

**THE TIGER MOTH REVIEW**  
*ISSUE 10*





## 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.

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Issue 10, 2023  
ISSN: 2661314X

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Cover image: *Rattan Eco Sprawl* © Zen Teh Shi Wei

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## Editor's Preface

*We can return to our mothers, and their mothers,  
and the mothers before that.  
Lie belly-down on the sand. Let the ocean rise  
to take you home. Learn to look down.  
Be dense. Be brave.  
Learn to breathe salt water.  
—Liberty Leggett*

Welcome home, reader.

In almost a blink of an eye, the journal has reached its tenth issue. It's still hard for me to believe that I've been at it for five years since October 2018, back when I was in transition from a full-time teaching position to full-time graduate studies. *The Tiger Moth Review* was conceived during the white space that I had freed myself with, starting off as a WordPress blog site for Issue 1, before moving to a paid platform with its own unique domain since Issue 2. From the beginning, we were blessed by the kindness, generosity, faith and support of benefactors, writers, peers, submitters and readers who contributed in one way or another to the realisation of the journal, through their advice, submissions, donations, funding, readership, publicity, etc.

When I was still putting the first issue together, I never dreamed how far the journal would go. Looking back, I'm so proud and honoured to have published work from the likes of more established voices from Singapore, Asia and the rest of the world like Yeow Kai Chai, Aaron Lee, Ann Ang, Khairani Barokka, Tammy Lai-Ming Ho, Ko Ko Thett, Vinita Agrawal, Teresa Mei Chuc, Boey Kim Cheng, Lydia Kwa, Lee Maracle, Craig Santos Perez to emerging writers and artists whose works too have so much to teach us. *The Tiger Moth Review* has represented hundreds of writers from every continent save Antarctica, and our focus from the get-go has been to create a space for ecoconscious contributors from minority, marginalised and underrepresented groups in society. To this end, we are humbled to have been able to bring to our readers the words of contributors from less reachable places: Kunle Okesipe from Nigeria, Lucas Zulu from South Africa, Zakir Hossain Khokan from Bangladesh, Guna Moran from Assam, India, Lauren Hyunseo Cho from Seoul, South Korea, Maziar Karim from Tehran, Iran, Sheikha A. from Pakistan-UAE, Mykyta Ryzhykh from Nova Kakhovka City, Ukraine and Nazarii Nazarov from Kyiv, Ukraine, Anastasiya Kuruliova from Belarus, Lorraine Caputo from Equatorial Andes, Fran Fernández Arce from Santiago, Chile, and the many women migrant writers from various parts of the Philippines working in Singapore and Hong Kong.

Putting together each issue is always a joyful occasion for me. Issue 10 is a compact issue that begins with Liberty Leggett's "Instructions for surviving the twenty-first century", which includes learning to "breathe salt water" (6). There is a sense of honouring our ancestors and recognising the wisdom and knowledge of the communal and collective in KayLee Chie Kuehl, Andy Oram and Zen Teh's poetry and art. Two current and former students of mine, Renee Yeap and Joseph Lee have their prose and poetry featured respectively, and this is an immensely proud moment for me as an educator. Death is a theme in this issue, as is the rebirth and reclamation of self and home. Alejandra Pena's closing poem offers "a rebellion, a lighthouse, a map home" as we remember our fathers who parted seas and walked without shoes or sleep in search of "the promised land" (44) we now call home.

*Esther Vincent Xueming*  
**The Tiger Moth Review**

## Instructions for surviving the twenty-first century

*Liberty Leggett*

Learn to breathe in salt water  
from the old dog with black lips and patchy knees,  
who opens his mouth as he splashes forward.  
Swallow a gallon or two. Open your gills;  
breathe.

The sand-crabs are watching you:  
thousands, amassed,  
by the shoreline. Learn from them;  
let the water crash at your feet,  
and when the oceans rise over your heads,  
and fall again, leaving only wet sand,  
let the bubbles you exhale tell your loved ones  
you are here.

On the docks, grey-haired uncles are waiting  
with their crab traps and fishing lines.  
When the rolling storms come past the cargo ships  
and ocean liners outlining the horizons, leave behind  
your buckets full of silver fish. Take  
what you need;  
follow them.

When I was ten, I learned to open my eyes  
in salt water. I saw a swordfish  
teach an eel to play the piano on volcanic rocks.  
Follow them: dive down,  
touch rocks. Peek at sea urchins.  
Float upside-down and gaze  
upwards to see where your ankles  
break surface tension.  
You can learn too.

Soon, our island will be underwater.  
The kampongs, bungalows, sky scrapers—  
they were made for this. They will stand  
in the ocean, grow tall as the sun. And what  
about us?

We can return to our mothers, and their mothers,  
and the mothers before that.  
Lie belly-down on the sand. Let the ocean rise  
to take you home. Learn to look down.  
Be dense. Be brave.  
Learn to breathe salt water.

## **Voice of Rain**

*KayLee Chie Kuehl*

the smell of rain  
on her skin still carries  
the scent of the sea

the same strip of emerald blue  
that tore at her ancestors feet  
when they cut the folds  
between their toes on the boat  
that ripped open the throat  
of their homeland  
leaving corpses tangled  
in the carcasses of trees  
flesh and bone  
scattered along the lips  
of the ocean

the smell of rain  
on her skin still carries  
the scent of the dead

the bodies of stolen people  
have been discarded, decayed  
inside the embrace  
of rip tides and waves  
but when the sea breathes  
their voices rise  
spread across a hollow sky  
carve open the clouds  
and fall to her skin.

the rain  
is the ancestor's cleanse.

## **They built**

*In honor of Sanjit Roy and the Barefoot College*

*Andy Oram*

They built the generators,  
And drew electricity from the sun.  
They brought them across many miles, across many continents  
To light up huts that huddled beyond paved roads.

It was largely the women who learned to twist the wrenches and wind the wires.  
And wherever they brought light, they taught women who lived there to build more.

They spoke but could not understand one another,  
Daughters of such far places.  
They attended the Barefoot College,  
Where what the poor thought was important would be reflected in the college.  
They employed puppets for teaching and sign language for work.

What does it take for a grandmother to leave a village?  
And what does it take to return?  
The most forgotten of women raises a torch to her companions.  
She settles back with husband, grandchildren, tribal leaders.  
But by the new light  
They see her more vividly.

## Argos Sees Odysseus Again

*Claire Jean Kim*

It's you. I know your scent.  
It came to me in dreams after you left.  
The smell of moss after rain.  
I tried to find it again. In your bed.  
In your boots by the door. On the paths  
we wandered by the shore.

The house rejoiced at war's end.  
Year after year we waited for you  
to appear. *A man gone this long does not  
want to come home.* I lost my passion  
for the hunt. What is the killing for,  
I asked. Every stag outran me after that.

At dawn, your son picks wildflowers  
for the bowl on his mother's loom.  
Then runs along the cliffs in the spray  
of the sea. Twenty years I have loved  
this dark-haired boy. I move my tail  
to speak my feelings, one of which is joy.

## For the Love of Lah Lees

Renee Yeap

My grandmother is dead.

That was the first thing my father told me when I woke up on Sunday.

Singapore is about an eight-hour drive away from Sitiawan, Malaysia, where my grandmother had lived her whole life, so we never really knew each other well. To be honest, when I heard she had passed, I did not really grieve her death as much as I grieved for my father's loss.

