



EVERYTHING IN ASPIC

Issue #4 // winter 2021



MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS



**Welcome to the fourth issue of
*Everything in Aspic:***

2020's over, babe!

- Chelsea Margaret Bodnar & Stephen Lin -

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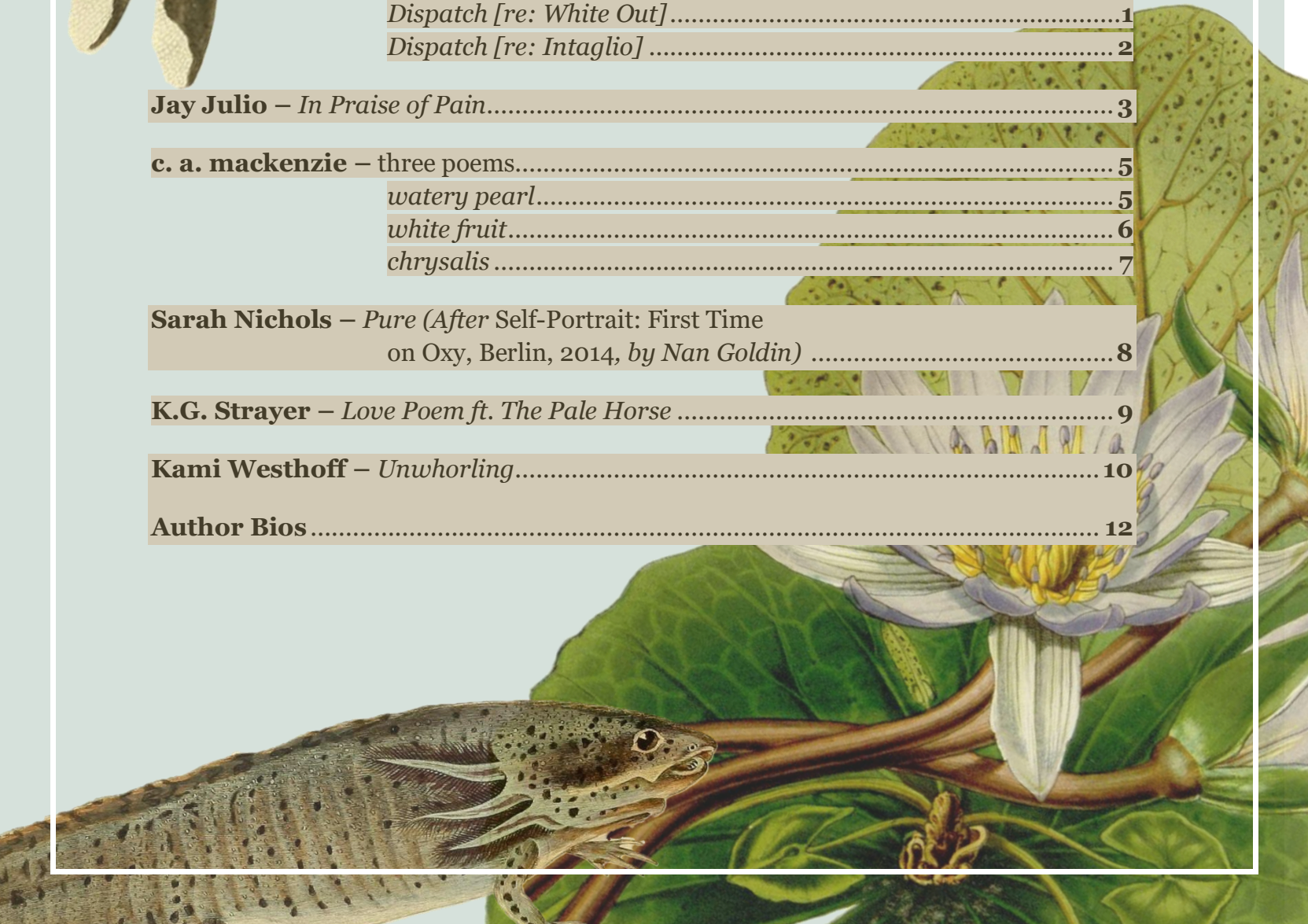
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THANK YOU!!



