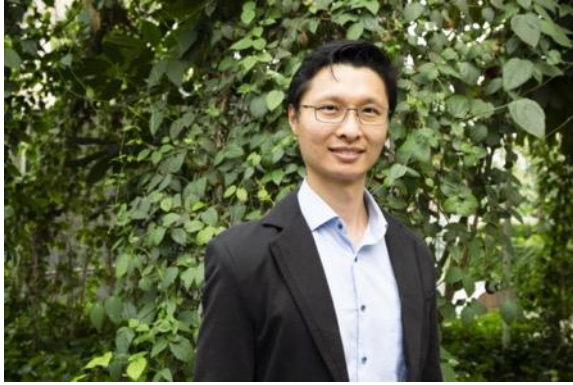


Cheng Him's work has been featured in the *Quarterly Literary Review Singapore (QLRS)*, *The Kindling*, and the *Eunoia Review*. They are part of the writing group known as The ATOM Collective.



Ellen Chia lives in Thailand and whilst pondering over the wonders and workings of her tiny universe, finds herself succumbing time after time to the act of poetry making.

Her works have been published in *The Ekphrastic Review*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Neologism Poetry Journal*, *Zingara Poetry Review*, *The Tiger Moth Review* and *Chiron Review*.



Dr. Ching Jianhong is Assistant Professor and co-director of the Metabolomics Research Facility at Duke-NUS Medical School. His research focuses on profiling products of metabolism. He pioneered the first metabolomics service facility in Singapore in 2012, and orchestrated multiple large cohort clinical metabolomics studies. During his PhD, he worked on the extraction of medicinal plants for novel compounds that can be used for therapies.

While Dr. Ching works in science for a living, his life thrives on art. Dr. Ching has an immense interest in philosophy, and believes in maintaining nature's equilibrium. Such philosophies are incorporated into his work as well as way of living.



Jillian Cheong is a part-time biology teacher, a part-time artist and a full-time mother of three rambunctious children. A self-taught artist who particularly enjoys painting animals, most of Jillian's artworks draw inspiration from the local wildlife in Singapore which she believes should be treasured and celebrated. When wildlife proves too elusive, Jillian tries to persuade the neighborhood stray cats to sit for their portraits.



MiLisa Coleman (they/them) is a poet, writer, and visual storyteller. They earned a Bachelor of Arts in Digital Media from Cleveland State University. Their work investigates the overlap in nature, imagination, and the human condition. Coleman has exhibited their work in solo exhibitions and group performances, and has worked in media production. They completed a writer-in-residence program through Twelve Literary Arts' Baldwin House Urban Writing Residency. Their first publication is in the forthcoming issue of *Obsidian: Literature & Arts in the African Diaspora*. They are currently based in Oakland, CA.



Mike Cole is from Fresno, California (USA) where he attended Fresno State College and earned a pre-MFA Master's Degree in Poetry. He was a high school teacher of English, Spanish, and Creative Writing for 30-plus years. He now lives and writes in Ahwahnee, California near Yosemite. Over the years, his poems have appeared in a number of magazines, most recently in *The Red Savina Review*, *Stirring*, *Front Porch Review*, and in the anthologies *Highway 99*, by Heyday Press and *Yosemite Poets*, by Scrub Jay Press. He is a member of the Squaw Valley Community of Writers.



Connor Fisher is the author of four chapbooks including *The Hinge* (Epigraph Magazine, 2018) and *Speculative Geography* (Greying Ghost Press, forthcoming 2021). He has an MFA from the University of Colorado at Boulder and a Ph.D. in Creative Writing and English from the University of Georgia. His poetry and reviews have appeared or are forthcoming in *Typo*, the *Colorado Review*, *Tammy*, *Posit*, *Cloud Rodeo*, and the *Denver Quarterly*.



Danielle Fleming was born and raised in Indianapolis, Indiana, but currently lives and writes in Louisville, KY where she works as a therapist, often using stories and poetry in her work with clients. She can be found on Instagram @havendf or on Twitter @danismalley10



J. Freeborn is a teacher and the anthology books managing editor at The Poetry Society of New York.



Aevan Gibson is a poet and photographer from Oxford, Mississippi. As a community-supported artist, she has earned writing grants from the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council and performed for Quasar, a grassroots artists' collective. Her work is informed by the American landscape and by the working-class experience.



Jasmine Gui is a Singaporean-born interdisciplinary paper artist, arts programmer, writer and researcher based in Tkaronto (Toronto). She is the co-founder of TACLA, an Asian Canadian living archive initiative and runs an interdisciplinary arts studio, Teh People. Her work explores mythologies, landscapes, translations, traversals, and grief, and is grounded in intersectional, interdisciplinary grassroots communities. She is the author of two chapbooks and has been featured in *Room Magazine*, *Held Magazine*, *SineTheta*, *GUTS Magazine*, *The Spectatorial*, *Panorama Journal*, and *Softblow* amongst others. She also does experimental paper arts as one half of the creative duo, jabs.