About a week later, my mother passed me a book. It was my grandmother's diary, back from when she was my age, in 1970s Sitiawan.

\*\*\*

Dear Diary,

Today after school I went out to play in the jungle. Ah Hui from next door came along with me. I heard she's the first one in our village to go to university. Her mother, her *Ab Ma*, was really proud of her.

In the jungle, we have to be careful, stepping over the twisting roots of plant life, some large and thick like little fences, forcing you to step over them to get past, some small and inconspicuous, until they catch your foot and trip you. The leaves in the jungle look as if Mother Nature uses cookie cutters, tenderly cutting out leaves round and jagged, tiny like green beetles or large as umbrellas.

I breathed in the damp, cool air.

Suddenly, I felt Ah Hui nudge me. She was pointing to the ground a few metres away. At first, I didn't see anything aside from plants, but then I discerned a little brown mass camouflaged against the muddy ground. It looked a bit like an anteater, but instead of fur, it had large, pointed scales all over its body. It reminded me of a tiled roof. It was no larger than a small dog, but was rather stocky, with a thick tail as long as the rest of its body.

"What's that?" I whispered.

"It's a Lah Lee. They're usually nocturnal, so we got lucky today."

I scrutinised the creature, which seemed to be taking a peaceful amble, clumsily making its way through the foliage. I giggled. Its body and tail seemed too large for its little pointed face and petite clawed feet.

Then I noticed a little lump at the base of its tail. The lump moved and poked out its nose. It was a baby! It was clinging to its mother's tail. How adorable!

Then I heard my *Ab Ma* calling me home for dinner. I could picture her at the front door, letting the wind carry her words to me through the trees.

I hope I'll get to see the Lah Lee again.

\*\*\*

I remember last year when my parents took me to the Singapore Zoo, I spotted a sculpture of the same curious little creature my grandmother had seen. I did not have a clever Ah Hui next to me, so I took out my phone.

*Pangolins, sometimes called scaly anteaters, have a diet consisting of ants and termites. When threatened, a pangolin rolls up into a ball, its armour protecting it from the strongest bites. Despite their scales, pangolins are mammals, and their females usually give birth to one pup at a time. Their pups stay in burrows until they are ready to hitch a ride on their mothers.*

My grandmother had seen a Sunda pangolin, *Manis javanica*, called a Lah Lee in the Kutien dialect, meaning 'the hill-dwelling creature with carp scales'. It is native to Southeast Asia and calls Singapore its home too, in our remaining shreds of rainforest.

\*\*\*

Dear Diary,

I pray to God for help.

I spent the whole morning in the jungle, trying to spot the Lah Lee again. Ah Hui told me that it was natural that I didn't see the Lah Lee and her baby. She had probably climbed up a tree or gone back into her burrow.

I thought of the road nearby and the way people sped past on their bicycles... Would her scales be enough protection?

For dinner, my older brother, my *Goa*, cooked soup. Usually, he's too tired from tapping rubber to cook, but today he said he wanted to make something special for us.

I ladled a bowl of soup for myself and gulped it down. I chewed the meat in it as well. It tasted like chicken.

"*Muay*, it tastes good, right?"

"Yes, *Goa*," I said.

"It's good for you too, especially when you have kids."

Something was wrong. What was *Goa* talking about?

He continued, “It’s hard to find them, but today one walked right in front of me as I was coming home, so I picked it up.”

“Huh?”

“The Lah Lee had a baby, too bad it was too small to have good meat.”

“How did you prepare it?” *Ab Ma* asked enthusiastically.

“I just threw it into boiling water. Afterwards, the scales came off easily.”

Please help her spirit, God.

\*\*\*

The pangolin sculpture at the zoo had a little slot for people to donate money. “Save The Pangolins” was written next to it.

I knew climate change was affecting many species, but why this one in particular? Such that it needed its own fundraising sculpture?

It turns out climate change is only one of the pots of boiling water the pangolins are being thrown into.

*Pangolins are contenders for the world's most trafficked mammals. They are highly prized as a delicacy and their scales are touted as having medicinal value, believed to cure everything from low breast milk supply to cancer. Their instinct to curl up to protect themselves is effective even against lions but makes them easy targets for poachers, who can simply pick them up. The hunting of pangolins for its questionable medicinal uses has been documented in China as far back as 500 CE and the business flourishes today on the black market, particularly in Vietnam and China. In 2019, 11.9 tonnes of pangolin scales, priced at \$48.6 million, were seized in Singapore. It was the result of the deaths of roughly 2000 pangolins.*

\*\*\*

Dear Diary,

I couldn’t sleep last night. I can’t believe *Goa* killed her! It’s sickening. I hope she and her baby know that I would rather have gone hungry than to...

As soon as I heard the rooster crow, I stumbled and crashed into the kitchen where *Goa* was eating breakfast.

“You shouldn’t have killed the Lah Lee. It was cruel,” I said as politely and respectfully as my seething self could.

Nearly choking on the rice in his mouth, *Goa* replied, “Hang on, are you trying to lecture your own *Goa*?”

He raised his eyebrows, daring me to defy traditional wisdom on respecting one's elders. I was about to accept his challenge, but *Ab Ma* seemed to have some sixth sense telling her about her daughter's insolence. She came into the kitchen and glared at us, asking what all the fuss was about.

But is it really making a fuss to stand up for what you believe is right?

When I told *Ab Ma* about the Lah Lee and her child, I could tell from her expression that it was a lost cause.

"You're just a little kid, so you don't understand. We feed and raise animals for killing. Don't you love eating chicken?"

*Goa* chimed in, "That's right. I killed the Lah Lee and its child so you and *Ab Ma* could have a good meal," He could not stop himself from adding, "I guess my good intentions were wasted on you."

That was what set me off. I protested, "It's different! The Lah Lee is wild and rare. They're peacocks, not chickens! Plus, *Goa* threw her into *boiling* water!"

*Goa* argued, "You can slit chickens' necks, but Lah Lees have those scales, so you need to boil—"

"Shut up!" I cried, "*Goa*, promise me you'll never kill one ever again. Please!"

Then *Ab Ma* grabbed my collar and dragged me out of the kitchen. There's a Chinese saying that "beating is affection and scolding is love", but all I could think about was how the Lah Lee *Ab Ma* trudged through the forest, letting her innocent little one ride on her tail.

\*\*\*

*Many poachers come from low-income families, poaching to make a living. The real profit only appears higher up in the black-market chain. An ideal solution is providing alternative job opportunities and educating poachers on pangolins' ecological value. (Pangolins control the termite and ant populations, which also prevents pest damage to agriculture like rubber trees.) However, this requires a lot more financial support for the relatively unknown creature.*

My father says he never knew his uncle. I wonder, what would I have done in my grandmother's shoes? I wonder, if they had listened to each other, could my grandmother and her brother have reconciled?

Perhaps in another lifetime, born into a first-world country like Singapore and away from the pangolins' rainforests, they would be in agreement. After all, they would simply need to slot their coins into a pangolin sculpture.

## **Civitas**

*Marie-Andree Auclair*

I civilize  
make good citizens  
out of seeds and plants  
protect them in a garden plot  
in rows and verses  
under variegated skies.

Selection is my privilege  
as gate-keeper and  
principal toiler.  
I keep a wild corner  
for trap crops, another  
for pioneering the peculiar.

