

# SPOONFEED

x  New Writing

ed.  
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Andrew Cowan



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Laia Sales Merino \* Memoona Zahid \* Meryl Pugh

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ISSUE



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# EDITORIAL

*content note: food, pandemic, food poverty \**

I completed my MA in Poetry at UEA back in 2016. During my two years there I also worked three food-related jobs. Firstly, I was a cook at a local bowling alley, flipping burgers and microwaving chicken wings. Then, I sold ice creams on a stall outside a bookshop near the town market. And finally I was in a retail shop, where my main duties included tagging sandwiches with reduced-price stickers. While I've always had an interest in food, it was during these times that I began to focus more intently on the various ways that food is used in society, from the transactional to the public to the private and beyond. So when Kat asked if I'd like to guest edit a collaborative issue of SPOONFEED with [New Writing](#), celebrating 50 years of UEA Creative Writing alumni, it was honestly a no-brainer.

It must be said that 2020 has also been a particularly different year for food. The pandemic has shone a light on the food chain, be that through queues at the supermarket, an increase in home-baking, or governmental arguments over what may or may not count as 'essential'. But SPOONFEED is not only a reaction to the pandemic. And don't worry, you'll be relieved to know that COVID doesn't prominently feature in any of the poems in the issue either!

One of the things I love about food-poetry is that it can encapsulate so much of the human experience. Family and culture, place and time, the page becomes a dough of immeasurable diameter and these are just some of the toppings that can go atop it. Of course, food in general often does this as well. A quattro stagioni pizza represents a year's-worth of seasons on a plate, even if it only takes ten minutes to bake. And so it is with the poems in this issue. Through foodie happenings including festivals, viral videos, and traditional recipes, we are treated to explorations and interrogations of connection – be that of the self to the body, the body to a community, a community to its surroundings, or even just the gradual fading of a memory between friends. We have poems of celebration, of uncertainty, and of documentation. Poems that revel in the opulence of food as well as those inspired by a single ingredient, or a smell, or a stain.

As a final thought, I was recently talking with an Edinburgh-based chef about the latest UK Government debacle surrounding free school meals. The chef made the point that free school meals should be the very least a society should provide, and that ideally we should have something similar for adults as well. The chef asked me to imagine a world where nobody had to go hungry – how much faster the injured or sick might heal and how much more productive people might be in terms of following their passions. This dream world may still be a long way off, but I hope that through food-poems, including those within this issue, we can challenge ourselves to think more about topics including food poverty and universal access to healthy food. If 2020 has brightened the light on how we treat food within our communities, then let's do everything we can to make sure that light doesn't dim again.

Thank you to everyone who submitted, and thank you to everyone who reads this.

Food matters. Let's talk about it more. Bon appétit.

sean wai keung  
Guest editor

*\* Please be aware that due to the focus of the magazine, 'food' applies to the whole issue.*

# **HORS D'OEUVRES**

The Body

# MEMOONA ZAHID

## Lychee

this new sadness?      oh      my body is tired of being a body  
my I love yous walk in and say I love you      and sit like rooftop ice on the kitchen floor  
                 while it rains outside in the dim light  
these girlish parts of me will moon away slowly  
         I could be the eyeball sweetness  
                 and my bare chest      a faded pink  
I am everything & nothing has happened

Memoona Zahid

is a British-Pakistani poet living in London. After graduating from Goldsmiths, she recently completed her MA in Poetry at the University of East Anglia. Her poems have appeared in *PAIN*, *bath magg*, *Ink*, *Sweat and Tears* and elsewhere.

# JOE DUNTHORNE

## Ghost feast

*[a previous draft of this poem was published in Poetry Wales]*

*content note: death; ghosts*

The dead ate their ghost steaks at the trestle,  
elbows threshing, serrated ghost knives asqueal  
on the china. Boy were they hungry. Their bowels  
whimpered like chimneys in the wind. And once  
the ghost meat was at peace inside them they stood  
in turn to read their ghost poems, voices dwelling  
in the sadder octaves only ghost throats reach.  
The force of their applause wafted the bit of paper  
with the wifi password clean off the coffee table.  
Which is how I realised they were in the apartment.  
When I asked them to show themselves they slid  
their many ghost fingers deep inside my ears  
and nose, took control of my hot sloshy body,  
made me write this poem. Even now they refuse  
to go, staring out from my eye slots as though  
at third-floor windows in a house fire.

Joe Dunthorne

was born and grew up in Swansea. He is the author of three novels, most recently *The Adulterants*. His first book of poems, *O Positive*, was published last year by Faber and Faber.

