August Mini Inne

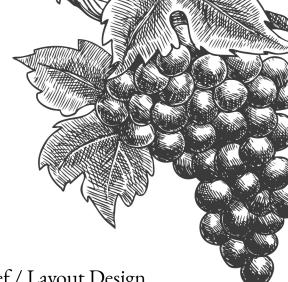
Poetry Prose Photography

Vermillion Lit

Vermillion Lit



AUGUST
MINI ISSUE
2025



EDITORS

POPPY HIGGINS

Editor-in-Chief / Layout Design

ELLA LIGHTEN

Co-EIC / Poetry Editor

SIMON HARRIS

Prose Editor

DESIGNERS

HANNAH LOUISE

Cover Art / Illustration

ZAFRAN ZAKARIA

Cover Design

KIMBERLY GARCIA

Layout Design

LAIBA SULEMAN

Layout Design

NEWT WOLTER

Layout Design

We are pleased to have received so many amazing works for this mini issue. Whether your work has been published this time or not, we are extremely privileged to be able to read from so many unique voices worldwide, and we hope you find your new favourite work amongst the selection.

Vermillion Lit seeks the strange and spectacular through all aspects of writing, and we greatly appreciate how the final work has reflected the time, energy, and creativity

invested by all contributors. A huge thank you to the writers, staff, and readers; you are the backbone of our publication.

Editor's Picks:

POPPY

Self-Portrait as the Memory (Failing)

Michael Best

ELLA

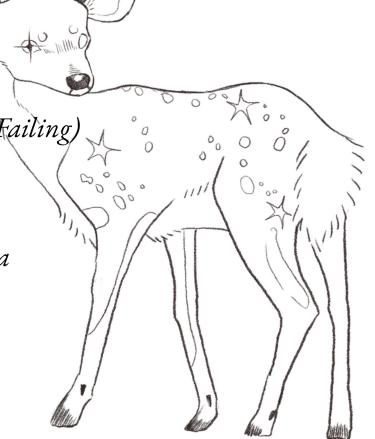
Colockum State Wildlife Area

Tanner Abernathy

SIMON

Mango Men

Niranjana Balram Menon



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Vermillion Lit Staff	01
Editor's Note	02
POETRY	
Un Bel Dia by Al Mcclimens	06
Self-Portrait as the Memory (Failing)	
by Michael Best	07
heatwave by Katia Engell	10
Palisade by Rachel Turney	12
Symbiosis by Amanda Trout	13
her/our/my heat by Bobbi Dix	19
Two Palm-Trees by Nicholas Viglietti	21
Perpetual by Amanda Trout	22
Colockum State Wildlife Area	
by Tanner Abernathy	23

POETRY ((Continued)
----------	-------------

28° by Maurice Hibbitts	<i>30</i>
A Poem for Early August by Tanner Abernathy	31
Mango Men by Niranjana Balram Menon	33
Golden Waves by Stephen Mead	35
PROSE	
Meatloaf by June Evrian	15
Made for Walking by Alexandra Cipriani	25
ARTWORK	
Mixed Media by Rae Mosley	11
Summer Stars by Saturn	29
Will Break for Rocks by Paige	<i>37</i>
BIOGRAPHIES	
Contributor biographies	39

Vermillion Lit

UN BEL DIA

Al Mcclimens

There's a dying butterfly on the stairwell. Don't ask me what sort it is. What am I, the local lepidopterist? It's yellow-ish. Small. When the door opens it seems to flutter but it might just be the draft. If it stays there long enough it could become an autumn leaf, a symbol of death, decay and a reminder that we're all heading for the exit. And it's summer

solstice this weekend. Irony or coincidence, discuss. Makes no odds to the butterfly. Royal Ascot, Test Match, tennis at Queens; brief trophies, gimcrack fame. It's a dying insect, the colour flown from its wing.

SELF PORTRAIT AS THE MEMORY (FAILING)

Michael Best

i.

I'm a suburban house burning in Kodak

Gold. The hillside a blur of green

& rust. My walls stained crimson. A man in the front door,

his cobalt shadow splayed across the porch. He's coming, or he's

leaving. I don't know. There's smoke & the grainy sky.

The pale ashes fall—California snow. I'm a white house



Vermillion Lit

burning in a plastic lens. The horizon. The man.