Tanvi Dutta Gupta is a second-year student studying biology with a concentration in ecology at Stanford University. Her poetry has received awards from the National League of American Pen-Woman and her essays have been published in *China-India Dialogue* and *Current Conservation*, among others. Right now, she lives in San Francisco and misses the rainforest.



Joan Hofmann is Professor Emerita at the University of Saint Joseph, serves on the Executive Board of Riverwood Poetry and was the first Poet Laureate of Canton, CT. Her poems have been published in anthologies and journals, including *Forgotten Women*, *Rumble Fish Quarterly*, *Juniper*, *Bird's Thumb*, *Spaces*, *Englyn*, *SLANT*, *Plainsongs*, *Plum Tree Tavern*, *Caduceus and Freshwater*, and in three chapbooks: *Coming Back* (2014), *Alive* (2017) and *Alive, Too* (2019). A retired educator, lover of the natural world, and frequent traveler, when not walking or hiking near her home on the Farmington River she is often living off the grid in the Eastern Townships in Quebec, Canada.



Joshua Ip is a poet, editor, and literary organiser. He has edited ten anthologies and written four poetry collections, most recently *footnotes on falling* (2018). He co-founded Sing Lit Station, an over-active literary charity that runs community initiatives including SingPoWriMo, poetry.sg and the Hawker Prize for Southeast Asian Poetry.

Visit his website: joshuaip.com



DH Jenkins worked as an associate professor of English/Speech for the University of Maryland in Japan and Korea for many years. His jazz play, *Ti Jean*, about Jack Kerouac, has been staged in Tucson, AZ and in St. Joseph, MO. Thirteen of his poems are set to music in the film *Call From a Distant Shore*, recently screened at the Helios Sun Poetry Film festival, Jan. 2021. Nine of his poems have been published in *Jerry Jazz Musician*, Autumn 2020/Winter 2021. Winner of the Iwakuni Poetry Competition, Spring 2019. He currently lives in New Zealand.



Theophilus Kwek has published four collections of poetry, two of which were shortlisted for the Singapore Literature Prize. His poems, essays and translations have appeared in *The Guardian*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *The London Magazine*, and *Mekong Review*, among other publications. He has also written and researched on issues of migration and citizenship, and volunteers with NGOs supporting migrant communities in Singapore. His most recent collection, *Moving House*, is published by Carcanet Press in the UK.



L.C. Lara loves taking pictures of the little things she finds in nature. Her happy place is among the trees. She holds an M.A. in Professional Writing and is published in *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, *Crack the Spine Literary Magazine*, Writespace's anthology *In Medias Res: Stories of the In-Between*, and by *The Bigger Picture*. Her work is influenced by her children, faith, the world around her, and vivid fantastical dreams.



Livia Meneghin is a current MFA candidate and writing instructor at Emerson College. She is the author of the chapbook *Honey in My Hair*. Her individual poems and reviews have found homes in *The Academy of American Poets*, *tenderness lit*, *Entropy Magazine*, *Tinderbox*, *So to Speak*, *Whale Road Review*, and elsewhere.



Biswadarshan Mohanty is a writer and graduate student in Master of Arts (Writing and Literature) at Deakin University, Australia. His work is forthcoming in *Van Voice 1.0* by Tribal Rights Forum, India. He lives in Dubai, and having moved numerous cities and countries, he has found home in his imagination.



Joralyn Fallera Mounsel is from Tantangan, South Cotabato, Philippines, and has been working in Singapore since 2016. Being away from her family for quite some time, she devotes herself to writing to help her cope with homesickness. Late last year, Joralyn joined the Migrant Writers of Singapore group and had a chance to perform at the Carnival of Poetry recently in January. She writes poems to express herself and to inspire others.



Cassandra O'Loughlin is a Conjoint Fellow at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Her PhD thesis is concerned with Ecocriticism and Eco-poetics. She has poems published in national and international journals and anthologies. *Taking My Breath* is her first book of poetry. Her ecocritical articles are published in peer-reviewed journals: *Landscapes: the Journal of the International Centre for Landscape and Language*, *Estudios Irlandeses*, and *Swamphen: a Journal of Cultural Ecology*.



Ow Yeong Wai Kit has edited poetry anthologies such as *From Walden to Woodlands* (2015) and *Love at the Gallery* (2017). His writings can be found in the *Interfaith Observer*, *Straits Times*, *TODAY*, *QLRS*, and elsewhere. Currently a teacher and writer, he holds an M.A. in English Literature from University College London.



Meenakshi Palaniappan is a Literature educator and a quiet observer of the world around her. She writes to think and enjoys playing with words to paint pictures of life as she sees it. She is especially drawn to nature. Her work has been featured in online journals, including the *Shot Glass Journal*.



Sofia Wutong Rain grew up in Beijing, moved to the USA by herself for high school and college, and is currently residing in the UK. Although pursuing science disciplines as her career, she has always been passionate about writing and expressing herself in different ways. It is only recently that she decided to submit her works to literary journals, to share a piece of herself with the world.



