

ISSUE 1

SUMMER 2020

SPOONFEED

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ed. by Kat Payne Ware

EDITORIAL

*content note: food, diet, appetite**

To say this has been a baptism of fire (out of the frying pan, etc.) would be about fair. I probably vastly misjudged the amount of work it is possible for one person to do. I've read and responded to five hundred submissions from half that number of writers. I've watched SPOONFEED grow from an idea borne from one person's hunger to a vibrant, supportive writing community, which is expanding daily. I've thought of enough food puns to fill the kitchen sink, or however that idiom goes.

It's also got me thinking about appetite. That the readers and writers of contemporary literature have an appetite for food writing seems to be true — the response to this issue has far surpassed anything I initially imagined. Yet appetite is something which carries a great societal shame. Shame here is the resultant compound of introducing sensual lust (reactive) to biological need (neutral): the humiliation risked by making public the pleasures of the body. This is why food is so often characterised as *naughty* — think of Nigella licking the mixing spoon, or sneaking downstairs in her *négligée* for a midnight slice of cake. The guilty pleasures of the oral erogenous zone. The stigma of a body shapeshifting in response. Calories, calories, calories.

Appetite and gender are two constructs which participate in a particularly fraught relationship in Western society: it is unfeminine to demonstrate one's appetite; it is unmasculine to indulge one's appetite delicately. Meat is for men and salad is for women. As Carol J. Adams puts it, 'Being a man in our [Western] culture is tied to identities that they either claim or disown — what "real" men do and don't do. "Real" men don't eat quiche.' (Adams, 2000. Preface to the Tenth Anniversary Edition of *The Sexual Politics of Meat*). It is impossible to ignore fatphobia as an element in this interplay. Appetite is imposed upon and distorted by cultural ideals: it is impolite to accept a second helping — or, it is impolite not to. So often, people express mistrust in their appetites, unsure if they are hungry or bored, hungry or tired, hungry or unwell. Is that hollow ache one of need or lust?

A paper in *First Monday* describes how data harvested from positive Yelp reviews in the US can be broadly split into two categories: 'foodcrack' and 'foodgasms'. 'Foodcrack' refers to reviews employing 'drug and addiction narratives' — *these cup cakes [sic] are like crack, be warned the wings are addicting* — and were applied to businesses selling the foods we're told we shouldn't be eating (fast food, "junk" food, foods high in sugars and fats). 'Foodgasms', on the other hand, are reviews which use sex metaphors — *succulent pork belly paired with seductively seared foie gras* — by which 'the reviewer further portrays themselves as a food lover attuned to the sensual and hedonic element of cuisine.' What the research found was that the use of either category directly correlated with the price of the food. Cheap food is addictive; expensive food is seductive. Or: the working classes are addicts; higher socioeconomic classes are sensualists. Thus the biology-sensuality compound is complicated

further — if appetite necessarily contains sensuality, but sensuality is restricted by economics, does capital buy appetite? Are working-class people limited to pleasureless biology only — the input/output of survival — except for the false pleasures of addiction?

'Reviews,' Jurafsky et. al. write, 'are fundamentally a kind of social discourse'. The same is true of literary food writing. To make a probably unforgivable generalisation, what separates literature — or *creative* writing — from other written forms is attention to linguistic choices. If these reviews betrayed (thinking generously) *unconscious* biases, what more could be illuminated, hidden, hinted, when lexis is chosen deliberately? Selecting one word over another is a political action. This is the food writer's challenge. The very best at their craft, twenty-two of whom are published in this issue, are those who understand the constraints, possibilities, and politics of appetite, and write through them — not about them, necessarily, but through them.

The pieces in this issue demonstrate the full flavour spectrum of literary food writing happening in the English language today. We sample grapes, hot cross buns, paratha, dates. We dine with grandparents, adopted children, mothers-in-law, seals, starlets, an artificial neural network. We eat in a cafe, by a deathbed, from the earth, with a cider in the summer air.

We are made hungry, sated, overstuffed. Our appetites are indulged and denied.

Kat Payne Ware
SPOONFEED Editor

** Please be aware that due to the focus of the magazine, this note applies to the whole issue*

CHRISTOPHER LANYON

Two Poems

Hot Cross Buns

The whole milk simmered gently,
steeping a glut of spices: cloves,
cardamom, cinnamon, nutmeg,
saffron omitted in our first fuck-
you to the recipe writer. Look at
all the things we were so happy
to take, to make ours. The kitchen
was early-summer warm with
ginger. The dough formed under
heart line, sun line, life line, round
and soft and fragrant. We took it outside
with our ciders and talked
about how we don't understand
our happily pregnant friends.
Our baby in its bowl refused to prove.
We kneaded in dried fruit,
hoping the little pockets of gold
would peel him open from the inside.

In Cornwall, everyone knows a selkie story.

Our fathers brag about common seals
that they are still in love with.

Dad talks about a girl
who ate her mackerel raw.
It flashed between her teeth
like rose quartz.

The myths stuck to our ribs
and on lads' nights out
we would lay down our own tales
of the mornings we woke alone
and found our beds full of sand:

the girlfriend who threw an old coat
over her shoulders and drove to the sea,
a web-toed ex who always wanted to go swimming,
the avid collector of sea glass.