The TV flickers, still on. Flickers,

smolders, blinks red, plays static.



ii.

Rust. My walls stained crimson. I spill blood the way a boy

spills Coca-Cola in the back seat of a steel-blue truck, laughing,

turning his face away from the light. I'm covered in

blood in a truck going no where. The road a long, bruised night; gas station bathed in neons; leaky faucet; film

flashing like a helicopter mistaken for a star.

Like a dream, suddenly on fire.

iii.

Splayed across the porch. The ox rising out of the dead bull, I

set myself alight in search of softness. Why am I still

heavy? Why am I still lifting? The yoke like a fist

around my throat, it cannot contain me.

iv.

The man the TV flickers. My father stands at the threshold.

I listen to the song of my bones becoming dust,

heaving my final words across this page.

V.

Red plays static. I lay down in my body of snow,

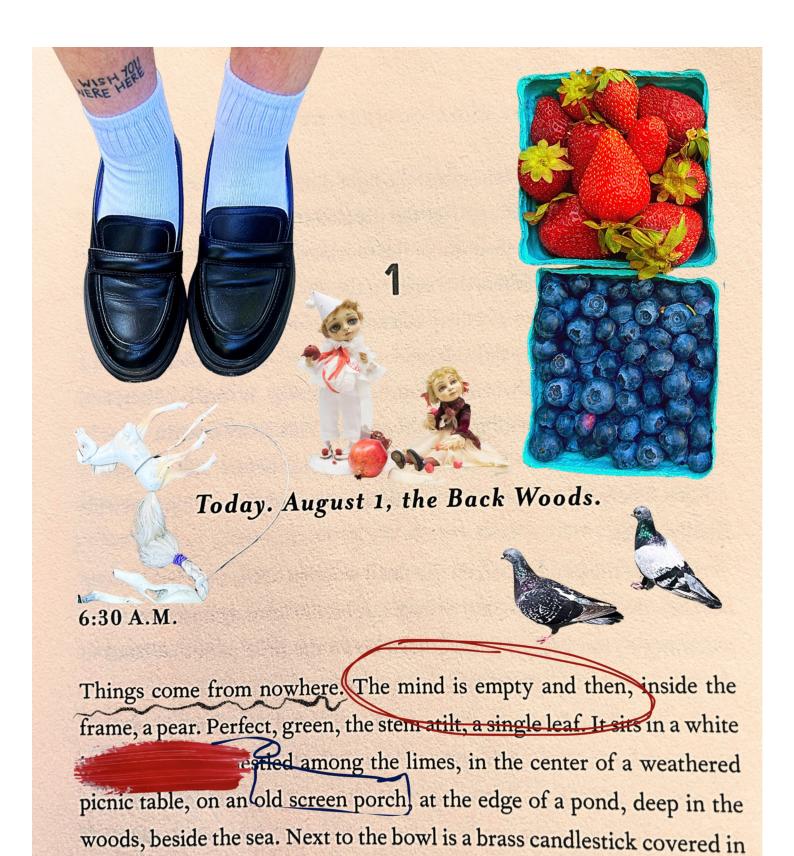
all ash & gold. The film all black—all nothing.

Nothing

HEATWAVE

Katia Engell

anything. our bodies flushed and sticky with heatwave sweat. we open our windows and legs let the breeze wander where the hottest salt of our dew gathers most. the table fan spins circles of air against our inner thighs. unlike a power outage, nobody gets pregnant in a heat wave. your hand on my thigh, unbearably hot i let it suction against my pinkened flesh, and melt.



drips of cold wax and the ingrained dust of a long winter left on an open

shelf. Half-eaten plates of pasta, an unfolded linen napkin, dregs of claret in a wine bottle, a breadboard, handmade, rough bosses it is a Mixed media piece by Rae Mosley

PALISADE

Rachel Turney

In August

The peaches
fall from the trees.
They rot on the ground
rilled by small white larvae
that crawl in the sinews.
Birds come
a murmuration of starling
pecking moth children
from the fruit
that has begun to
ferment.



e^{ve}ry so

I

can

Seada

SYMBIOSIS

Amanda Trout

cada ng echoes

cjęada Cłę_{da}

ream too

MEATLOAF

June Evrian

Someone who looks like a woman sits at the side of my bed. Without my glasses on, I can't make out whether her face is featureless or just blurry. Her fingers are dancing on my defenseless arm, and her weight is tugging on my yellowing sheets.