Sarah Degner Riveros (she/her) teaches Spanish and studies Creative Writing at Augsburg University in Minneapolis, Minnesota where she is currently working on an MFA in poetry and creative nonfiction. Her work is forthcoming in *Vassar Review*, *Clarion*, and *Pithead Chapel*, and has appeared recently in [*Sonora Review*](#), [*Grey Sparrow*](#), [*Barnstorm Journal*](#), [*Yes, Poetry*](#), [*Willaway*](#), [*Bearings*](#), [*Porridge*](#), [*Murphy Square Quarterly*](#), and [*Azahares*](#).



Maria Nemy Lou Rocio is from Pangasinan, Philippines. She is married with three lovely kids, and is currently working as a domestic helper in Hong Kong. Maria is a member of Lensational Hong Kong and is an Uplifters team leader. She started to write poems when she was in High School, and writes poetry as an outlet to express her thoughts and emotions.



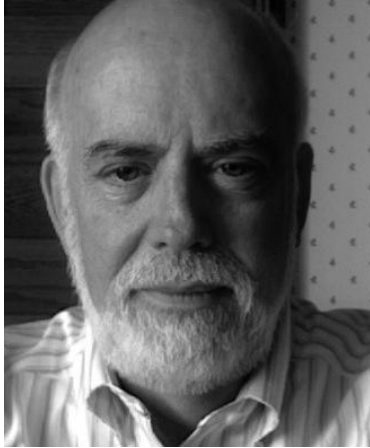
Paul Ruta is a Canadian writer and occasional photographer currently living in Hong Kong. His writing has been published by *Penguin Random House*, *Math Paper Press*, and many online literary journals. He reads for New York's *No Contact* magazine.

Visit him here: www.paulthomasruta.com or @paulruta



Photo credit: Toru Shimizu

Heather Sellers is the author of *The Practice of Creative Writing*, a children's book, three volumes of poetry, *Georgia Under Water* (fiction), and a memoir, *You Don't Look Like Anyone I Know*, featured in *O, the Oprah Magazine* and an Obook-of-the-month club pick. Her essays appear in *The New York Times*, *Reader's Digest*, *Real Simple*, *Good Housekeeping*, *The Sun*, and *Best American Essay*. *The Present State of the Garden*, a collection of poetry, is forthcoming from Lynx House Press. *Field Notes from the Flood Zone* is forthcoming from BOA Editions.



Richard Spilman is the author of *In the Night Speaking* and a chapbook, *Suspension*. His work has appeared in many journals including *Poetry*, *The Southern Review*, *Canary*, *Clade Song*, *Pilgrimage*, and *Western Humanities Review*.



Rema Tabangcura is a mother of two boys. She has been working in Singapore as a domestic helper for almost 10 years, and volunteers as a Team Leader at Uplifters, a non-governmental organisation that provides a free online course about Money Management and Personal Growth. Rema started writing when she joined the Daily Life in COVID-19 GROUP, now Arts in Me, founded by the Migrants Writers of Singapore. She loves to read and write as it helps ease her boredom and homesickness.



Julie Ann Tabigne is from the Philippines, and she works in Singapore as a foreign domestic worker. She has lived and worked in Singapore for seven years now, and has an eight-year-old son and supportive life partner. She is a team leader of the non-profit organisation Uplifters, and also a member of Migrant Writers of Singapore.



Zen Teh is an artist and educator interested in interdisciplinary studies of nature and human behaviour. Her art practice spans across photography, sculpture and installation art. Her works have been showcased in numerous group and solo exhibitions in Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and China, and was invited as a guest speaker at regional environmental conferences such as ASEAN Powershift 2015 and Hanoi Innovation Week 2016. Teh has also been recently awarded the winning title for the 7th France+Singapore Photographic Arts Award and Finalist (Artist) for 2019 IMPART Awards and 2021 Julius Baer Next Generation Art Prize on sustainability.



Heather Teo is a Fine Art and History of Art graduate from Goldsmiths College, London. Her film photography practice pursues beauty in unexpected places and serendipitous encounters. She also writes both fiction prose and poetry.



Gayathri Warriar is an artist and recent Studio Art graduate from Colorado College. Having recently moved back home to Singapore, she is now working as an Art Assistant at the North London Collegiate School (Singapore), where she spends her time exploring all things art and education.



Christian Yeo is a final-year Singaporean law undergraduate at the University of Cambridge. His poetry has been published in *Quarterly Literary Review Singapore*, Ethos Books' *This is not a safety barrier*, the *Eunoia Review*, the *jfa human rights journal*, 6'98's *Redefinitions*, *Notes*, and *ZETEO Magazine*, among others. His work is forthcoming in *[Insert] Zine*, won the Arthur Sale Poetry Prize in 2019, and was long-listed for the Sykes Prize 2021.



Verna Zafra-Kasala was born in the Philippines but was raised and still lives in the Pacific island of Guam. She teaches English Composition and Critical Thinking classes at the University of Guam. Her work has appeared in *Tayo Literary Magazine*, *Hawai'i Review*, and *Minerva Rising*, among others.



Russell Zintel lives north along the Hudson River with his partner KT and their cat. His work has appeared in *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *decomp Magazine*, *Re-Side Zine* and others. He is currently in progress with a full-length poetry collection.