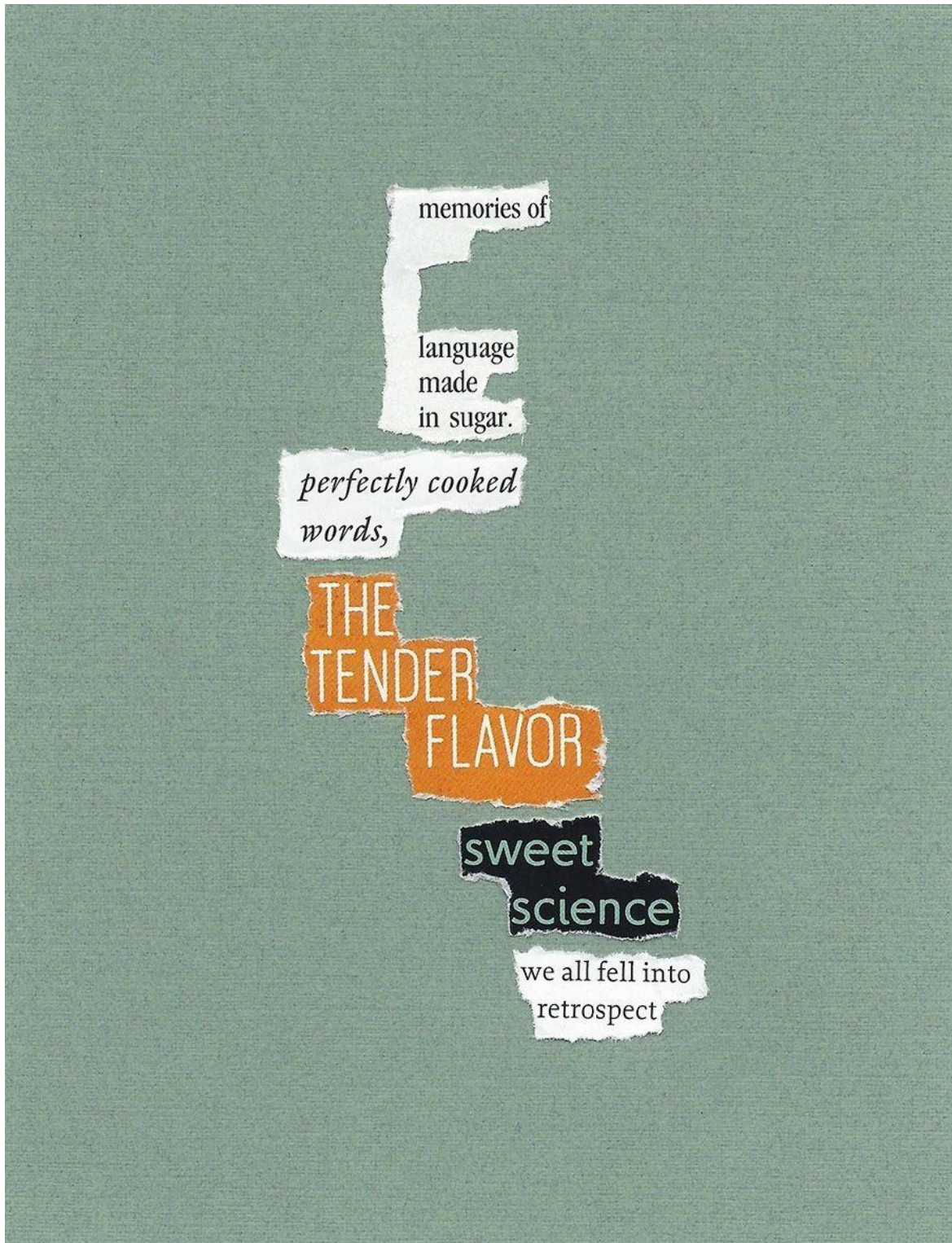
I have spent hours by the harbour
trying to pick out the dark phocine eyes
of the woman who was almost
my mother. It's hard to know though,
most seals eat their mackerel raw.