"Go away," I say. My voice is clear in my head, but my lips are not moving; I'm mumbling sounds without vowels or consonants.

I wait for her, beneath the elegance of her feminine shadow, to ask me in her low, seductive voice, "What was that, dear?" Instead she takes on the voice of a wicked fairytale grandmother, whispering, seductively, "Make me, then."

The more she touches me, the heavier I feel. Her light prances on my skin push me deeper into the mattress. I'm already halfway in, about to be swallowed by the bed in which I lie. My gloomy bedroom and its drab, petite-rosed wallpaper gradually disappear from sight. "Let go of me," I say in my head.

She takes her hand off, but still lingers by my arm.

She yawns. There is nothing for her to see except the shipwreck of dirty clothes docked in one corner, the thousand strands of hair painting the orange floor tiles, and the mountain of coffee stained papers that the single desk has become. "It smells nasty in here."

"That would be the meatloaf," I respond unknowingly. It has been sitting on my nightstand for me to consume on the days that I do get hungry. Black dots that I can only assume are flies are floating ritually around it.

She shakes her head. "No, no."

She brings her nose to mine, puffing without wind. She really is featureless and somewhat red. Her breath burns as she inhales the air around me. I think for a moment that she has stolen my oxygen for herself, for I am breathing like a helmetless astronaut in outer space. She shudders. "Rotting animal."

Heavily, I roll my eyes away from her, dragging my irises from the peak of the hills and down to the bloodshot valleys. The rest of me is locked: neck will not rotate, arms will not lift, toes will not wriggle, just as mouth will not speak. I have become the safehouse to a military intelligence operation.

I still cannot distinguish lines from curves and shapes from objects when a series of scarlet lights reveals itself. It squirms in the air like earthworms and is coming closer to attack my eyeballs. I laboriously force my bleary eyes shut, and in the darkness of my fallen eyelids, the fuzzy earthworms choreograph themselves to form a message; the lights are not mere lights, but numbers: 07:03.

"I have to go," I say impatiently. "Almost eight."

"Where?"

"I have to go. Almost late."

"Where?"

I cannot answer her, and it is not because I'm swimming in frozen time.

"So you have nowhere to go," she says, "and decide to be roadkill."

"I'm not—"

"I've seen it all before."

She gets up swiftly on her feet, and I expect to rise back to the surface. Yet I can only watch the vague outlines of her body move as she walks circles around the humid lair that traps us together. When I think she's heading for the door, she turns towards the obscure desk. "What's this, what's this?" she mutters.

She picks up one sheet of paper after another, whispering, "One-hundred... Approved... Signed by... Congratulations... Another one-hundred... This award is presented to..." She looks at me and gives me what seems like a pout. I almost believe she pities me. "It's always your kind who end up meeting me. And, you know, murderers and whatnot, of course. But that doesn't imply anything."

I'm sweating from all the places my body can sweat. The slit of sunlight from between my strawberry curtains scorches the skin on my arm where she touched me. I fear that I'm going to perish one way or another—if not by Her then by sun; if not by sun then by flies.

I must be writhing under my blanket, because she turns to me again after pausing curiously before the infested nightstand.

She runs her sauna-coal fingernails from my shoulders to my knees,

and I free-fall in place. "You poor thing."

So she does pity me.

"Just kill me already."