I plant and push for a crop  
or two, familiar and new,  
stake to posts the tomato plants  
nip sucker buds, thin carrots  
all for order and a future feast.

Yet the untamed too is hungry.

## Locust Trees

*Tara Menon*

The black locust trees appeared out of nowhere  
in the conservation land bordering our property  
and multiplied to tower over the greenery,  
making it hard to plant anything in our soil.  
Their roots extend across our lawn  
and threaten the foundation of our house.

Our solar panels collect less light.  
The bay window in my mother's bedroom  
that functioned as an observatory  
is now dominated by branches and leaves  
instead of the constellations—Columba, Orion, Corvus,  
Crater, Hydra, Monoceros, Canis Major, Pyxis—  
that poured their light into our binoculars or our stark eyes.

The green giants filtered out much of the view  
of a partial solar eclipse.  
Mercifully, they obscured much of the delicate pin-pricked canopy  
only after my son cultivated a love for astronomy  
as a star-gazing toddler who embraced the cosmos.

Sitting on the deck on a cane armchair,  
I gaze at frequent trespassers—brown rabbits.  
Undaunted by a bookworm turning her pages and staring at them,  
the lagomorphs meet my gaze, then graze on the flowers  
that thrive without the sun.  
They nibbled out of existence the coreopsis plants my husband tended.

The wind shifts, cooling my face, scenting me  
with a jasmine-like fragrance from white luscious flowers  
clustered on high branches.  
The petals tumble down, never-ending flakes in spring,  
joyful confetti dotting the deck.

On my aunt's property in Ernakulam, a jasmine tree  
perfumed her house and scattered blossoms.  
I didn't think a similar fragrance, a similar shower,  
would drift down to my house, guarded on the street side  
by pine sentinels, in frigid Lexington.  
If I had the right kind of string to weave a garland  
I'd have plucked the clusters and, petal by petal, strung them  
into a creamy necklace for my blue papier-mâché  
Krishna statue, like I did decades ago for my Grandmother's  
idols when our fingers created loops to pin  
jasmine buds into floral necklaces.

I used to flaunt the leftover pieces in my raven hair,  
then thick and lustrous like the flowers.

The locust trees have tall thorns  
and their clusters hang beyond my reach,  
enticing honey bees,  
allowing my fantasies of garlands to blossom.

Without the giants, the wind would drift different recollections,  
the view would be different, none of the blossoms would fall on my hair.

**Two poems** by *Adrienne Pilon*

**Plague No. 1**

It starts in the curve of a wave, in the rock hollows, the shore's edge.  
Steel gray water streaks vermillion under gray clouds. Gulls soar  
low over the blood-water, feast on the fish that come to lie  
white-bellied on the surface. Then the gulls lie belly up,  
and the mammals come for the fish and the gulls  
and the other dying birds. The shoreline becomes a morgue:  
bodies pile one atop the other. Dolphin, seal, fish, bird.  
Crabs crawl out to feast, and flies, too, until all lie in deep repose.  
The water shines crimson and then green. Maggots crawl out  
from the corpses and die. In a story of many Sunderings,  
in this one the sea glows at night, gives us a light  
to tell the tale by, shows one way the end comes.

## Conger

*Adrienne Pilon*

*An ice shelf about the size of Rome has completely collapsed in East Antarctica within days of record high temperatures, according to satellite data.*

—*The Guardian*, March 24, 2022

Honeymooning in the Eternal City, we walked from our hotel  
to the Colosseum, stood in the ruins that spanned  
centuries, shouted to one another across the vast  
amphitheater. Its edges have crumbled, *disintegrated*  
from earthquakes and neglect. Inside the Pantheon  
I stood nearly alone in that slanting, calculated light of ages.  
We strolled along the Tiber, crossed that *atmospheric river*,  
took in the narrow winding streets of Trastevere  
with its bars and cafes, streams of students flowing past,  
crossed the river again, stood in the giant oval  
of Piazza Navona where strolling musicians circumnavigated  
the fountain. On the one-hundredth of the Spanish steps,  
we found an empty spot—*a surprise*—for a photo.  
At Palazzo Borghese we watched Daphne transforming  
into a tree, witnessed Persephone wrestling away  
from Pluto, forever struggling to escape her fate.  
Did she see any *sign of what might be coming?*  
Sometimes things *may happen faster than we think*.  
Even Persephone is crumbling  
at a rate imperceptible to my small eye.

## Tipping Point

*Amy Akiko*

“You’ve almost stolen everything... and *why?*” the little turtle cried, his words expressed in silent bubbles, as the last of his family were swallowed whole by the sprawling mouth, with a thousand nylon teeth, his heart racing faster than the Great Whites of the past, who had vanished months before.

He looked down at the reef of discarded straws, that sipped on seawater, synthetic bags exhaustedly hanging onto the colossal structure’s swaying spines, having swam many miles, from continents afar.

Some of the strange creatures seemed to age like people—their skin sagging and thinning with time, the youthful shade of their ginger-orange gradually fading into whites and greys. But none of the creatures ever seemed to die.

The little turtle gawped at the new species of tin fish, their round mouths flapping closed and open, consuming the tiny plastic plankton, spitting them out with the next ebb of a wave, unable to swallow. The artificial ecosystem never seemed to notice the little turtle much. Although every few days, a fragment of jaw, accidentally wrenched away from the sprawling mouth, tried to painfully chomp down, gnawing into his shell and flesh, until he managed to untangle himself—before the bite was too deep to ever escape.

And the little turtle knew that he must find a new home, because he no longer recognised the home that had once belonged to him, and his Kind.

Dodging empty cans of tuna fish, the metal versions long outliving the tuna themselves, who had not been seen for at least two years, the little turtle finally made it to the shore.

He rummaged inside the wardrobe of his shell, for he knew that he could not live in his own form for a moment longer, and he dressed himself in a brand new body.

## *Capuchin*

He arrived in the cemetery where the trees used to grow, their stubbed gravestones a sorrowful reminder of the mass destruction that had almost wiped them out, entirely. Only one tree remained, where a whole forest had once thrived, and one female capuchin who hugged onto its branches. For her, it was love at first sight: he was the most exquisite capuchin she had ever seen. It didn’t matter that he was really a turtle underneath his new fur, and she a bowhead whale. She flirted with some playful stalking, zigzagging after him amongst the piles of chopped, skinned corpses, yanking his fur, until he got the hint, and they became each other’s devoted home. So when the bulldozer inevitably arrived, they could almost cope with the loss of their tree, so long as they still had each other to cling to.

## *Drought*

Yearning to feel the water on his skin, even if it was fresh and small, and not salted and endless, the little turtle turned himself into a frog. The bowhead whale decided to become a toad, for she saw beauty, where others saw ugliness. They spent six blissful months in their newfound sanctuary. They got on swimmingly with their newt neighbours, whom they were never tempted to swallow down as a midnight snack, even when the flies began to dwindle. They didn’t notice, at first, as the water level lowered like a slow draining bath, and once they did notice, they tried their hardest not to again. Until one day, when

just a precious pearl of water remained, they knew they had no choice but to leave behind the deceased remains of the pond they had hoped would be their enduring place, and search, instead, for a new and living land.