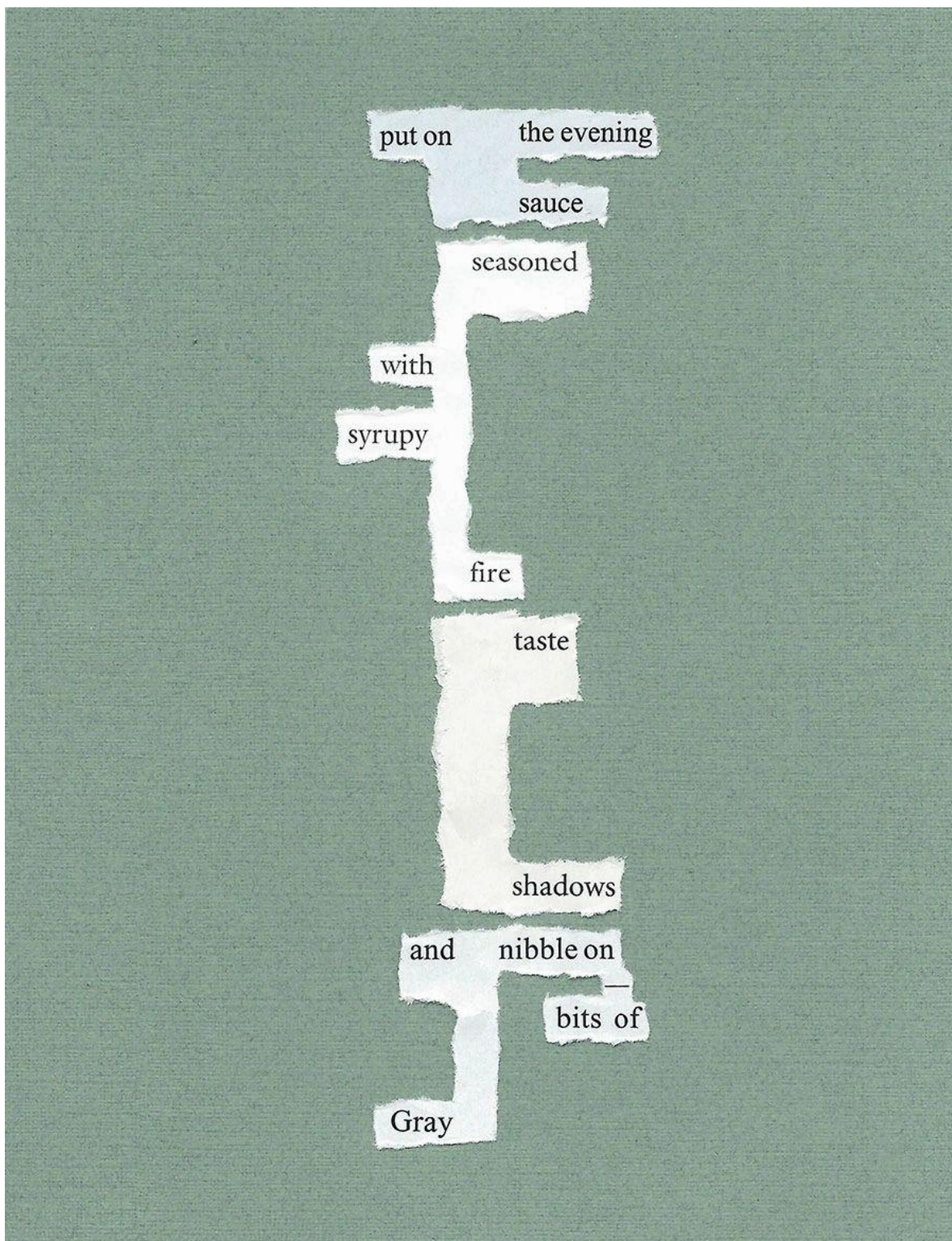
Christopher Lanyon

is a poet and mathematician based in Nottingham, UK. His poems have been published in *Abridged*, *Finished Creatures*, *Strix* and Bad Betty Press' *Alter Egos* anthology, among others.

J.I. KLEINBERG

Two Pieces





J.I. Kleinberg,

twice nominated for Pushcart and Best of the Net awards, is an artist, poet, and freelance writer. Her poems have been published in print and online journals worldwide. She lives in Bellingham, Washington, USA, where she tears words out of magazines.

SEAN WAI KEUNG

Two Poems

the godmother

content note: adoption, mention of war and violence

陶华碧 is the founder and former CEO of 老干妈 brand
she is a household name throughout both china and the chinese diaspora
in 2014 it was widely reported that she had quietly retired from her company
and the hashtag #曾经中国最火辣的女人 trended on social media platforms

the character 火 in the hashtag #曾经中国最火辣的女人 means fire
but also in this context it can mean spice
it represents both the fierce reputation of 陶华碧 as a person
as well as the chilli-based products that 老干妈 brand is famous for

despite the fact that 陶华碧 was on the Forbes list of China's richest people
she had been born into poverty and had received zero education
at the same time money only motivated her so far and she refused to be bought out
by the many other brands which tried to compete with or imitate her recipes
she took many of them to court until finally 老干妈 brand stood alone on a pedestal
the undisputed supreme ruler of the chill-based product market

i learned this story while sitting at my table in my tenement flat in glasgow
eating a bowl of fried rice with 老干妈 brand chilli oil straight from the jar
googling articles and news stories about 陶华碧 out of a sudden random interest
in the founder of one of my favourite childhood brands
i ended up on an article about a white american couple who adopted a chinese kid
in the article they said that they had been struggling to get the kid to adapt
to american life
but that one day they visited an asian supermarket and when they went to the sauce aisle
the kid saw 老干妈 brand and immediately broke
into a smile
the article suggested that other white american couples who adopt chinese kids
might try 老干妈 brand as well if they also found themselves struggling
in a similar way
the comments section was filled with comments

like *this has been so helpful to us*
and *thank you*

these days 陶华碧 is reported to enjoy driving luxury cars around her hometown
she is a politically active member of her local People's Congress
and is still a beloved figure in the minds of millions

after finishing my fried rice and chilli oil i washed my bowl
returned the nearly-empty jar of 老干妈 to my fridge
and as i went to close the door i swear
i felt a thousand small hands reaching out
from behind me and begging me to keep it open
accompanied by a tender whisper in my ear

telling me memories of times and places
i will never be able to understand

segmented

each night in the period after *coronation street* but before
nightly news she would get up from her chair and walk
over to the fruit bowl in the hallway
pick up an orange

when she returned she would hand the orange to him
in his chair and he would take it without looking
his eyes still glued to the telly

then as she went away again to pour herself a dram
of brandy (medicinal: helps her sleep) he would start to peel
away the skin of the orange
he would try his best to do this in one long take
curling the whole orange in his left hand
while still slowly peeling with his right

then she would return to her chair
and sitting under a blanket or two she might say something like
have you got it on the right channel
to which he might say something like
of course – im not an idiot

its unknown to me how many times this scene played out
possibly hundreds of evenings went by like this
maybe even thousands
it was a long marriage after all
arranged by those on the other side of the world who had spent
entire lives without a tv with multiple channels
or oranges readily available each and every night

at the same time diasporic lives of long shifts in kitchens
or child-rearing or arguments or violence or
family visits or a myriad of other things ensured
that it couldnt be every night
some nights theres simply no time for oranges

but during the last few years it happened regularly

after the orange was peeled he would then pick at the pith
removing as much of it as he could from around the front of the segments
this was a methodical process during which the news would begin
telling stories about political upheavals
business leaders meeting in far-away places
an elderly man in the countryside still using traditional methods to cook

etc.