CONTENTS

Sarah Beddow – two poems	1
<i>Dispatch [re: White Out]</i>	1
<i>Dispatch [re: Intaglio]</i>	2
Jay Julio – <i>In Praise of Pain</i>	3
c. a. mackenzie – three poems.....	5
<i>watery pearl</i>	5
<i>white fruit</i>	6
<i>chrysalis</i>	7
Sarah Nichols – <i>Pure (After Self-Portrait: First Time on Oxy, Berlin, 2014, by Nan Goldin)</i>	8
K.G. Strayer – <i>Love Poem ft. The Pale Horse</i>	9
Kami Westhoff – <i>Unwhorling</i>	10
Author Bios	12



Sarah Beddow

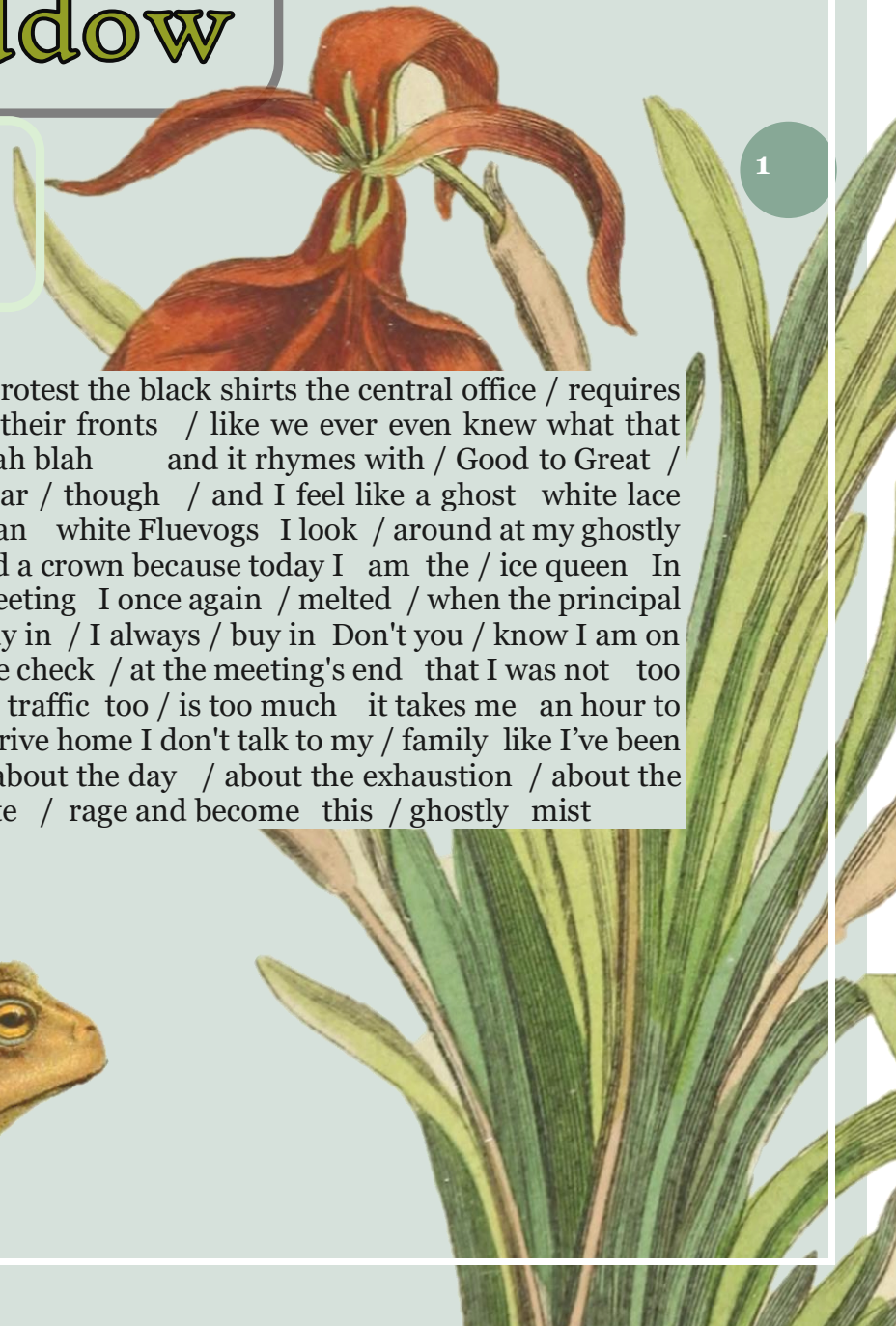


#3

Dispatch
re: *White Out*

1

This Wednesday we wore white / to protest the black shirts the central office / requires us to wear 80-10-8 stamped across their fronts / like we ever even knew what that meant / Some goal something blah blah and it rhymes with / Good to Great / We are great to garbage fire this year / though / and I feel like a ghost white lace dress white lace tights / white cardigan white Fluevogs I look / around at my ghostly colleagues / and I fear I was offered a crown because today I am the / ice queen In the Instruction and Culture Cabinet meeting I once again / melted / when the principal asked us to be a team to / buy in I buy in / I always / buy in Don't you / know I am on / your / side And still I have to double check / at the meeting's end that I was not too / much I am always / too much The traffic too / is too much it takes me an hour to drive home / and in the end when I arrive home I don't talk to my / family like I've been thinking / to and instead / I write about the day / about the exhaustion / about the students we do not serve / I sublimate / rage and become this / ghostly mist





Dispatch
re: *Intaglio*

2

On the third day of the stay-at-home order / my finger itched badly / beneath my
wedding ring I took it off and left it / off for days longer / than I have ever gone