*Her Loss was the most Painful Loss*

Of course, if the little turtle had known what would become, he would never have suggested that they turn into cows simply because the grass was so vast, and still semi-lush in the autumn and winter months. For one whole day, they contentedly chewed, and for one single night they slept side by side, and hoof by hoof. But as a new day rose, and he slumbered in its morning, greedy hands, and greedier mouths led her away, for she had always been too loving, too trusting, and as they drained her drier than the pond she wished had never died, the salty red reminded her of the salty blue sea she missed so dearly, and it comforted her in her final moments, the waves dancing across her face, as her eyes quietly closed.

*Flight, Fall*

In devastation, the little turtle turned himself into a swift, and flew to the top of the highest mountain, far away from everything that he thought could hurt him. But the warm ice began to melt beneath his delicate claws, and all that was left was an overcooked sky, all the moisture evaporated away, the taste of burnt ash baked into its air. And so the little turtle decided to turn back into himself, and purposely, he tumbled towards his demise. For he would rather face an untimely extinction, than turn into the skin of those who had almost stolen everything.

*Rise*

As the little turtle plummeted, he saw a sea of concerned hands. Millions of fingers, reaching up towards the sky. He only hoped that there would be enough.

To save the world in time.

**our throats dry out again.**

*Georgie Bailey*

We're low on bleach,  
can you water the plants?

Last night I dreamt people  
never lose things.

We used to be good at  
never finishing, always finding

new links with laughter  
oozing through our veins,

filling up our lungs like blood  
in saltwater, completing us.

We woke up on the beach,  
parched, depleted.

We're the rocks that look  
like wandering islands,

no boat, far from shore.

## **Rattan Eco Sprawl: Manifesting the Forest**

*Zen Teh Shi Wei*

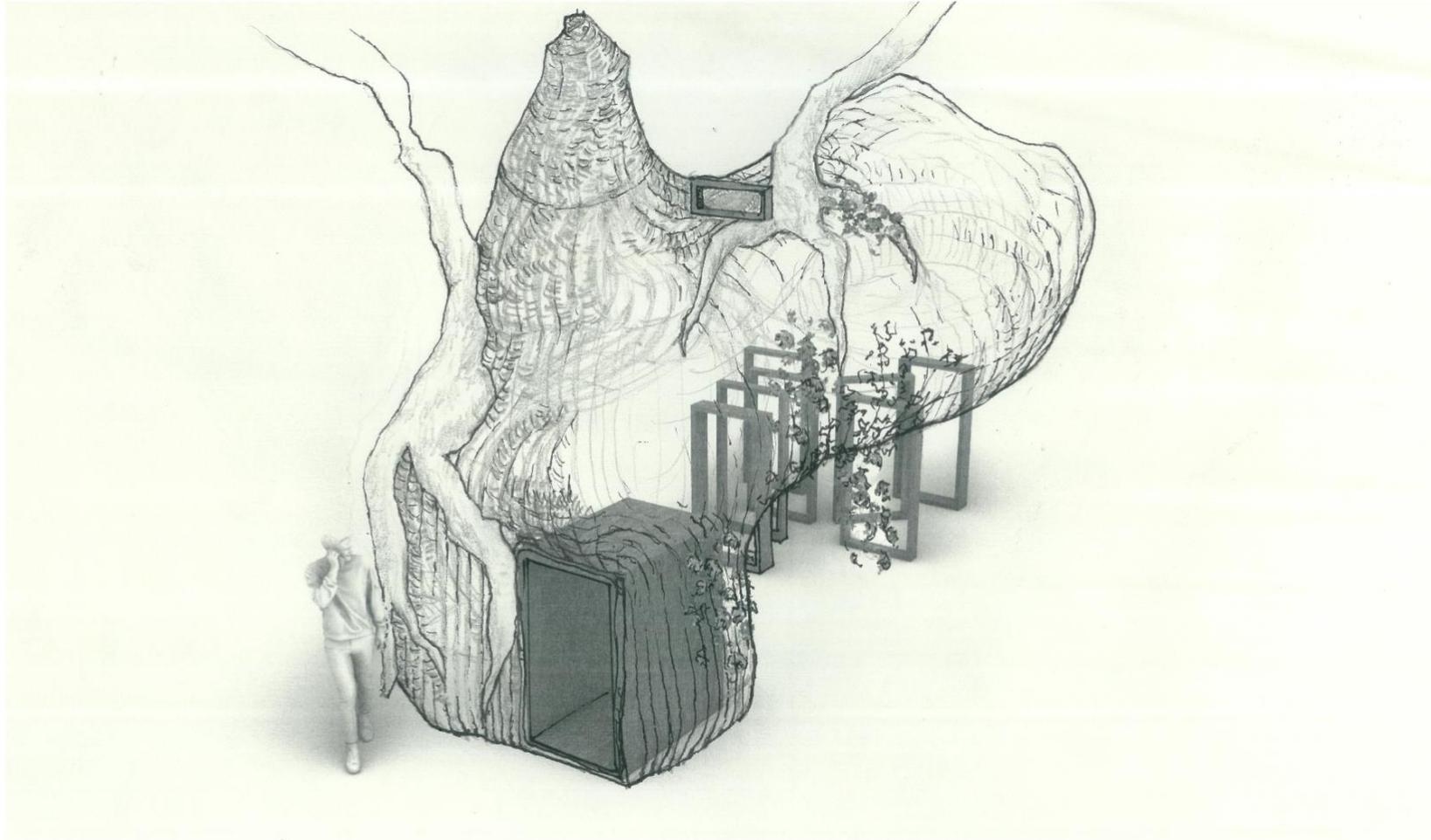
*2023 by Zen Teh in collaboration with Dr Chua Siew Chin*

*Rattan, wood, tropical plants for forest restoration*

***Rattan Eco Sprawl: Manifesting the Forest*** nestles in the lush greenery of a quiet spot in the neighbourhood. Constructed primarily from rattan, its wavy forms weave in elements from the natural world including mountains and mounds where insects dwell. Such formations have also inspired sacred monuments like the Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Mirroring the atmosphere of reverence when entering similar spaces, the lowered ceilings and narrowed passageways of Rattan Eco Sprawl impel visitors to navigate the enclosed space with care. Live plants encroach its exterior, furnished with selected species also found in the adjacent forest. Witnessed here is the same jostle between natural and man-made elements in the area: tree roots pushing their way through concrete pavements, destabilising fences and bollards, as if nature was attempting to reclaim its territory.

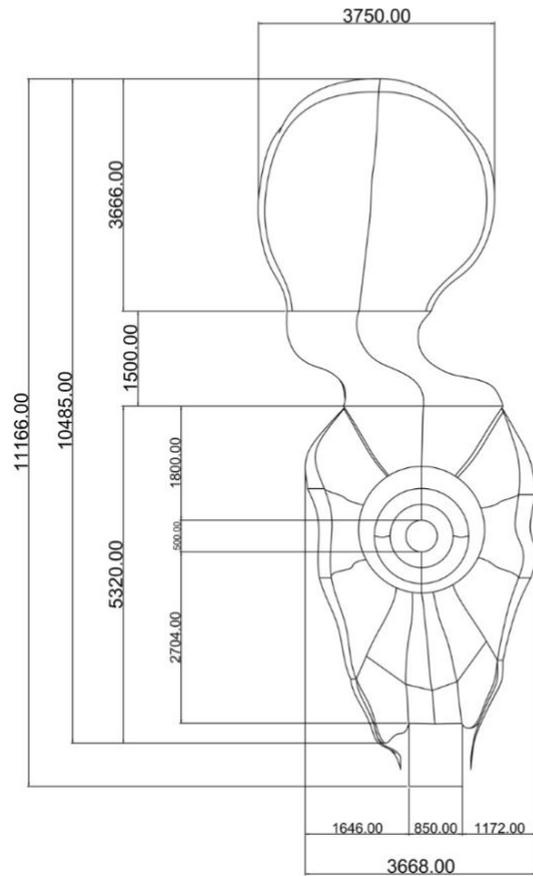
***Rattan Eco Sprawl*** reflects on this entanglement of nature and urban development against the backdrop of a fast-changing Singapore landscape while extending the ecological network of the existing forest. While the forest remains partially earmarked for the development of a new MRT station, the work serves as a vessel for sonic encounters, embracing both man-made noise and the serenades of nature.