once the pith was removed he would split the orange in half and the white strands separating the two would be discarded
before one of the halves would be offered to her
and silently she would take it

then she would suddenly say to me in english *do you want some*
turning towards me with her hand outstretched
and before i could answer she would say with a giggle *if you do*
then help yourself to the fruit bowl

im ok i would say back
which would be followed by a big sigh
from over in his chair
in the other corner of the room

and still munching on an orange segment he would point
to the tv images of an army or a warzone
and he would shake his head and say in english
the whole world – shit

and as he threw another segment in his mouth
and as she did the same
they would both nod solemnly with each other
in agreement

sean wai keung

is a Glasgow-based poet and performer. His pamphlet *you are mistaken* won the 2016 Rialto Open Pamphlet Competition, and he has also released projects with Speculative Books and the National Theatre of Scotland. He has a particular interest in the mixed and migratory narratives of food.

AMLANJYOTI GOSWAMI

Where grapes come from

We had no home then
There was no mama

Once your papa small as you
Ate a lot of grapes green red and purple

He ate so many we thought he was hungry
Then he threw it all up

We took him to a doctor he said no worry
It is all out now

The grapes they went flying out of his mouth
Some became trees some birds some they say

Turned into grapes
The ones you and I are eating now

Amlanjyoti Goswami's

recent collection of poems, *River Wedding* (Poetrywala) has been widely reviewed. His poetry has been published in journals and anthologies around the world. His poems have also appeared on street walls of Christchurch, exhibitions in Johannesburg, an e-gallery in Brighton and buses in Philadelphia. He has read in various places, including in New York, Delhi and Boston. He grew up in Guwahati, Assam, and lives in Delhi.

CAI DRAPER

Completely Meat Chocolate Pie

Categories: rubbing holiday

20kg almonds, rough
1lb tomato nuts
1/2 cup jean meat
4l liquid ice cream
1 seed of the chocolate cheese
1/2tsp brown leaves
1/4tsp paper (optional)
1g mixture
1/2 ears, crumbled
8kg cocoa mustard
10gl brink custard
1/2lb fresh surface
2tbs minced person
1/4 pint sharp pieces
2 chunks
plastic

1. Scrape the mould into a ball
2. Add creamed meat and another deep mixture
3. Discard head and turn into a non-stick spice
4. Drop one greased pot
5. Cook 0.25 seconds
6. Serve immediately in sugar

Yield: 1 servings

Cai Draper

is a poet from South London. Recent work has appeared in *Tenebrae* and *-algia-*, with poems forthcoming in the next issues of *Bath Magg* and *Tentacular*. 'Completely Meat Chocolate Pie' is a gathering of output generated by a neural network that had been fed recipes to learn from. A more detailed exploration of this process can be found on [Janelle Shane's blog](#).

DANIEL FRASER

Two Dates

content note: mention of death

I.
Slowly, he picks a date out from the box,
its skin withered, wrinkled: a presence of past tense,
the soft glow of kept promises,
of chance meetings. Palms rub
its mottled amber, turning out
the slow beat of bodies
contracting into warmth,
each vertex and surface
sweetened toward passing:
a poetry of verb and dusk.

II.
Tomb fruit, chewy as a toothache,
his mouth closes until its flesh returns a stone.
Peat corpse, mud gem, bog organ,
glinting the way anything dead
can easily be made to shine.

This time his hand returns to find their light
uncertain, brown orbs heavy with
the liquescence of silence and of flame.

Daniel Fraser

is a writer from Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire. His poetry and prose have featured in: *LA Review of Books*, *The London Magazine*, *Entropy*, *Aeon*, *Anthropocene Poetry*, and *X-R-A-Y*, among others. His poems and short fiction have both won prizes in *The London Magazine* annual competitions. His debut poetry pamphlet will be published by *ignitionpress* in Autumn 2020.

DARCY MAY GILLHAM

pica

i.
as children we ate soil / before we learned
it was not what the body needed / still
some of us liked its taste / and have spent
our years uncovering / quiet ways to hide
the dark earth / that holds itself / between
the teeth / beneath the fingernails /
stark against the slow and pale
transition / from skin to bone

ii.
others go on / drinking from the garden
hose / from baths / pools / puddles /
put their trust in each cool offering /
knowing only thirst / and how best
to rid themselves of it

Darcy May Gillham

is a queer poet living in Manchester. Her work is due to appear in the forthcoming issue of *Lemon Curd*.