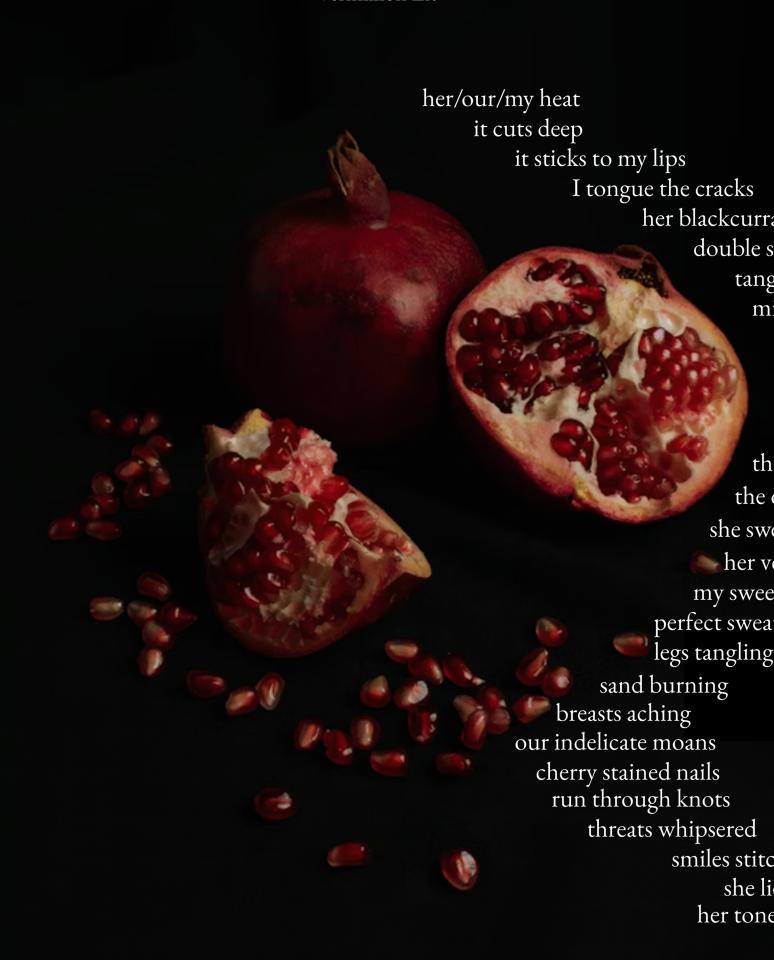
"Kill? What am I, the Grim Reaper?" she cackles dryly. "Besides, you're doing a good job of it yourself."

The room is an oven, and whoever is baking has set it ten degrees hotter. Soon, I will melt into and become one with the mattress. It won't be so bad. We are well-acquainted, the mattress and I; we have been for the past thirty-something days of summer.

"Alright. Enough of that now," she says as if she can hear my thoughts. "You're not that special, you aren't."

She walks away from me and opens my bedroom door. The illusion of a breeze seeps in. "You take care now. If I *must* visit you when the leaves start falling, which I quite often do for my other clients, make sure you get this place cleaned up. I don't mind the mould, it's the hair—*blech*."

Immediately after the door slams shut, I jolt off my pillow and take the mightiest gulp of air I have ever taken. It's still hell, but I'll live another day.



```
ant balm
trength
gy and trouble
ixes with the heat
I drink it up like wine
the sensation soaking
that forbidden place
the one she craves
e one she despises
one she curses
ears I -
enom
tness
```

HER/OUR/MY HEAT Bobbi Dix

thed
es again
et telling
I swear she it sticks to my lips
it cuts deep

TWO PALM TREES

Nicholas Viglietti

On the soul-side of town, I stood dejected on land she owns.

Makin' hardly a point, Leanin' on my truck-bed.

Two palm-trees,
Close enough, but in distant yards;
Up in the sky a jet flew between –
Immense ratio to distance, I ain't smart enough to explain.

It's hard to be who you ain't.
I'm stuck in this vicious valley,
On its pilfered riverbanks.

PERPETUAL

Amanda Trout

Perpetual

-after "August" by Bear Attack!

Each breath, my lung dust
piles higher, alveoli rendered
Saharas from this lack of rebirthing
rituals: no sunburnt skin
sloughed from this unloved body, no lipstick smears on
once-white
pillows, no sugar
coating Life's lemons.
I long to stay sour,
stay summer. I long for leaves
burned brown from the heat, still latched to each
branch, still refusing to fall.

Tanner Abernathy

If I hear one more shotgun crack in these canary hills of rams, smokey elderberries, candlewick sagebrush

In the windmill-rimmed economy of larch and magpie, I, crowned in chukar plumage, will give body back to scabland, laying wildflowers on the hollow bones of hollow men

who kill things so much like our children, watchful and pure-eyed. Ain't you just a devil then?



MADE FOR WALKING

Alexandra Cipriani



Rusty scissors in a gas station bathroom sink. Weathered signs that scream they stay open past midnight. The embroidered towel section at Salvation Army. Letters left in lockers. Family heirlooms of bronzy, plated gold. And those welts on peaches—not the slightly dull peach-colored kind, but the slightly dull, slimy lettuce kind.