without it Even days / later a recessed band banded / my ring finger with love
In sculpture this is / intaglio a design cut / into the surface the opposite / of
relief I haven't seen my students in two / weeks I haven't gone / so long without
students since / my children were born Even / summers I / run an online
discussion board with / my AP Lit students to keep them reading / writing engaged
/ with one another The district told us / do nothing Do nothing for two weeks
/ Now that we are back / on the clock we still cannot / grade not even work
submitted before the / closure If we reach out / be sure to use the approved district
language / if only they gave us / the language an agenda a memo anything They
did / not they did no/thing I still feel / my students through their / anxiety
their fear / these griefs they can/not articulate Their absence is intaglio / a band
circling my throat



#1

Jay Julio

In Praise of Pain

Because the crack of one hundred
forty volts of alternating current took the skin
off my ring and pointer fingers my seven-year old
heart did not stop that night
in the Philippines. Yes, it stung and
shook like the electric bodies
of the bees whose home I took
for a place to place my body
in the summer, who took their
lives to say: *This is not
for you*, whose kind pains
meant I would never kill
again. The way I didn't
die that night took me years
to grasp, years after my parents waking to smell
the outlet burnt out, plastic smudged
with soot, my body flecked in the heat
that only surviving permits. A boy
I once allowed inside me asked once
how I knew this all was real (he had

been drinking and I had, well.) I asked
if it wasn't, would he want it to stop.
He was quiet. Then said
I could never try. And: Would you?
I moved to the lights, turned them off,
room soot like the back of my hand.
How would my man know I was sharp
if I never picked up my mother's knives?