EMILY MURMAN

pendulum

as I have developed a sensitivity
to your windy white mouth
I move in paper bags

I write *sorry*
practically every day

crumpled in the sheets
unfresh, unfull

my heavy head is wormy
my mood the hanged so-and-so
swaying on the gibbet

for three days I scrimp
in the same shirt
and rust red briefs: it's what I can't
synthesize that slows me

I am the mealy tomato
hydrocephalic on the vine
I am the executioner's hood
whispering to the head: *don't let go*

Emily Murman

is a poet, illustrator and educator from the northwest suburbs of Chicago. She holds a Bachelor's of Arts in Writing from Lake Forest College and graduated in 2018. She is currently pursuing her MFA in poetry via National University. Her debut chapbook, *SHRIVEL AND BLOOM*, is forthcoming via Dancing Girl Press in 2020.

HENRY BLADON

What You Always Wanted

When I saw a starlet on a sunless sunbed
reading a book by the pool
I noticed that all the pages were filled
with question marks.

This set me wondering about
my Amazon browsing history,
which is littered with ornaments
I will never need and books
on how to survive an avalanche.

Eventually my brain started
to smell like a car tyre
after a long motorway trip.

I took a drink from my can of 7Up
and a stray blonde hair filament
got stuck in my throat.

Henry Bladon

is a writer, poet, and mental health essayist based in Somerset, U.K. He has a PhD in literature and creative writing from the University of Birmingham. He is the author of several poetry collections and his work can be seen in *Poetica Review*, *Pure Slush*, and *Lunate*, among other places.

JACOB ROLLINSON

P is for Pumpkin

content note: illness, death, grief

Think about diseases. They're not very good, are they. Name the diseases you know. Scarlet Fever. Rubella. Mumps. Gonorrhoea. Think: some diseases sound quaint and charming and are imagined in black and white. Whooping cough. Some diseases bring up images of modern laboratories and white-coated agents of expertise, graphically overlaid with informative statistics. SARS. Some diseases are, and always will be, sheer terror. Ebola. Think about Ebola.

Now sift your flour. Sift is a verb. Sift. Drift. White.

Think about Doris Lessing. In the nineteen eighties, when AIDS was a dread plague you contracted from unmentionable sin, Doris Lessing was asked to contribute to a book called *A to Z*. This book would fight the taboo on AIDS and raise funds for treatment and prevention. It was full of contributions from progressive celebrities, where each celebrity took charge of a letter of the alphabet. Lessing provided copy for the letter P.

Her contribution was "P is for Pumpkin". It comprised a recipe for pumpkin pie, and nothing else. Remember "P is for Pumpkin". The starkness of it. No statements about the comfort that good warm sweet food provides, or the therapeutic value of cooking with one's hands, or the significance of food as a physical manifestation of love and care. It started and finished, unadorned.

This fits your impression of Doris Lessing. She wasn't sentimental or motherly. She wasn't one to say, without complication, "food is love." Or if she ever said "food is love", she would, you imagine, follow up with some brutal deconstruction of love, as physiological crisis or psychological dependency perhaps, or self-delusion, or as an impulsive tendency working itself out in belligerent iterations through the patterns of one's life. She could base the connection on hunger, perhaps, or the erotic act of devouring.

You imagine. She couldn't really do any of that now, of course. She's dead.

Food is love, food is love, food is love. Take your butter out of the fridge. Your hands need to be cold. Wash them. Wash them again, why not.

Think: it is possible to read a rugged form of sentiment in Lessing's bare recipe. Its absence of waffle suggests an acetic – aesthetic? – *ascetic* dedication to the notion that a recipe has

value beyond any expression of sentiment. It is hard not to read it and imagine a caring woman, facing a catastrophe she cannot surmount, perhaps cannot even conceptualise, resorting to a practical gesture, the kind of tiny practical gesture that can – if repeated enough, patterned, incorporated into the matrix of gestures and signs that we sometimes call a lifestyle, sometimes a relationship, sometimes a societal trend – slowly start to overcome the most terrible calamity.

It's a Twelve Steps kind of mentality, you're following right now. The kind of homely wisdom Stephen King would promote. You know – *how do we walk? One step after another.*

You know, the way you offer the freshly bereaved a cup of tea.

And they say A CUP OF TEA? Do you think I want A CUP OF FUCKING TEA right now?

And you acknowledge the insufficiency of your offer, this cup of tea, but persist in offering it. Because you know this cup of tea will lead to many more, reflective and sociable, and you see that bereaved person working through grief, cup by cup, and incorporating it into their life, and bearing the pulses of pain, and understanding that the intensity of each pulse is decreasing, and missing that intensity, and missing, missing, missing their beloved in the long dark hours of night thoughts. But ultimately continuing. Drinking tea. One cup after another.

Work the butter into the flour. Make breadcrumbs. That's a stupid name for something uncooked. Bread kibble. Suet soil. Add water, slowly. Push the kibble together into a lump. This is called pastry dough. Don't knead it. Place it in the refrigerator for an hour.

An entire hour passes, just like that.

Take the hunk of chilled dough and deform it with a rolling pin. Flatten it out. You have never offered tea to the freshly bereaved.

Think: there is also something unified about a recipe. It is a contained form, whose instructional mode provides the comfort of predetermined action. Think: it has the appeal of an incantation, an almanac, a spell.

Now take your canned pumpkin. Remind yourself that it has to be canned. This is a factoid: canned pumpkin provides a sweetness and intensity of flavour that fresh pumpkin too often lacks. Consider the absurdity of trying to put fresh pumpkin in a pumpkin pie. Consider the magic of mass production. Consider a contained form, whose instructional mode provides the comfort of predetermined action. Think of the word protocol.