# MERYL PUGH

## Seasonal

*content note: alcohol*

Smell of fermenting turnips in the carriage,  
of cumin on the escalator. To have  
an odour that particular. What's mine?  
*It isn't air, so done with this city,*  
clutching the Ventolin, down Baylis Road –  
*muggy, filthy choke* – to sag before  
the chiller cabinets striking cold  
into my soaked t shirt, *too much to choose from.*

Cold sheets. *Was it the beer?* Sweat – mine, sharp, sour –  
a chronicle-artifact: Face flaming, laughing,  
voice high in the throat, hands all over him,  
astounding fact of the body. The pub,  
the night, the whole city – 24-  
hour gym, open car window – perspires,  
respires our animal life. And the dear one,  
snoring beside me, smelling of baked beans.

Meryl Pugh

teaches for Poetry School and UEA. Her first collection, *Natural Phenomena* (2018) was a Poetry Book Society Spring Guest Choice and longlisted for the 2020 Laurel Prize. *Wife of Osiris* (pamphlet) is forthcoming from Verve in 2021; *Feral City* (creative non-fiction) from Penned in the Margins in 2022.

# **APPETISER**

Kinship



# KATY MACK

## They were majestic

placed on the pewter dish to ripen,  
the neat folds of the linen tablecloth,  
a pair of steel knives laid out.  
All of that week we had been waiting  
(my brother and I) for the right moment  
when the bitterness would give way  
and they would be soft, ready.  
A quiet inner chemistry was at work,  
we were told, a prickling at first  
like a pot of milk heating on the stove,  
the lid starting to rattle.  
The plums rested on the table,  
each one beginning to turn.  
We children were impatient  
in the kitchen's sour heat –  
one cheek flushed in a small hand,  
ears ringing.

Katy Mack

was a prize-winner at the 2013 Troubadour International Poetry Prize, and her poems have appeared in various publications including *Ambit*, *Poem International* and forthcoming in *Poetry Birmingham Literary Journal*. She is also currently undertaking a critical and creative PhD at UEA in poetry.

# CAT WOODWARD

## Gastro, mon amie

Banana, abandon your discretion  
softly now, pulpify  
we're waiting to be shamed

Mango, golden noisy oval you  
be what you are  
lamp, heavy as infant heads  
your shadow, throw

those Lentil conspirators huddling  
where are your sympathies?  
among fingers gently mingle,  
Cashew becomes you

even the Mushroom has gills  
worshipful fold, precious stranger  
mimics the ear, shrinks

and dumb brain of Walnut  
crumpled, runnelled thing, knocking  
divulge your little darkness  
to us, a larger dark

now Squash, relinquish  
embrace the form  
of small cubes departing  
one another  
chop, chop!  
broil our irreversible broil  
pattern of the world's sore unwinding

here Bordeaux bamboozles us,  
unbinds us with its swill  
of busy ghosts simmering  
be a loving devil  
be a ruby ring, sing  
the vine of home, o –

when my friend she broke her confidence,

like a bird from the hedge in May

indelicate          an ornate bone          departed from her cheek

savage + weightless

there was          left over from

when a little lie < in a small room <

a crochet hook.          and declining,

could not blink, could not eat

was almost

now, say

if rind then nail

if nail then the molluscs of her eyes

say

if pip then thumb

if peel, surprise

say

if wet then sweeten

if thumb then eyes

then the reddened rind of her tongue

say

if flesh then eyes

if mollusc then thorn

if friend then sweeten

say

if friend then sweeten

her

ever-falling chiffonade

of sanguine, tart, voila!

abandon your discretion

softly ,

we're waiting

golden noisy      you  
what you are  
a      heavy      infant head  
your shadow,

those      cons      huddling  
where are you      ?  
gently  
becomes you

even the      room has gills  
ful fold, precious stranger  
mimics the ear, shrinks

a      dumb brain  
crumpled, runnelled      , knocking  
divulge      little  
to us, a larger

now      relinquish  
embrace the form  
of      departing

chop!  
our      revers  
pattern      the      sore      wind

here      bamboozles us,  
unbinds us with its will  
us      ghosts simmering  
be a      devil  
be a rub  
of home, o –

when my friend she broke      ,  
like a bird      a

delicate      ornate one      her cheek

savage +      less

there was      left over

a little lie <

a crochet hook      a      declining,

could not blink, could not eat

was almost

o

rind then nail  
nail then the molluscs of her eyes

pip then thumb  
peel,

wet then sweeten  
thumb then eyes  
then the reddened rind of her tongue

flesh then  
mollusc then thorn  
then

friend then sweet

ever-falling  
o !