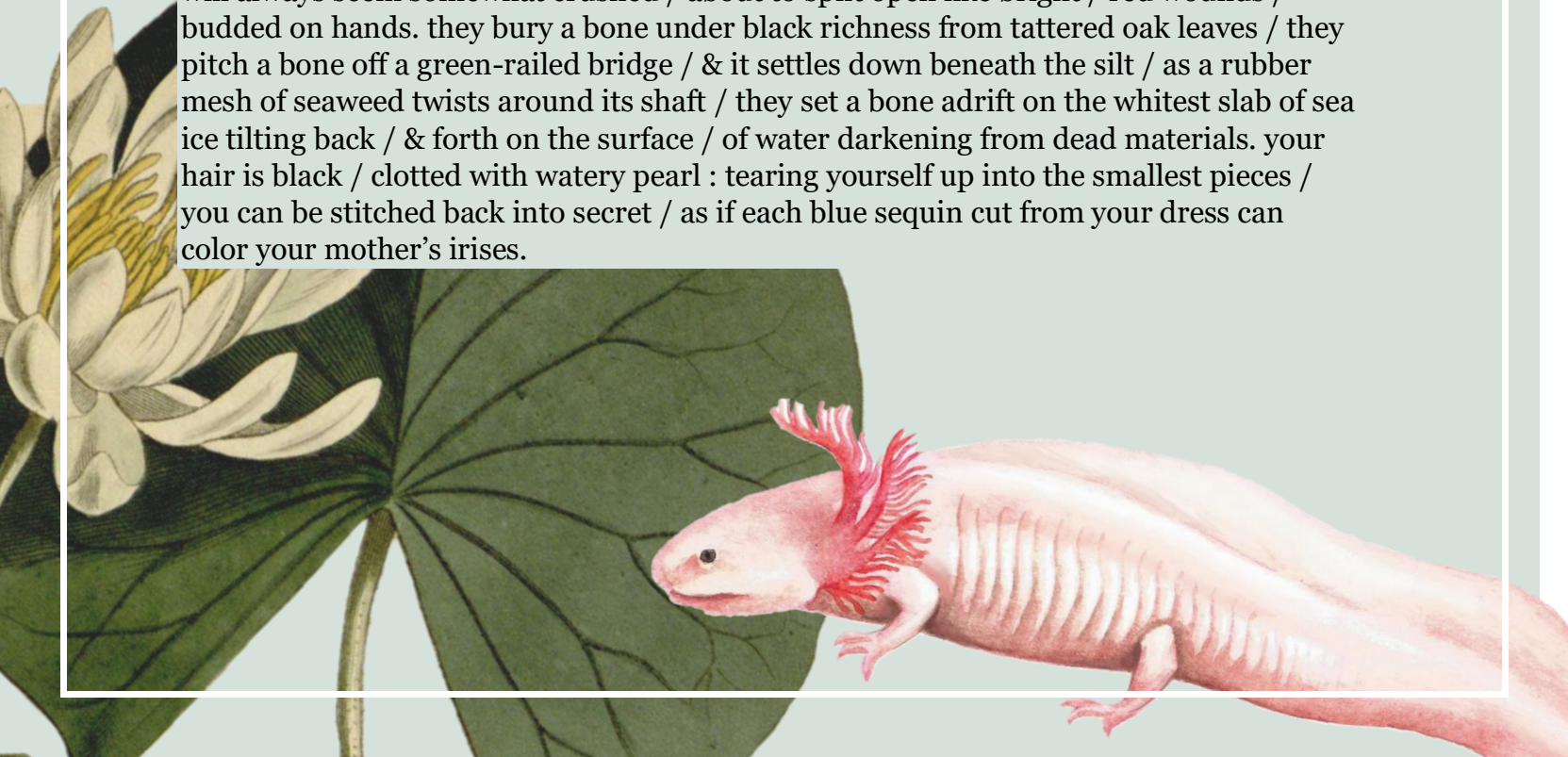


c. a. mackenzie

watery pearl

5

watery pearl / shimmering syrup / streaks down from the top of your forehead / your face / split into five pieces : golden-rayed lilies / rust splattered / torn bone by bone / by many pairs of hands encrusted with scabs / like when minerals sheet a thousand times in the lime / brine of an ancient lake / until its beauty compresses / into something that will always seem somewhat crushed / about to split open like bright / red wounds / budded on hands. they bury a bone under black richness from tattered oak leaves / they pitch a bone off a green-railed bridge / & it settles down beneath the silt / as a rubber mesh of seaweed twists around its shaft / they set a bone adrift on the whitest slab of sea ice tilting back / & forth on the surface / of water darkening from dead materials. your hair is black / clotted with watery pearl : tearing yourself up into the smallest pieces / you can be stitched back into secret / as if each blue sequin cut from your dress can color your mother's irises.