Fart-dump the pumpkin into a mixing bowl. Smash two eggs that came out of hens' arses and slop their contents in there too. They do not mix immediately. Stare at the mess. Think about the word diarrhoeal. Spell the word diarrhoeal.

Stop thinking that.

Think about diseases. Salmonella. Salmon. Error.

Stop it. Stop thinking that. What's wrong with you?

The recipe calls for a can of sweetened condensed milk.

Finally.

This is the real stuff. Ultimately, we all know pumpkin pie is just a vessel for the consumption of sweetened condensed milk. Open that can. Smell it. Malty. Lick the lid. Go on. Nobody's looking.

Put your entire finger in the open can of condensed milk, then pull it out, trailing custard-coloured skeins. Suck it off your finger. Ooh you beast. That – *that* is pleasure. The nerves in your mouth contacting your brain and telling it to go *ummmmmmm*. You are falling in love right now, Doris Lessing might say. It's the same neurological process.

Gee, thanks Doris.

Ask, in a self-righteous tone: *Doris, do you think the remorseless pursuit of uncomfortable truth did anyone's relationships any good?*

Ask it out loud.

Then say: *Nothing, sweetheart. I was talking to myself.*

Pretend you didn't just do any of what you just did. Pour what's left of the sweetened condensed milk into the mixing bowl. Mix the mixture. Consider the erotics of consumption. Some men put their penises in food. You don't. You won't today. But tomorrow, who knows? It's good to keep your options open.

Keep your options open. But follow the recipe. Because recipes provide form. They have a beginning, and a middle, and an end result. Consider that you will present this finished pumpkin pie to your wife. She will enjoy it less than you, because food is an anxiety for her the way diseases are an anxiety for you, but she will enjoy it nonetheless on multiple levels, including that it is likely to taste nice, and act as a comfort for her sadnesses and an expression of love, unsentimentally delivered, and a token of commitment to continue in the face of calamity – even imaginary calamity – into the future – the ever-imaginary future – a simple, bounded concept painted with a sunset.

Pour the mixture into the pastry base you should have already placed in a shallow glass baking tray and place in the oven you should have already preheated to 180° centigrade. Sorry I forgot to put those details in the recipe. Place the pastry base in a greased baking tray. Grease the baking tray. Fuck. Place the pastry base in the baking tray and preheat the oven to 180° centigrade. Do this, then return to an appropriate point above, perhaps the bit where you dunked your finger in the sweetened condensed milk, and cycle through again.

Jacob Rollinson

just completed a PhD in creative and critical writing at the University of East Anglia. He was inspired to write 'P is for Pumpkin' while working at the British Archive for Contemporary Writing, which holds an extensive Doris Lessing archive. When not writing about food, he writes about translation, classical Chinese poetry, ancient evil demigods, and mental health.

JEN KARETNICK

A Few Extra Flourishes That Cannot Be Bought

What I can't do with a good
sharp-pointed knife, I don't need
to do. Family requirements keep it

in use. For when the mood comes
over me after a full day spent
in the dreary modern, stainless steel

means something to me, and so does
iron. My equipment is also the value
of thick women, of hands, of spices

to be mixed. Shiny or not, they are
my friends. Other tools fool me
occasionally with more ease than

you have been led to believe.
If I also had a freezing compartment
in the basement, a pressure cooker

far more useful than descendants,
I'd get an early start, would call you up
and say, "Be here in half an hour.

Come as you are." And it would be
a party, the practical put away for
the mink coat, everything thoroughly

upside-down.

Jen Karetnick

is the author of five full-length poetry collections, including *Hunger Until It's Pain* (Salmon Poetry, forthcoming spring 2023) and *The Burning Where Breath Used to Be* (David Robert Books, forthcoming August 2020). Her work appears recently or is forthcoming in *Barrow Street*, *The Comstock Review*, *december*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Terrain*, *Under a Warm Green Linden*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, and elsewhere. 'A Few Extra Flourishes That Cannot Be Bought' is part of a micro-chapbook of found poems using phrases from vintage cookbooks. The words in this poem were sourced from: *Coggins, Carolyn. Carolyn Coggins' Company Cookbook. First ed. Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1954.*

J. TAYLOR BELL

Wasted Away Again in Satay Kingdom

i like to always begin with an apology
for pushing through pull-only doors
and for pulling him away from whatever
he's watching on a tablet under the counter

i like the back table that waits like poison
i like the king's gambit and the corner pocket
i like to pour the faucet water into plastic cups
and consider all the appreciations i have

cultivated for fluorescent lights
i like how ruthlessly it washes over
all of the porcelain faces, tepid
like bathwater on washroom tiles

i like it when i feel so sentimental
i like it when we're all gathered below
a great belligerent wind beating down
against the barred windows, the silent

television, the punctuating electricity
of plastic forks and plastic spoons
i like digging deep into a stovetop curry
with the enthusiasm of an archaeologist

unearthing ancient bowls, deliciously interred
for a thousand years, and when you look at them
under bright lights, you can almost imagine
all the unsalted potatoes & plain white rice ladled out

& served with a vacant contempt, that's what i like—
the weariness towards nothing too specific
the customer, the weather, society, whatever
happens to blow in through the door that day

j. taylor bell

studied Poetry at Queen's University Belfast, where he was the Seamus Heaney Center International Scholar of 2018-19. His work was shortlisted for the Mairtín Crawford as well as the Overland Fair Australia Poetry Prize and can be found in *Ambit*, *Gutter*, *The Tangerine*, and elsewhere.