All things you shouldn't trust.

New boots can be added right at the end.

The mud was unforgiving as Constance plucked her feet one after the other on her trek. Prying the boots from the sludge's grip felt like yanking a thread when one already knows doing so will unravel the whole shirt. She could sense the engraving of the leather being bloated with dirt, the decorative gems being cut loose and lost to the sea of sediment. She couldn't even tell if it was the mud or her own sweat making her feet slide around the soles as she walked onward.

Sweat was something she'd never get used to here. Dry heat was a heavenly thing; pure and superior. Wet heat was devilish in every way. It'll creep down a spine and spread through a skeleton. Infestation-like. The elements become dense and heavy in the surrounding area, and all

of a sudden, a random girl walking home on the side of the road has her own atmosphere hovering around her shiny skin. It was suffocating. The boots didn't make it any easier. Every step was like slipping on a frog. She almost lost her balance every fifteen seconds.

As the night sky melted, so too did Constance's will to keep going. The world was fighting her, and she questioned why she even came out here. But memories are a fickle thing, especially when one is a lightweight. Where was the joyful stupor of a few hours ago? How about her wide smile and cheery demeanor? Or a pair of newly-purchased, "Made in Italy" boots that were once pristine? None of that was here anymore.

A car was coming down the road. It was probably a truck, but honestly, the difference is dumb. It's a vehicle. It's got four wheels. And it's heading towards a girl on her own in the middle of nowhere with her nice new boots getting caught in the mud every quarter of a minute.

Constance somehow got sweatier.

Twisting free from the ground's claws, she scurried away from the road and towards the taller grass. The road was lifted just a bit, so if she crouched down real low a few feet away, the vegetation could be enough to conceal her. She prayed it would, at least.

She hugged her knees and held her head loose like a corpse as she balanced on her boots. These damn boots. The heel was making her look taller, but it wasn't like she could just take off running away from the road. It was flat fields for miles. She'd be seen. And though the sweat was travelling from her palms to her elbow creases to the folds in her belly, she kept her crazed breath calm; she did her best to get the stuttering gasps to quiet.

The car or truck or beast rolled by in motorized silence. Peeking her head above the grass, Constance unhinged her legs, wiped off all the critters that had crawled all over her, and kept walking.

Once upon a time she loved walking. A good stretch of the limbs made ripe in the morning was a delight. She even considered walking to the tailgate earlier today. That was undoubtedly the wrong call since walking a mile or two all alone with no civilization around is not smart. But when the ride turns into a college kid coming back for the summer, options become limited.

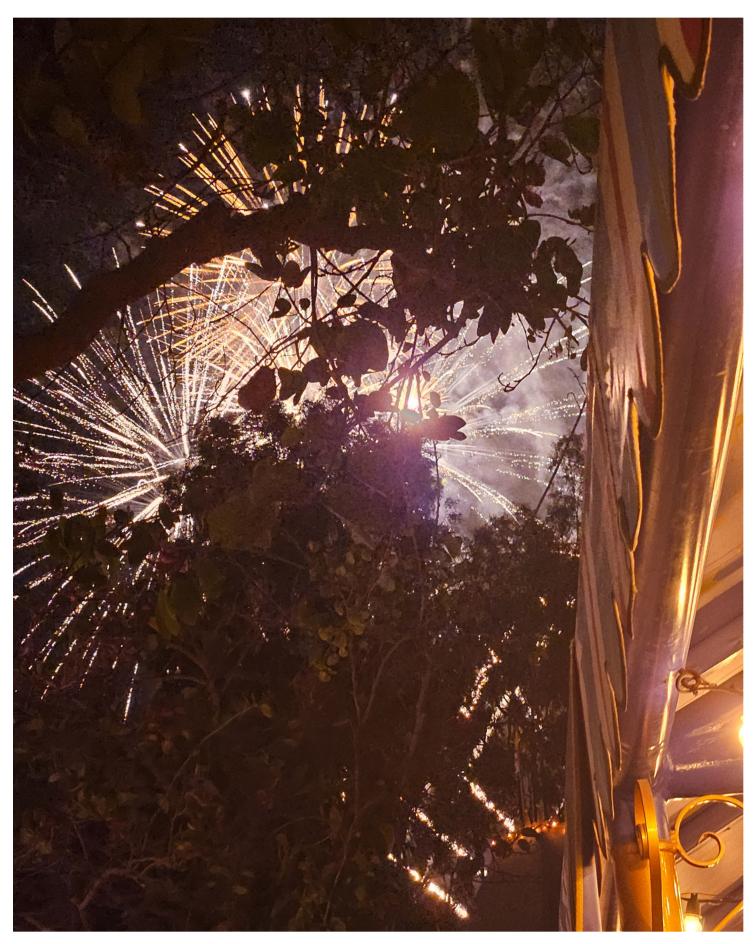
Constance added that to the list: college kids coming back for the summer. Might have to go above the peaches.