abandon your  
softly  
ing

noisy  
what you are  
a heavy infant

those                    huddling  
are                      ?  
                         gently

even the  
                 fold            ious stranger  
                 the ear, shrinks

a dumb

nelled knocking

to us

relinquish  
the form  
of departing

revers  
pattern

boo  
us  
us ghosts  
be a  
be a

me, o –

when my friend she broke ,

like

an ornate cheek

savage +

left over

<

a hook a declining,

could not , could not eat

was

rind then nail  
then the molluscs of her eyes

then thumb

then

then eyes  
then the reddened rind of her tongue

flesh then  
mollusc then thorn  
if friend then sweeten

then  
ever-

abandon

ing

what you  
infant

where  
gently

even the  
shrinks stranger

to us  
ish  
depart

pattern

us  
us o  
o

a  
a

when my friend she o

like

an ornate

savage

over

a hook declining,

could eat

rind nail  
molluscs eyes

then thumb

then

her tongue

then  
then  
then

## Cat Woodward

is a feminist lyric poet and lecturer in Creative Writing at The University of Cumbria. Her first collection, *Sphinx*, was published by Salò in 2017; her second — *Blood. Flower. Joy!*— was published by Knives, Forks and Spoons in 2019. In 2018 she won the Ivan Juritz Prize for creative experiment. Her poetry has been published in *The White Review*, *Hotel*, *Butcher's Dog*, *Black Box Manifold* and *Datableed*, among others.



# INUA ELLAMS

## Swallow Twice

Given the smallest prompt / Father will describe  
how I skulked just beyond the lamplight's reach

watching the ring of men / ripe with beer and laughter  
push thick fingers into the mountain of spiced meat

roasted with onions / ginger and chillies like an altar  
I fought to worship at / swiping through their arms

at the chunks / a mouse attempting to feast  
with kings / Frustrated / Father stopped their speech

so I could reach in / greedily choose the choicest piece  
ignore his warnings and tear at the muscle / strain

against the flesh till its elasticity slipped my fingers  
and the chunk / chillies and all slapped into my eyes.

Father thumped my back as I coughed on the pepper  
/ swallow twice / he urged / dropping the wailing mess

of me on Mother's knees / What Father didn't know  
is I imagined the key to their impenetrable talk

lay in the cubed meat and I longed to be like them

In the circle of friends I have / most of our conversations  
revolve around music / the heft and sway of the changing

world / the rapid rate of our redundance / how best  
to pretend we know it all and when beer loosens

what inhibitions are left after shredding meat  
with bare fingers / laughter cloaks our weaknesses:

our inability to provide for those we love / who love us  
we who still know nothing of what our lovers want

how frightening it is to have nephews growing up  
who want to be like us / who want to be like men

Inua Ellams,

born in Nigeria, is an award-winning poet, playwright & founder of the Midnight Run. Identity, Displacement & Destiny are reoccurring themes in his work in which he mixes the old with the new, traditional with the contemporary. His books are published by Flipped Eye, Akashic, Nine Arches & Oberon.

**ENTRÉE**

Community

# LAIA SALES MERINO

## eating bread systems I

back in the village  
la casa was always filled with people  
wherever you went there was someone next to you  
her sisters, her brothers, her parents, her friends  
Isa Robert Maica Elena Marcela Fede Luís Maria Miguel Federico Josep Inés —  
noisy gallinas and rabbits gordos outside  
horses and cows and also pixapins with second homes in the valley  
they would play en el bosque hide and seek  
build their own palace out of branches  
they would eat bread with sugar and wine to make it sweet

*For breakfast it was milk, that my mother heated up on la estufa and then inside, that's where we'd put the stale bread... This was our 'cereal and milk': hard bread and milk, which we got in Cal Silis, and my mother would boil it two or three times before giving it to us.*

*When she boiled la llet, then it made cream... A thick layer that she gave to me or, you know, to anyone who liked it. When I was there in Barcelona, sometimes if she knew I was coming on the weekend she would keep it for me. Then you would spread it on the bread as well and put a little bit of sugar on top.*

*Sometimes, for berenar, with the loaf of bread we did a third with water, a third with wine and a third with oil. And so it became a very colourful loaf and it would seem yo que sé qué [chuckles]*

Laia Sales Merino

is a poet from the Catalan Pyrenees, currently based in Barcelona. Her work can be found in *Ambit*, *harana poetry*, *I'll Show you Mine Journal*, and *perhappened*, among others.

# KINGA WHITE

## Flickering candies

*content note: mention of death*

I made a chestnut man:  
A round belly, inedible pulp  
To pat.  
Skinny legs made of matches.  
They rot on frosty nights before  
1st November.

Coats were pulled out of wardrobes.  
Pine tree wreaths, chrysanthemum.  
All for the dead.

Steaming naphthalene and damp wool.  
Warm, digested words coming out and  
A halo of sweets sold in kiosks.

The dead chewed earthy soil;  
We sucked on hard sour candy.  
Loud and crunchy.  
Oh, Lord,  
Let perpetual light shine on them,  
Chupa Chups Cola lollies, amen.