Through engagements with rattan and wood artisans, an ecologist, and nonhuman residents, ***Rattan Eco Sprawl*** acknowledges the fragile, intertwined relationship that we share with nature, driving a collaborative need to bring old and new knowledges together for a sustainable future.



*Rattan Eco Sprawl* © Zen Teh Shi Wei

## Artistic vision: an ecological and spiritual gateway



*Rattan Eco Sprawl* © Zen Teh Shi Wei



*Rattan Eco Sprawl* © Zen Teh Shi Wei

1:5 Scale Model



*Rattan Eco Sprawl* © Zen Teh Shi Wei



*Rattan weaving as communal activity and knowledge sharing process*

© Zen Teh Shi Wei



*Rattan weaving as communal activity and knowledge sharing process*

© Zen Teh Shi Wei



*Rattan weaving as communal activity and knowledge sharing process*

© Zen Teh Shi Wei



*Rattan weaving as communal activity and knowledge sharing process*

© Zen Teh Shi Wei

## A Shiver in the Blood

*Drew Townsend*

The Bittern, which is found in suitable habitats throughout most of Europe, became extinct as a British breeding bird in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and re-colonised East Anglia in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup>.

The boom of the Bittern, familiar in literature and fable, is the call of the male – a deep, bovine, resonant note, certainly audible for over a mile.

*Birds of the British Isles and their Eggs*, T.A. Coward and J.A.G. Barnes

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He was on the water when he heard it again. Although he had never really heard it before. Only an imitation performed by his grandfather in the old fowling shack that disappeared with the flood of ninety-six.

*'They sort of come out of the air, you almost feel it before yer hear it.'*

*'What's it feel like?'*

*'Like a shiver in yer blood.'*

*'Does it hurt?'*

*He laughed.*

*'It don't hurt, don't worry about that.'*

*'What do they look like?'*

*'I can't tell yer.'*

*'Why not?'*

*'Yer have to see it. Yer can't describe a bittern. It can only be seen. Yer can't see one in no picture neither.'*

*'What if someone drew one?'*

*'They can't.'*

*'How not?'*

*'They just can't. If some artist saw one, when he came to draw it, he would either lose all memory, or it wouldn't look like one once he was done. It would look like something altogether strange or not of this world.'*

But he knew it when he heard it, an inherited knowledge, although he didn't feel that shiver in the blood at first. The soft boom resonating over the last of the fen this far east. There was nothing else that could make that sound. The pause. Then again.

*'It sounds more like a beast, really. Like some sort of land dwelling thing, like an ox.'*

*'Like a cow.'*

*'Like a cow, but smarter sounding.'*

*‘Did they scare people, before they knew what they were?’  
‘Maybe. Still used to take me a little by surprise when I heard them.’  
And then he did it again, imitated the boom, too hard to translate into written word and pass on in material form.*

He pushed his punt further in, deeper amongst the continually golden phragmites. All the fen had changed since his grandfather’s day. The banks had shifted and new passages had been carved by the silted waters, but on top of this the land had been drained, reclaimed and flattened and turned and planted. The fen was shrinking, nearly gone.

*‘They keep draining like they are, then yer can forget about seeing a bittern. Yer can forget about seeing any kind of fowl or waterbird.’*

*‘Where will they go?’*

*‘Some other place. They’ll be awright, unless they do this in other places an all. It’s us that’ll be gone.’*

*‘Can’t we live on land.’*

*‘Us, live on land like everyone else, how we gonna do that?’*

*‘Well, we sort of do already.’*

*‘I spend more time on the water than on the earth. And what will I do if I int out here setting my traps, if I int pushing my punt through the reeds?’*

*‘You could work on the land.’*

*He laughed at this.*

*‘You could leave with the birds,’ said the boy.*

*He smiled kindly.*

*‘Maybe God will grant me a pair of wings in my sleep.’*

Pause again, then boom. A little louder. He ventured deeper into the fen, his ears keen to the sound, guiding him. When it stopped, he stopped.

*‘Did yer ever tell my mother the same thing, about the bittern?’*

*‘I may have done.’*

*He looked at the boy and adjusted the rabbit skin cap on his head.*

*‘She liked the water, yer mother.’*

*The boy nodded.*

*‘Did my father?’*

*‘I can’t speak for what he liked.’*

*‘I don’t even know what he looks like.’*

*‘You may one day, if not in person, then maybe you’ll see a hint of him looking back at yer from the water, although you’ve got yer mother’s eyes.’*

*‘What will I do when you go?’*

*‘I dunno, boy. All I have will be yours, but that int much.’*

*‘I’ll stay on the water until it’s all gone.’*

*‘Sounds a plan.’*

*‘And when it’s gone, I’ll follow the birds. I’ll find the place they go to after here.’*

*‘Even better.’*

*'And if there int no place, and it's been drained, then maybe I'll go off on one of those big boats, on the sea, and see where I end up.'*

*The old man looked at him and wanted to say something but had nothing to say.*

He came to a place where the reeds were thick and he rested on the pole of his punt. He heard the little grunts this time that preceded the booming and knew it to be near, and he looked off amongst the reeds but saw nothing, and yet he still felt something calling to him even in its silence, that shiver in the blood, a sensation beyond a sensation, like it came from some channel beyond the silted depths below or the vaulted sky above. Then it boomed again, further off in the distance, and he pushed off once more.

*A shortened version of this story was shortlisted for the Flash 500 prize.*

**Two poems** by *Smitha Sebgal*

**Malabar Gliding Frog**

door to the patio  
opens to cinnamon tree  
a gliding frog intercepts  
quiet, lithe,  
blending on the brown bark  
it isn't that we have never met  
the bulge of heavy-lidded eyes, singular betrayal  
of plantain leaves, tap of a woodpecker  
'there' I point 'there, towards the hedge'  
that noon I discover—  
I am the trespasser

## **Bird Sanctuary**

*Smitha Sebgal*

My brother, the flamingo turned lion keeper  
feeds piranhas, “from the Amazon river”  
he says, they crowd around a chunk of flesh, later  
disappears into the hay stacked dimly lit birth-  
room. On the white of his palm, blind,  
raw skin, new life, outside  
the summer of tortoise, we beam.  
Each journey unravels the joy of a seed  
tapping into the sunlight of fruit trees. Early  
winter he comes down with sallow skin, lichens growing  
on his eyebrow. Pathology reports rumble he is a  
returning flamingo. In the corridor, white noise  
bird squawk, and bough of leaves flutter. Shrouded in ochre-  
white feathers, a bird in deep meditation on  
a pyre, fanning flame wings into the twilight sky  
before softly taking off. It rained all night.