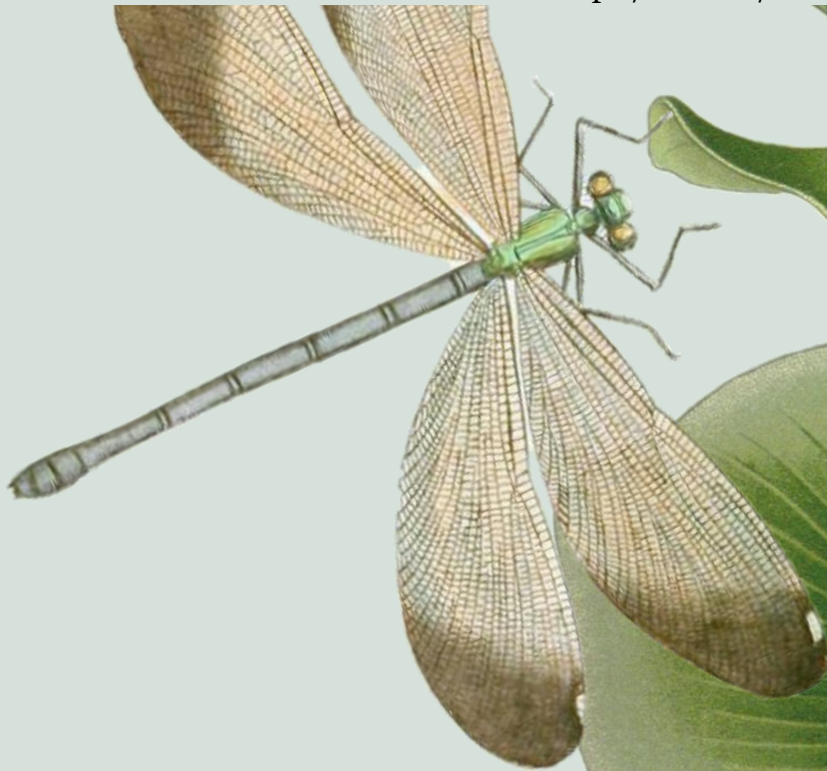
white fruit

6

a rose-gold male flower scrunched into an ear canal / milky with amassed pollen. how you wanted to wilt into papery gray flakes that would always bead fresh heads / fanning blades of yellows even brighter than before. tendrils draped over an ear in five thin coils / plastic hair snaked around little fingers. real hair smells like the silver-netted rind of a musk melon / you say / scooping out a handful of seeds / slippery like tissue clumped in a womb / as its white fruit fades out from the center into watery greens / traced with a black band. somewhere our bodies are each hard wax cells of a honeycomb / our bodies / become the honey unloaded into a clawfoot tub. like an ivory tusk crushed into desert sands / you are not so small inside / when your brokenness is not seen as brokenness / brokenness removed from the break. where an ear used to be / three wilted flowers. where hands used to hold / one ruffled leaf / white seam down the middle laid over a palm. where tears used to seep into cold soil / starlight made two rivers.

chrysalis

a thin tissue like sunflower leaves / enshrouds your breasts / your sex / made bitter with the smell of hands. blocked quartz floating in the darkness / splinters / into a silky white light that pours down your chest like oil / khrusos / God. who left these dead hands / on the sweat-soaked mattress / fingers blotched black / stale bean pods unnaturally thrust out / from a flattened mass of flesh / liquid obsidian / shells / a man. God. erupts a sunflower stalk from your navel / black flowered / ringed with fire / face pressing hard / against a red-rippled glass window until it shatters / then spirals up into a dance of blinding stars. all God left behind / is your scraped-clean ribcage / banded gold / jade / dried summer clusters of buttercups / twined / around your bones.