Kinga White

was born in Poland. She works as a bookseller in Cambridge. She earned her MA in Biography and Creative Non-Fiction at UEA. Currently Kinga is writing a food memoir. Her favourite nostalgic food is *botwinka*.

# CAI DRAPER

30/4/20

*[This poem was first published in No Contact Mag]*

navigating the comma

navigating the navel

inner

linter

portal

sometimes I tickle myself & come out getting egged in Manchester

circa two thousand and nine

today I am grateful for the lack of egging

& the fact of no weed left

I smoked it all in a kissing gate feeling gross as I said

I am trying to say exactly what I mean

the windows remain

very dirty

I am scared I will never be able to live with another person again

this morning I have already had three arguments

one with my boss about the spreadsheet

one with my neighbour about British Summer Time

one with myself about the way the first two were dealt with

for each of them I was completely alone  
for a good portion of the time  
my thoughts resemble giant hairy caterpillars not of me born  
M says not every deviation is betrayal  
so big up the moments of divine junk  
sometimes I stick my hand through my belly button  
& come out washing rocket down the basement kitchen in New Cross  
sturdily booted Arriva Jesus flailing greased apron & busted pot  
dancing with a broom like Turbo in Wildstyle  
without recourse to clear fishing lines holding it up  
saying that  
I did know a man who walked the New Cross Road barefoot  
& came back to life after an accident  
which cured him of his taste  
but not his thirst

Cai Draper

is a poet from South London living in Norwich. His work appears in various places, including *Lighthouse*, *PERVERSE*, and the Bad Betty *Alter-Egos Anthology*, with poems forthcoming in *Anthropocene* and *Babel Tower Notice Board*. He organises free workshops at the Book Hive and an online reading series with Assembly House.

# DESSERT

Culture



# ELLEN RENTON

## BBQ

Two men are having a barbecue and it is  
so boring I can hear a potato salad  
being explained from two garden-  
widths away and how did flavour  
become dull I want to read and be  
somewhere else but I can travel no further  
than Homebase where a grill was purchased  
or the twisting queue at a local butchers'  
where burgers were sourced There is  
nothing worse than a conversation  
or a barbecue that you weren't invited to

The men talk about the particulars  
of a skewer the *unreal* and *absolute*  
bargains the alcohol in a pineapple marinade  
I used to think I couldn't feel boredom  
because my head was too much thoroughfare  
but now, the question of firelighters  
has been raised It might not be boredom  
at all In fact I might be angry  
and it is much easier to say that my hands  
are in fists for a lack of something to do  
I left my phone inside because it hurts  
to look so I might as well be a man  
who yells himself heard *chicken skin*  
*is crisping* smoke is moving closer  
and I can't fathom what I used to find  
in its smell

Ellen Renton

is a poet, performer, and theatre maker based in Edinburgh. Her work has been published in *Magma* and *Gutter*, and featured on BBC Radio Scotland. She received the Unlimited Emerging Artist Award in 2019.

# CHLOE L. YEOH

## An Ode to Uncle Roger

There are two types of people:  
those who can cook egg fried rice

and those who can only try.  
Here is the cultural barrier:

*wok hay*. You either have it  
or you don't. In the spirit of stir-fry,

here lies the unspoken breadth.  
Here lies the gap between your culture

and mine, where rice is not  
just rice. Where rice, like words,

weighs heavy on the tongue  
before it passes into thought.

Chloe L. Yeoh

is an Australian-born Malaysian poet. She enjoys snail mailing and eating, the latter of which is the Malaysian national sport.

# AL ANDERSON

## Dasein

*content note: food poverty*

Yes, I'm aware of the ketchup stain on my jumper  
It's there so that I don't have to tell you I'm struggling  
The whole point of filter coffee was its bitterness that  
It cost 80p & was drunk in the rain & not served in a cuntin'  
Chemistry set & my eggs are cold & twice as expensive  
This does absolutely **nothing** for the movie in my head  
All I know is that today I was meant to write  
My best ever poem about eating ass  
But I've never felt so un-fucked  
As by this avo on toast  
                    Food  
            Orientated  
            Ontologies  
I can't remember  
What that means though have  
A tendency to drop the phrase  
At job interviews, I admit I was  
Broke for three years  
Because I never learned how to cook  
Lived off coagulated ready oats & pizza  
Now the hours are spent contemplating  
Sesame roasted asparagus  
I wonder if October sun  
Still rolls over Telegraph Hill  
If I am asleep somewhere  
A pensive mayo stain all along  
Beware them both  
Hope & dread

Al Anderson's

*Tenderloin* will be published by Blush in 2021. He is a PhD candidate in Creative and Critical Writing at the University of East Anglia and an alumnus of the Poetry MA at the same institution.

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