## **Barricade**

*Eliana Franklin*

I search for paddlefish  
in the French Broad River,  
their long flat noses, pointy gray fins—  
our ancient ancestors.

They're gone—  
even as I dive in, feel the rush  
of cool water ripple around me,  
sand settling on my skin.

But where are the prehistoric giants,  
the sleek scales and shiny eyes?  
I only find ghosts, floating  
behind the dam.

The pool grows still—stagnant,  
the closer I get to the concrete barrier,  
a break in the soft current.

The paddlefish disappeared  
when the dams went up,  
stopped their every movement.

I, too, can't swim beyond  
this barricade. On the other side,  
fantail darters and longnose dace  
gather in crowds

and push against the levee—  
maybe someday, they'll tear it down,  
breach the walls,  
bring together all the fish  
beyond those artificial waterfalls.

## Red/ Black/ Springstorm

*Upasana Mitter*

I — born as a woman and raised as a lamb — in the land of vermillion earth richened by alluvium and bloodshed — where a walk through the slopes stains my soles with this crimson rust that has had ballads laid to its feet — centuries of home-grown and war-torn love held precious for this *ranga maatir desh* — land of the red hillocks, that is, where their hands have spent centuries crafting men, women, horses, dogs, elephants out of the soil where their houses stand — and here, I who run through the hillforest like the lamb, and March who chases right after me like the lion — its wind lashing at my back, tangling up my hair, stabbing my small brown face with rain needles.

I — of the land of the loud and thunderous festival — on a quiet, dull evening where summer beats down on your scalp — it rashes pink on your fragile skin and you have to drag your body to work and back as if locked up by a fever, hot and sweaty, grilled meat on charcoal — where the bright white morning and yellow afternoons make you weary and grizzled — it roughs you up, under the direct fire of weather, with locusts kissing your cheek and ants crawling up the hair of your legs — I lie, it is me that it roughs up, and it is I who hear the first crack of the sky — or so I like to think, do not disillusion me, let the child feel like a king.

I — see it clearly, the evening sky cracking open — like a massive black egg and through its fine lines it splits and lets the yolk of rain fall through — and washes away the sins of the heat wave past — it falls, it falls, on the dried terracotta earth and the open palms of those who want to clean them off it — the *viola indica* bows its head to the breeze in soft dark sorrow — the damp grass is stepped on by the delicately clattering hooves of cattle — the rocks soak up the abrupt barrage of water, it knows it's going to be a while before this sudden love bombing ends — it soaks up like it has soaked up years of dust, floods, droughts, tobacco spits, acids, fumes, *indigofera tinctoria*, red and blue, blood and flowers.

And now — the storm is a scream through the air — it is multiple screams and sobs and starvations ringing with the sharp sound of howls that belong to me — to us, the land of bleating, squabbling lamb people — it carries soda cans and dirt within its waft, it carries packets of chips and dandelion rays and drops them into flooding streams, it carries a punch and a laugh, it carries the redolence of burnt ozonic remains and smoke and geosmin — and it happens every year, this harbinger of spring — it is the muse of songstresses and the climber of myths — it is the herald of insect and reptilian season — of violently coloured marigolds and hyacinths and jasmine — *kaal baisakhi* marches, its music a lion's roar, here, now, for us.

## **The Sands Wash Away**

*Joseph Lee*

The sands wash away the noise.  
Voiceless. We scatter.  
Here is no electricity or  
Gold. We're all man-made. We refuse  
To be defined,  
To be catalogued, my body bleeding  
Unlike the cosmos.  
Pure sand tastes bitter and sometimes hot.  
It is noisy again. The rain begins to pour  
Bloody void. It makes things.  
Then disappears.  
Again, space is filled with stars, not sand.

## Notice

*Calvin VanErgens*

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### WANTED: TAXONOMIST

Specializing in lichens.

Though learning to name  
and notice them is to be  
taxing, they're not to be  
missed, as I know I do.

One or two I know, like  
those likened to and  
liked by reindeer and  
thus called accordingly.

But I want to know, can  
I nap in its spongy bed  
in forest rain? Your help is  
appreciated. Appreciation  
will be easier with help—  
of their color, not that of  
blazing summer flower  
and autumn leaf, yet some  
of nature's best. Calm. If  
blazing, then a pinprick of  
blood red. Sometimes color  
on a tree in Michigan I'd  
expect in Bahamian  
ocean. If over a dozen  
species nestle on an old  
split rail, what does a  
forest hold? Could you  
walk me through it?

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## If I Were a Skinless Black King Snake

Cerra Cathryn Anderson

My favorite days are when I die. They don't come as often as I would like, but they are always worth the wait. Death's voice is faint only when I am indoors; on the cliffs' edge she abandons her inside voice and wraps her wordless tendrils around my ankles. Jump, *jump*. I used to tremble at her voice, backing away quickly. Not anymore. Now when *l'appel du vide* calls my name, I close my eyes and breathe so deeply. This is when I feel the most alive—not because I could have died, but because I chose to keep on living.

\* \* \*

I am driving home. It is a Wednesday, and the familiar slump of fatigue hovers over my shoulders as I click my right-hand blinker and exit the highway. I woke up too early, produced a hundred lattes, and sat in the most windowless classrooms on the university campus. My breath shallows just thinking about it, and I punch the mute button on my podcast. I need to *breathe*, not think.

The sky is the same shade of blue I find at boy baby showers, and the wild petunias his matching twin sister. I pass the construction area about six minutes from my house where someone is burying power lines in someone else's ditch. Five minutes more and my home road materializes, black asphalt patch-worked with the sunlight that survived the net of pine fronds above it. When I crack my windows to let in the scent of those pines, powering down the air conditioner, the boundaries between *my space* and *space* begin to merge again.

My neighbor's field holds the memory of nighttime deer, little dents in the grass like thumbprints in bread dough. Willy and Bill, the turkey vultures that haunt the ninety degree turn in our driveway, wing their way up from me as I round the corner. They disappear beyond the tree line. I wonder if they are searching for a black king snake fatally nicked by the hay-baler. *Cathartes aura* at war with *Lampropeltis getula nigrita*, “purifying breeze” against king of serpents. Perhaps the wily snake snuck by those beady eyes in wrinkled heads, slipping out of his old skin, leaving the decoy behind to slink away and nurse his wounds. He may have even escaped the notice of the scissor-tailed flycatcher perched on the barbed wire fence who peers at me now, its namesake dipping and wiggling behind it to keep its one-ounce body in prime viewing area of this strange spectacle.

I *must* look strange to these animals: a creature who sleeps in a box, climbs in a box with wheels that drives her to other boxes where she shoves her own ideas and prepackaged knowledge alike into boxlike shapes, all while consulting the conveniently pocket-sized box that flashes and dings like a child's playtoy. The scissor-tail flies away and I roll on past my aunt's house to my own.

I leave my box on wheels there, and, abandoning my backpack, tromp to the southern side of our property. There is a pond farther down I want to see.

The leaves of the oaks surrounding it are young, just peaking through with a color barely dark enough to be called green. When we reach the height of summer they will tan into the deep, deep green of my childhood, overshadowing the pond that will be depleted

and foggy with algae, the surface dim like a poorly cleaned, public bathroom mirror. Pollen will coat the tense surface like a generous dusting of cornmeal on the bottom of a cast-iron skillet; here and there water bugs will dent the surface with spindle legs, scattered by the occasional fish who have sensed the nearby dinner possibilities. Grasshoppers' wings will beat together so loudly you can hardly tell the difference between them and the cicadas hiding in the white oaks. Everything will be hot and tired and ready for autumn, but not ready enough to forgo the summertime naps in the shade where the humidity will settle like a thick blanket over our bodies. Breathing will deepen, lengthen, so soft we hardly move. A temporary grave.