JULEIGH HOWARD-HOBSON

About Lobsters

As Found in Lines of an Article in Gourmet Magazine

Everyone knows what a lobster is. As usual, though, there's much more to know. It's true that they are: eaters of dead stuff, class crustacea, lobster salad, lobster bisque, lobster T-shirts and lobster bobblehead dolls and inflatable lobster pool toys. They date from the Jurassic period. The nerve stem of Maine's lobster industry, a lobster is a marine crustacean. There are dozens of different kinds worldwide. they'll also eat some live shellfish, certain kinds of injured fish, and they have stalked eyes. A lobster is joyful and lucrative, and sometimes extremely well marketed

Juleigh Howard-Hobson's

poetry has appeared in *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Mobius*, *The Lyric*, *Able Muse*, *Poem Revised* (Marion Street), *Birds Fall Silent in the Mechanical Sea* (Great Weather for Media), and other places. Nominations include "Best of the Net", Pushcart and The Rhysling. Her latest book is the Elgin nominated *Our Otherworld* (Red Salon). The lines of 'About Lobsters' came from [this source](#).

LINDZ MCLEOD

crocodile

content note: grief

Grief has no honest feathers;
it blows up like a balloon,
covers my ribcage with paper mâché.
Cold, childish slop. When this carapace

hardens//my heart pops//knife-slit.

I'll slither out of what I used to be,
too slick with grief to be contained.
The scraggy remnants of arteries
littered on the floor of a church hall.

Ashes//ashes//end to end

I sobbed on the grass, my heels sinking into
whoever lay under me. The water dribbling
down my cheeks is a soup-skin; no meat to
this dish, only broth for a winter burial and

stews//scones //oven heat

a kitchen etched in
oak and grey. A tree without a trunk.
Jolene in sepia. Cinder-eyed caimans
inhale under my fingernails. My jaws

unhinge//impact//snap

on stricken prey, unsatisfied by the crunch.
She flows in me; grief-adjacent, carried
like a fallen branch. This anger will debouch
eventually, between slow-muddied beaks.

For now//I fast//on silence.

Lindz McLeod's

short stories have been published by the *Scotsman* newspaper, the Scottish Book Trust, the Dundee Victoria & Albert Museum, and more. Her poetry has been published by *Allegory Ridge*, *Prismatica*, and more. Lindz is the competition secretary of the Edinburgh Writer's Club.

L KIEW

Exeat

Popeyed Grandpa labours on
Sunday's topside beef and spuds.
I count one, two seventy-five.
Lunch hauls heavy as a week.

Can I get down from table? Can I
skulk, freed from relations and school,
slide down the slope on my backside,
den deep among blood-brambles –

No, I must behave. No splash,
no spill, wash the willow bowls,
wipe the forks, knives, plates,
use that cloth only for glasses.

Robins drive away strangers.
The one on the sill stares,
then peck-pecks at bacon rind.
Hear, I don't belong inside.

L Kiew

is a Chinese-Malaysian living in London, who earns her living as an accountant. Her debut pamphlet *The Unquiet* came out with Offord Road Books in February 2019. She is currently a participant in the London Library Emerging Writers Programme.

LUCY CRISPIN

closed

content note: illness/ageing

Although (or perhaps because)
I'm neither Prodigal nor Older
and although (or perhaps because)
this Younger went out and built a life
and the Older returned, not
having managed it; which is
hands-high-to-heaven sad;
which is another (or perhaps the same)
story:

still always, when I visited,
there would be fêting--
if not the fatted calf, then certainly
a well-enough fed one--
and from early morning
food-fragrant air
would steal from the kitchen
where you'd be weighing,
stirring, chopping.
Peelings tidy on a square
of kitchen roll; those ridiculous
tiny knives we teased you about.

Now, though, you are upstairs,
small in your dressing gown,
a look on your face
as of someone trying to make out
an object in the distance--
not able to, but still trying;
puzzled; your circle buffering,
endlessly. If you were a shop,
the door blind would be down,
the sign flipped to "Closed".

Downstairs, the eggs in the rack
are dust-filmed, out of code.
The fridge holds Fortisip, crème caramel,
Pepsi Max, cracked-heel-hard cheese.
Even the usual sad slither
of last month's salad is gone.

So now, when I arrive back with all
the familiar complement of hungers--
now, not even that one is sated.

Lucy Crispin

is a former Poet Laureate of South Cumbria and has been published widely in print and online, most recently in *Channel*, *Poetry Birmingham*, *Anthropocene* and *Pennine Platform*. Her micro-pamphlet *wish you were here* is available from Hedgehog Press, who will publish *shades of blue* later this year.

PRATYUSHA

Meals with my Grandparents

Bokaro Steel City, 07/15

[children playing cricket on the street/ vegetable vendor going from door to door to sell fresh vegetables/ my grandmother chooses aubergines and parwal/ the doorbell rings like a cuckoo's sound through the house]

Paratha.

My bua would have added extra oil, but we can't have everything.

Aloo.

We eat under the tube light in the dining room, which is blocked from every source of natural light. I breathe in the soft scent of jeera and also the soft white fumes rising from the tube light. Its light is so bright that sometimes I wonder if it smells slightly metallic and sweet, or if that's just my imagination. My grandfather beams at me from across the table. He wears a sapphire ring, fascinating in its blank yellow loveliness. I once asked him for the name, he said *pukhraj*. His mellow deep voice husking over the -kh sound.