Sarah Nichols

Pure

After Self Portrait: First Time on Oxy, Berlin, 2014, by Nan Goldin

8

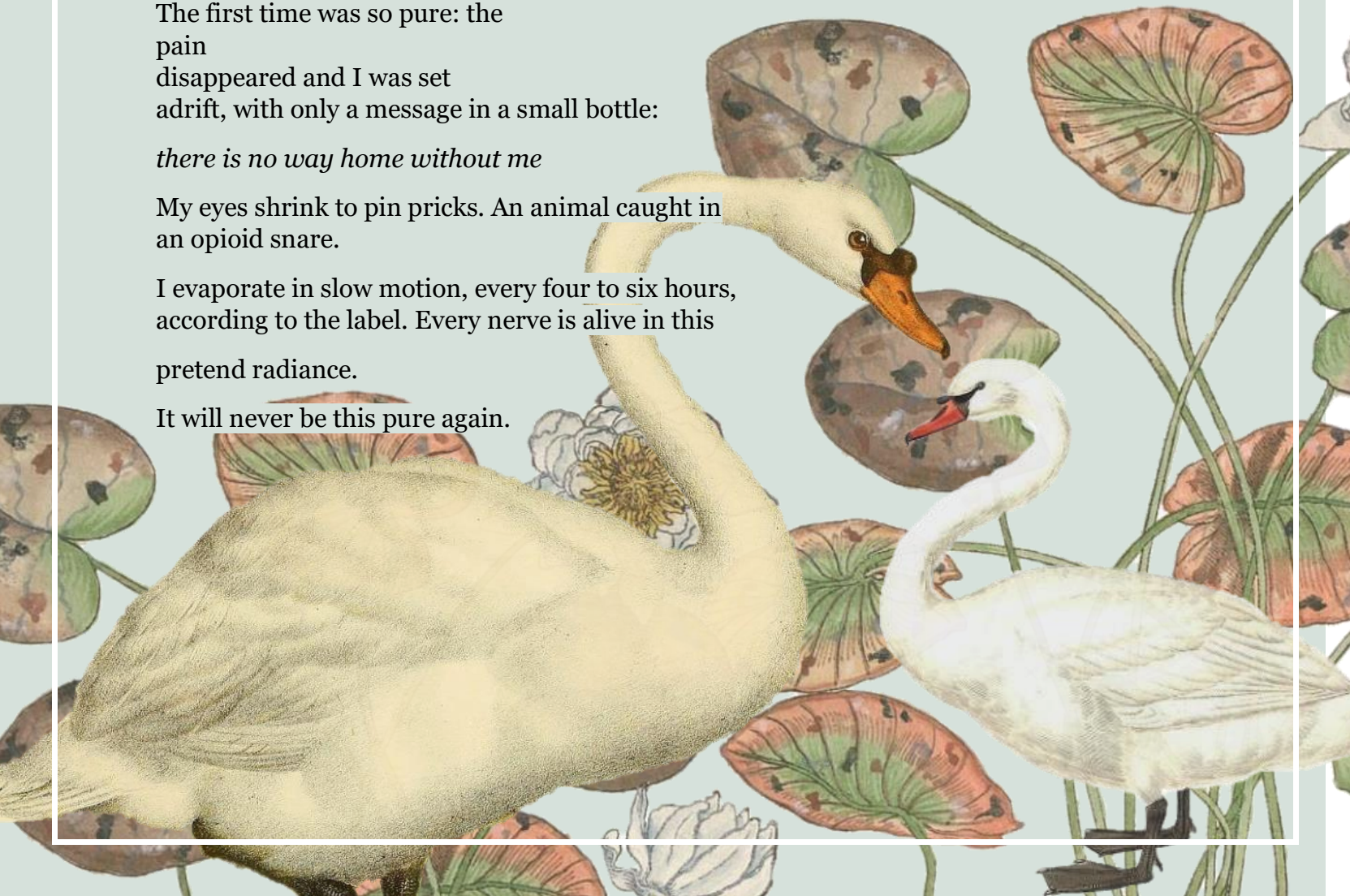
The first time was so pure: the
pain
disappeared and I was set
adrift, with only a message in a small bottle:

there is no way home without me

My eyes shrink to pin pricks. An animal caught in
an opioid snare.

I evaporate in slow motion, every four to six hours,
according to the label. Every nerve is alive in this
pretend radiance.

It will never be this pure again.