(Only sometimes can I tell the difference between sleeping and death.)

But that is not what the pond looks like today. This time of year is the time for rain, and the dampness seeps into my shoes, making strange squelchy sounds. I remove them, and the muddiest places cling to my feet. A smooth, slender trail winds its way through the damp earth, and I hope it belongs to that king snake, crafty little devil. It is in this place, with the hope of escape, that I begin to unpackage myself from all those boxes, my shape losing its compressed corners and defined edges. A song, uninvited, creeps into my mind as I approach the waters' edge—if an edge is something water can have, endless, boundless as it is. Even the biology professor can't pin it down: is it a gas, a liquid, or a solid? Boundless, boundaryless, non-binary—that's what it is.

A great blue heron, *Ardea herodias*, nested near this pond a summer ago, and sometimes I catch sight of her over our back field, flying from one pond to another. A Canadian goose also haunts this area of our property, but she I am not so eager to meet as soon she will be defending a nest. Neither large non-passerines are present, and once it becomes evident that no wildflowers have yet sprung up in the marshiest parts, I retreat to the eastern field where the dreams of flowers have begun to wake—the tiniest, yellowest buds perching on swaying grass stems. I can almost see the golden butter dripping from their waxy, cupped centers.

I make my temporary grave as the deer did just last night, near the buttercups and, as I am not of the category of people who are against harvesting wildflowers for pleasure, I take the smallest bundle and tuck it behind my ear. Then, arms spread wide, I press my back to the soft plants, trinities of leaves crowned with sun-yellow petals.

It is in this place that I come to die.

\* \* \*

I am not a morbid person. My thoughts are more curious baby things than the rumination of a full-grown creature. I am in a time and place in my life where “passing on” holds a magic still, a mystery, and very few things in my life are encouraged to be a mystery anymore. I graduated that class with an A+, no late papers submitted. The university model is by definition against mystery, and the ten year plans, retirement funds, and helpful zoo plaques that strike all efforts at ignorance from this Western brain only emphasize what my mentors encourage. Far be it from me to wonder about the future, to spend my pocket change on pastries, or stand in uncertainty regarding the evolutionary steps involved in developing an orangutan. No, for I am *civilized folk*, committed to expending every possible

brain cell in the process of eliminating this mystery that keeps me up at night. Anyway, I can sleep when I'm dead.

When I make my temporary grave, I try to make it like the deer would, or like the snake. It has become a kind of unifying ceremony to me. More accurately, it is a *reunification* where I abandon all sense of civilization, breathe the trees and hear the flowers, and do any little thing I can to thin the line between my own being and that great Mother whose womb is churning beneath my slowing heartbeat. It is a consolation for me—this ritual, this part of the earth. The names of flowers and birds coat the tip of my tongue like the cherry-flavored cough medicine I took on a sick day in middle school. *Tyrannus forficatus*—scissor-tailed flycatchers. *Ranunculus fascicularis*—early buttercups. I do not say them. I am dead, and the dead do not speak. Only collect flowers and catch tears.

In this community of mystery I truly rest in peace. Gravity thickens and pulls on each vertebrae of my spinal column until I can almost feel my ribcage unfolding and rooting into the Arkansas soil, leaving my heart exposed. I allow this place to work on me in this undocumented way. It is Mother Nature's turn to churn and plant and water and guard: to churn my sedentary spirit to wandering; to plant a little seed of a thought, just the right size for a haiku; to water the driest parts of my body when I stand for five hours and work for a vague and faceless crowd; and to guard me from the pencil bags, tablet case, and due dates that are uprooting the years of work my human mother put in to keep me at least a little wilder than the rest of my generation.

My generation has an interesting way of consoling themselves: with screens historically known to raise anxiety levels. In this we find comfort. I say we because, though my mother was quite prolific in her promotion of books and bread baking, I could not escape the harm of humanity completely. I still reach for my phone when stress arises, thumb through colorful ten-second videos, and talk—*talk*, endlessly. I produce my own words so often I forget to listen to the word of God. In the beginning... in the now, in oxeye daisies and oxymorons and oxford commas. In robin wings and snail shells I thought were abandoned. In surprising, jarring revelations of word and nature, which are synonymous (obviously).

This natural, universal mystery is what I come to find when here I die (by *I*, of course, I mean my whole being, not simply my body): do I, by dying, *end*; or is this where the completeness of reunification begins? I must emphasize that I do not come here to *solve* this mystery. I come only to *find* it again and again in all its gravestone glory, in the gray area where I end and decomposition begins. To become a little more like water: less binary, with fewer bounds and boundaries.

A cloud's shadow overtakes the sun, as if to add clarity.

\* \* \*

I am awoken in the aftermath by a cricket crawling over my hand. He rubs his spiny forelegs together, antennae bouncing in the levity of sunlight. A vulture circles above me, and I wonder if this is how that snake felt—lying belly up, earth pulling down, cricket and ant crawling over, vultures floating updraft to updraft until those broad black wings close and we lock eyes. I feel the snake, I am the snake, but not the snake wounded by the hay-baler, bleeding and slinking away to die alone. I peel away from the ground like it is old

skin, and look at my daytime impression in the green, a little dent in the grass like a thumbprint in bread dough. I am no longer woman—*Homo sapien* ruler of Kingdom *Animalia*. I am simply one of the kingdom with a reunified body and soul and spirit. I am made up of need and desire and heaven, with blurred edges and unboxed self—something a bit more like water.

“How do we learn to trust ourselves to hear the chanting of the earth?” By lying in the empty field and allowing the cricket to examine my body more than I have examined it myself. By embracing the sunlight and cold shadows of clouds with equal vigor, fingers of my soul clawing for any warmth or cold that reminds me that I AM, not I *do*. With each temporary death I leave behind another skin as evidence of my ritual reunification to the singularity of animalhood. One of Many. Many of One. Myself, only.

Each time I die I must eventually rouse my corpse, return to my home and do the best I can to make it *not* a box. I will have to write the paper and study for the test, but only after this consolation. Above all else I must remember I am simply one member of one species in a vast collection of diverse organisms, each with our own lives to live—or rather, deaths to die each day. I am not a scissor-tailed flycatcher or a sleeping deer or a skinless black king snake. I am not water in every state of matter. I am not food for vultures—*yet*. I can only pray that when those vultures come, be it in seven years or seventy, that they gorge themselves well on a newly skinned body, lush and rich with the quality of life. But before they feast, I hope they say their own prayer of thanks to the boundless, non-binary God who waters the buttercups over my grave.

## **Moses**

*Alejandra Pena*

when i think of my father, i think of hands calloused & eyes heavy & boots dirty. i think of him as Moses—parting the sea by walking days without sleep, without water, without shoes to the promised land; a land so foreign that his tongue will never roll smoothly enough to be considered native. instead—it rolls too harshly; every flick of his tongue a rebellion, a lighthouse, a map home.

## Contributors



**Amy Akiko** is an educator and journalism graduate from South London. She enjoys writing various forms of fiction including poetry, children's stories, flash, and short stories. She is an avid advocate for animal rights, and is currently working on her first novel, which explores the impact of loneliness, particularly on older people's lives.