And so she plunged forward. The marrow in her bones was fried, and her body ached, and the boots—consider them unsalvageable at this hour—were falling more and more in love with the mud. Droplets slid down her cheeks and nose. Her frilly white tank with the dainty lace stuck to her chest and stomach and back as if glued. The cutoffs fared no better with all the moisture and dirt creeping in, and all her exposed skin still wasn't enough to ward off a cent of heat.

Sky was lovely, though. It always is out here. Sure, it was mollifying and dropping stars on the ferns like dollops of cream, but it was stunning. It was the only reason she came out here. That, and the fact that big-shot-Jeremy-from-high-school had complimented her boots at the liquor store with that smoke-filled rasp of his. She regretted ever letting him buy the booze. Her boots had paid the price.

By sunrise, society was emerging on the horizon, and Constance could have cried. Here she was: a girl with no wits that looked like shit, and she had made it back in one piece. Close enough, at least. She could see a steeple, a faded flag, and even the flickering lights of the corner store.

Just outside the church sat a basin. Peeling off the boots was not easy—some mud had crept in and melded her heel to the shoe's insides—but with a grunt she was free, and the boots were dunked into the water. She scrubbed them gently with a cloth that hung over the tub's side. Already some dirt was coming loose.



Summer Stars by Saturn

$\mathbf{28}_{0}$

Maurice Hibbitts

and again i'm wishing there'd never be another rainbow, so god could forget his promise and flood the earth again because we are here choking on harsh ash from trees burning out like hastily consumed cigarettes; maybe august is an apocalypse of purifying fire, dirtying the lungs,

washing the soul
a gust of ember-laden wind
while we fold out chairs
and grasp cups sweaty with condensation
filled with too-sweet lemonade that
sticks in our

throats like
the cinders
the flame is divine, and maybe
that's why the ash is so torturous:
tantalising the mind with thoughts
of a burning bright holiness
seen at the tips of st augustine's fingers
and in a bird.

A POEM FOR EARLY AUGUST

Tanner Abernathy

Standing over the sink with pistachios and hummus and a can of sparkling water.

I watch Seinfeld episodes mostly because I want to make better small talk with my father. We usually drive in silence to the superhero movie (the main reason for our getting together).

Jerry's parents don't want to have dinner with the Costanzas even after Mrs. C made so much paella. Jerry is horny. Everyone wants to have sex so badly. A show about something.



I have laryngitis. I told my wife that laryngitis is a condition one develops when they need an excuse to miss a work function. We're packing for vacation tomorrow laryngitis and all. I will ache and throat by the pool.



MAIGO MEN Niranjana Balram Menon

time has leaked from my hour before midnight, so that what I'm left with is the dark hour that awaits between one and two.

I'm reading

Seven Days In June—

the intimacy between the letters

leaping out of the page
and fingering me.

I've just moved back and become a recluse. an ocean yawns between the two places I have once called home, my polyamorous nights turned to taboo.



Vermillion Lit

I get hungry, and waddle to the fridge. it hums as I open it.

I spoon half a cold mango, And halfway through, I get frustrated.

I pick it up with my hands and bite, tug, suck.

the fan overhead my bed rotates and tuts, every few seconds in orgasm.

watching the scene unfold below: one lonely woman who has come back home.

this is my thirty-fourth mango this summer month. but I've still eaten zero Indian men.



GOLDEN WAVES

Stephen Mead

I've been waiting to see them, to wade or fall on knees & ecstatically scoop, splash after splash, such shimmering butterscotch warmth, its liquefied wheat, these waves perhaps even just light, some luxurious school of it, that blindness bronzed & delicious as skin, a baptismal, a rebirth.