K.G. Strayer

Love Poem ft. The Pale Horse

Sometimes I wake up
and feel its closeness.
Reach a hand against haunch.
When my therapist told me
to nail the escape route shut—
is this what she meant?
I palm the animal's skin
so I don't surprise it.
I love you and right now
I don't want to die. Right now
I want everything ridiculously
coated in foil and gold leaf,
edible glitter, jelly roll pens.
I'm alive in my little terrarium,
the pink world shining in my eyes.

Kami Westhoff



#2

Unwhorling

10

Finally, the storm that kept us inside that day cracked the sky into slashes of light, coaxed us into the blossom-burst dusk. We stomped

rainboots on the trail that bisected the waterfall that would lead us to the cemetery if we followed long enough. What happened was an accident:

its whorl woven into sword-fern and needle grass, while I focused on my daughter's hundredth cartwheel.

I felt the massacre through the boot sole. And because my daughter loves to collect mollusks, house them in elaborate cardboard mansions,

I knew it was likely a grove snail, ribbon tongue smothered in microscopic teeth, emerging for a breath from the saturated earth.

When I lifted my boot, polymorphic shards wedged into the tread, the rest, globs smeared along the edge of the craggy trail.

That's exactly how I lost you, the slow



steady bet. You, who a decade ago, stood
at our front window, our daughter swaddled

on your chest the night you told me I'd
drunk too much to feed her, so I drove to my
parents' to sleep it off. In the middle of the night,

I woke to the throb of my bomb-like breasts, bawled
at the waste when I had to hand express, milk
tiny white bullets dissolving into a warm cloth.

You, who was still at the window when I came
home the next morning, said nothing when you
handed me the baby, who latched as though I'd never left.

We called it ours. But it was a shattering, an unwhorling,
a thousand teeth on the tip of a tongue.



AUTHOR BIOS



Sarah Beddow is a poet, mother, and teacher. She has written a lot of poems and essays about her body, rape culture, and abortion. Her chapbook *What's pink & shiny/what's dark & hard* was published by Porkbelly Press, and she is the founding editor of the Pittsburgh Poetry Houses, a public art project. Find her online at impolitelines.com.

Jay Julio is a multi-instrumentalist and writer based in Harlem. They enjoy rhythms, ube ice cream, and being brown. Their work has appeared or is forthcoming in the *Winter Tangerine Review*, *West Trade Review*, *Rathalla Review*, and *Dream Pop Journal*, among others. Check out their music at jayjulio.com.



c. a. mackenzie (she/her/hers) is an MSW student for interpersonal practice and has a BA in English, Creative Writing, and Psychology from The University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. c. a. mackenzie is a graduate intern in outpatient child/adolescent psychiatry with interests in OCD, depressive/anxiety disorders, trauma-related conditions, and intergenerational trauma.

Sarah Nichols lives and writes in Connecticut. She is the author of ten chapbooks, including *Press Play for Heartbreak* (Paper Nautilus Press, forthcoming, 2021,) and *Hexenhaus* (Milk and Cake Press, 2020.) Her work has also appeared in *Moonchild Magazine*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Can We Have Our Ball Back ?* and the *Twin Peaks* poetry anthology, *These Poems are Not What They Seem* (Apep Publications, 2020.)



K.G. Strayer is a poet, textile artist, and non-binary horseperson with an MFA from The University of Pittsburgh. K.G.'s poems have appeared in *Superstition Review*, *Midwestern Gothic*, *Clever Magazine*, *Yemassee*, *Crab Fat Magazine*, and elsewhere.

Kami Westhoff is the author of the story collection *The Criteria* (Unsolicited Press, 2022), and chapbooks *Cloud-bound* (Dancing Girl Press, 2021), *Sleepwalker* (Minerva Rising, 2017), and *Your Body a Bullet* (Unsolicited Press, 2018), co-written with Elizabeth Vignali. Her work has appeared in various journals including *Meridian*, *Booth*, *Carve*, *Third Coast*, *Hippocampus*, *Passages North*, *Waxwing*, and *West Branch*. She teaches creative writing at Western Washington University in Bellingham, WA.





Thank you so much
for weathering our
first year / 2020
with us!