**Cerra Cathryn Anderson** is a junior Interdisciplinary Studies & Theological Studies double major at Harding University in Arkansas. While her hobbies include playing cello, sketching, travel, and various temporary craft obsessions, her two most loved pastimes are nature walks and writing. She has written personal essays, a novella, a novel, and various flash-fiction and poetry pieces. Her post-graduation plans have yet to be formulated, but will most assuredly involve people, creative communications, and plenty of the great outdoors.



**Marie-Andrée Auclair's** poems have found homes in many print and online publications in Canada, the USA and in several other countries; to name a few: *Bywords*, Canada; *Acta Victoriana*, Canada; *The Helix*, USA; *High Window*, UK and upcoming at *Frogmore Papers*, UK. She also enjoys photography, traveling and adding to her cooking repertoire after each trip. She lives in Canada.



**Georgie Bailey** is a multi-award-winning working-class writer, who is an alumnus of Bristol Old Vic Theatre School's MA Dramatic Writing, Oxford Playhouse's Playmaker Scheme and Soho Theatre's Writers Lab. His play *TETHERED* won Innovative Play at the 2021 London Pub Theatre Awards. Georgie is the Artistic Director of ChewBoy Productions. His works have appeared in the Trouvaille Review, Lake Poetry, Ropes Literary Journal and Horizon Magazine to name a few, and as been shortlisted for multiple prizes.



**KayLee Chie Kuehl** is a poet, writer, and artist based in Iowa City. Her projects often focus on culture, identity, race, and spirituality. Through the work creates, she hopes to provide a safe space, encourage empathy, and help heal as many people as possible.



**Eliana Franklin** is a sixth grade teacher in Asheville, North Carolina, USA, with a degree in creative writing and environmental studies. She has work published or forthcoming in *Pensive Journal*, *Lucky Jefferson*, and *Deep Wild: Writing from the Backcountry*. She can often be found outside, writing poetry about her experiences in the mountains she calls home.



**Claire Jean Kim** is Professor of Political Science and Asian American Studies at University of California, Irvine, where she teaches classes on racial justice and animal/climate justice. She is the author of two award-winning books published by Yale University Press and Cambridge University Press, respectively, and she has just completed a third book (*Asian Americans in an Anti-Black World*) that is forthcoming from the latter in June 2023. She began writing poetry in December 2021, and she has taken workshops with Kate Angus, Kim Addonizio (twice), Bernard Ferguson, and Derek Sheffield. Her poems have been published in *Rising Phoenix Review* and *Terrain.org*.



**Joseph Lee** is a graduating English student in Singapore. In his free time, he writes poems about identity, nationhood, spirituality and the environment. His poems have appeared in *Pandemic Poems: May Day! 2020* and *Bury Library*.



**Liberty Leggett** is an almost-twenty, almost-American, and always-homesick artist currently studying at the University of Washington. She was born in Shanghai, grew up in Singapore, and is now learning to make Seattle her home. She is mostly succeeding.



**Tara Menon** is an Indian-American writer based in Lexington, Massachusetts. Her most recent poems have been published in *Global South* (forthcoming), *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Arlington Literary Journal*, *San Pedro River Review*, and *The Loch Raven Review*. Her latest fiction has appeared in *The Hong Kong Review*, *Litro*, *The Bookends Review*, *Rio Grande Review*, and *The Evening Street Review*. She is also a book reviewer and essayist whose pieces have appeared in many journals.



A poet, writer and acrylic/oils/mixed-media artist, **Upasana Mitter** pursues a degree in Sociology from Calcutta University and resides in West Bengal, India. She occasionally sits down at a keyboard and lets herself go for a little too long. You can find her painting away her graceless inner turmoils on Instagram @rumpelstilskin1693. Her writing has previously appeared in *The Ekphrastic Review*.



**Andy Oram** is a writer and editor in the computer field. His editorial projects have ranged from a legal guide covering intellectual property to a graphic novel about teenage hackers. Print publications where his writings have appeared include *The Economist*, the *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, and *Vanguardia Dossier*. He started dabbling in poetry after noticing that he had been inserting his creativity in unprecedented ways into the technical documentation he was paid to produce. He has lived in the Boston, Massachusetts area for almost 50 years. His poems have been published in more than 40 journals.



**Alejandra Pena** is a lesbian, Mexican-American poet. Her work has appeared in *Another Chicago Magazine*, *Sleet Magazine*, and *Prism International*. She loves her pug Kiwi & the moon.



**Adrienne Pilon** is a writer, editor, and teacher. Recent work appears in *The Linden Review*, *Minyan*, *HASH* and elsewhere. She is on staff at *BoomerLitMag* and *Kitchen Table Quarterly* and is a booster of literary magazines everywhere.



**Smitha Sehgal** is a legal professional from India. She writes poetry in two languages: English and Malayalam. Her poems have been featured in contemporary literary publications *Usava Literary Review*, *Madras Courier*, *Panoply*, *Shot Glass Journal* and elsewhere.



**Zen Teh** is an artist and educator interested in the interdisciplinary studies of nature and human behavior. Her art practice spans across photography, sculpture and installation art. Teh initiated numerous collaborative projects with artists, art professionals and scientists over the years: *A Familiar Forest* is a long term ongoing collaboration with environmental biologist, Dr Ching Jianhong from DUKE-NUS that has been exhibited at the ArtScience Museum (2015) and Lee Wee Nam Library, NTU (2021-2022). Her residency at Selasar Sunaryo Art Space (2019) and Sa Sa Art Projects (2022) involved collaboration and research with geologist, urban planner and architect, investigating the impact of rapid urban development on Indonesia and Cambodia.

Teh has been consistently showcased in numerous group and solo exhibitions in Singapore and the region, including National Museum of Singapore, Singapore Art Museum (SAM) and ArtScience Museum, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Korea, Taiwan and China and invited as a guest speaker at regional and international environmental conferences such as UNESCO-UNITWIN 2021, ASEAN Powershift 2015 and Hanoi Innovation Week 2016 on Sustainability. Her works have been acquired by the SAM collection and numerous private collections in Malaysia, Indonesia, China and Singapore.

In 2021, Teh was conferred the Young Artist Award by The National Arts Council, Singapore's highest accolade for artists under the age of 35.



**Drew Townsend's** inspiration is the land in which he has spent most of his life. His work has previously been published in *The Curlew*, a literary nature journal, and his story 'The Outer Edge of Light' was shortlisted for The Cambridge Short Story Prize 2020 and was published online at *TSS Publishing*. More recently, his story 'Children of the Sun' was published in the fall issue of *Exiles Sans Frontières*, and his poem 'Chasing Fieldfares' is forthcoming in *Ariel's Dream Literary Journal*. He is also an alumnus of Edinburgh University's Creative Writing masters.



**Calvin VanErgens** is a poet from a place called the Great Lakes State: Michigan, USA. He often uses poems to tell made-up stories in the voices of the made-up people. The poetry of Calvin VanErgens has recently appeared at the *Reformed Journal* and the Reformed Journal podcast and at *Ekstasis*.



**Renee Yeap** is a Singaporean student who loves Literature and Biology in equal but different ways. She hopes to pursue both Life Sciences and Literature in university. Her secret ambition is to major in Chinese Studies but she is content with watching Chinese dramas in her spare time.