The paratha breaks in three perfect layers, the middle one thin, the top and lower ones crispy from the oil and the hot stove.

I eat from a steel plate, drink water from a steel tumbler. Thousands of kilometres away, in my London flat, my crockery is supplied by my landlady. But I brought some steel utensils with me, utensils impossible to replace or replicate in their usefulness by anything I've found in crockery.

Bokaro Steel City, 1966. The year of my father's birth, also the year that Indira Gandhi laid the 'foundation stone' of Bokaro Steel City. Her name makes my stomach lurch.

Nobody knows where Bokaro Steel City is.

My grandfather worked in the steel plant all his life.

In the reflection of my spoon, I watch him tear a piece of paratha, scoop in the aloo, and engulf the flavour. The shiny back of the spoon reflects his smiling teeth, upside-down.

Pratyusha

is an Indo-Swiss writer. Her latest pamphlet, *Bulbul Calling*, was released with Bitter Melon Press in 2020. She co-edits *amberflora*.

RAYN FOX

cento for therianthropy

food was
milk po'd over bread
food was mush
in large troughs
'piggee-e-e-e-e, piggee-e-e-e-e'
see em
runnin up
deid lay down
on dey little stommacks
& eat
wit naked hands
eat eat eat eat
like so many pigs
like so many pigs
sometimes dey fight
sometimes blood
get in the trough
dey eat right on

Rayn Fox

(they/them) is a Colorado native but not the crunchy kind. They have been writing since they could type, and love the moon. The text in 'cento for therianthropy' is reworked from Walter Jones, Fredrick Douglas, Amanda Ross, Easter Jackson, and Laura Smalley.

SARAH MNATZAGANIAN

Food Run

She knocks back her latte like a seal gulping mackerel
and heads for the station with gifts for her first-born:

Eucalyptus leaves to fill his room with forest medicine,
fresh goat's cheese, a green-gold throw for his college chair,

a bottle of colloidal silver to murder the germs in his throat.
FLANNERY, scoffs the crane by the tracks.

A round cake of apples and almonds, a Guernsey sweater,
heavily darned, and two letters from the bank. She might arrive

with nothing to say. At the bottom of her trolley: Ribston Pippin,
Adams Pearmain, Blenheim Orange, Winter Gold. The cake

was still warm when she packed it last night. It may have
ripened the apples a little. She should have made pesto.

Sarah Mnatzaganian

is an Anglo-Armenian poet. Highly commended in the 2019 Mslexia/PBS pamphlet competition and shortlisted for the Poetry Business pamphlet competition 2016/17, her poems have appeared in *The Rialto*, *Magma*, *The North*, *London Grip*, *Atrium*, *Snakeskin*, *14 Magazine*, *Fenland Reed*, *PITW* and numerous anthologies.

STEVIE KILGOUR

Don't tell me how to make a Full English

content note: mention of funerals

I know it's a town on a plate, communities divided by salt and sauce, eggs acting as boils on the faces of teenagers. It is neighbours erecting fences of black pudding & anger. Shouting cuss words, hiding each other's mail, making noise complaints to the pigs. It's a funeral procession of women with mushrooms for hats. It's a bald man, head like a baked bean, tomato red, burned and trying to escape the plate. Spilling himself over the edge becoming lost in the carpet & eventually found by the dog.

Stevie Kilgour

is a poet who writes about working-class culture and his own upbringing in a southern town. He is currently studying for a PhD on these subjects and lives in Leeds with his daughter Holly and partner Sarah.

SY BRAND

Allergy Concerns

We strive to provide a selection
of products for our customers
who have certain food allergies,
follow special diets, or prefer
to be served coffee in silence
as they read over texts
they promised themselves they'd delete,
let their drink go cold and night
grow late, sit with one glove off
as the street lights stretch
down through the diner windows
and the last order bell rings
rings rings rings rings rings
rings rings
rings

Sy Brand

is a queer non-binary person living in Edinburgh, Scotland. They write through the haze of cat-/child-induced sleep deprivation to try and make sense of gender, relationships, and ADHD. Their work has been published in *Popshot Quarterly*, *Capsule Stories*, and *ZARF Poetry* among others.

VANESSA LAMPERT

Trifle

content note: hospitals, illness, death

Your mother-in-law asks for trifle in a croaky voice when she is in hospital, lying on what will soon be called her deathbed. She has never liked you and you know this for a fact because you recently invited her over for lunch and while your husband was in the toilet she said 'As God is my witness I have never liked you' in a quiet sharp voice without blinking. You are sitting beside her bed now, mainly to see if she wants to do a U-turn on that. You realise that if it is just a bed she is lying on and not her deathbed, you are probably giving up your time to a lost cause, which may or may not be found later. She rasps the word again, 'trifle, trifle' with her eyes shut. You consider taking the lift down to the M&S in the foyer and buying a trifle to bring back up but are weighing this up against the possibility of having to say to your husband 'your mum passed on while I was on an errand for trifle'. You eventually decide to take the lift down after she says 'trifle' 7 more times or 'you've been a good daughter-in-law to me and I haven't deserved you', whichever comes out first.

Vanessa Lampert

is an acupuncturist and poet from Oxfordshire. In 2020, she won the Cafe Writer's Prize, the Ver Prize, and came second in the Fish Prize. She has recent poems published in *The Moth* and *Magma*. She co-edits *The Alchemy Spoon*.

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