This is the crux all want senses at moments near precognition: an Epileptic's aura held in a Cocteau film. It begins with a path, simple enough, say like a hallway, a row between books & then, at the end, hypnotic, a radiant pool. I float towards that beckoning, the way it moves over stairs, an adjacent room, street.

What's falling down the center?

Some subway train, miners, a foreign crowd, troops, ack ack's crackling flash &, always, beyond box car bonfires, smuggled refugees, axles, tracks, pistons----Always beyond there's a glowing orb.

Follow. Come closer. How far is it? How far? Is somebody waiting? An escort? A contact?

Past courtyards, alleys, spacious time winding canals amid buildings, I weave like a vessel, fog beams on high to touch, settle in the embracing shores of that dock.

How long will it be? How long? We are all burning you see, like covenants, lost.





Will Break For Rocks by Paige 38

BIOGRAPHIES

AL MCCLIMENS

Al McClimens is a Sheffield-based writer, variously described as an unemployed waster, Scrabble fan and lapsed socialist. He reads a novel a week, writes a poem a day and thinks himself blessed if he goes to sleep warm and dry. His literary ambition is to overthrow Don 'Dundee' Paterson from his position of UK sonnet king.

MICHAEL BEST

Michael Best (he/him) is a queer poet based in Northern California. He is a Virgo and observant of fine details. He has been published in Prism and Dakota Warren's Nowhere Girl Collective.

KATIA ENGELL

Katia Engell is an artist & poet living in Toronto, Canada. When she is not collaging, writing, or collaborating with friends, you'll likely find her working creatively with people living with dementia. Katia's poems can be found in Epiphany Magazine and beyond. You can find her online at @katiaengell_ on Instagram.

RAE MOSLEY

New York-born artist Rae Mosley (<u>@Littleboyybluue</u>) is plagued with visions. In an attempt to understand what it means to be human, she explores violent delights, perpetual yearning, and overall, the act of coming home to yourself.

RACHEL TURNEY

Rachel Turney, Ed.D. (she/her) is an educator and artist located in Denver. She is passionate about immigrant rights, teacher support, and empowering other artists. She is a Writers' Hour prize winner, and The Poetry Lighthouse will publish her full-length collection Record Player Life in the coming months. Website: turneytalks.com Instagram: @turneytalks Bluesky: @rachelturney

AMANDA TROUT

Amanda Trout is a Midwestern US writer with a passion for sound and form. Her work has been published in Zaum, the Northwind Treasury by Raw Earth Ink, the Common Language Project, and other publications. Instagram: @atrout2972

JUNE EVRIAN

June is an Indonesian writer based in Australia who wishes to inspire diverse voices to share their stories with the world. She fights in the battlegrounds of academia during the day and comes home to the cosy, speculative worlds she has built in the nighttime. When she writes, you'll often find her accompanied by a bowl of instant noodles and a playlist of Ghibli movie soundtracks.

NICHOLAS VIGLIETTI

Nicholas Viglietti is a writer from Sacramento, CA. After Katrina ravaged the gulf coast, he rebuilt homes for 2 years. Up in Mon-tucky, he cut trails in the wilderness. He pedaled from Sac-town to S.D. He's a seventh-life partyhack, attempting to rip chill lines in the madness.

TANNER ABERNATHY

Tanner Abernathy is a writer and public high school teacher in Tacoma, WA. His work has been published in Abyss & Apex, Allegory Magazine, Gold Man Review, and McSweeney's among others.

ALEXANDRA CIPRIANI

Alexandra Cipriani is a Filipina-Italian writer and a New York University Summer Publishing Institute graduate. She studied a bachelor's degree in English at the University of Colorado Denver, and she continues to work for her institution's literary magazine, Copper Nickel, as well as the publication October Hill Magazine. Her work is published or forthcoming in Chainmail Poetry, KRNT and Still Here.

SATURN

Saturn is a queer photographer with a passion for reading, writing, and the arts.

MAURICE HIBBITTS

Maurice is a writer of poetry, short stories, and poorly-planned essays who is currently studying English Literature and History at university.

NIRANJANA BALRAM MENON

Niranjana Balram Menon is a writer and environmentalist from Chennai, India, whose work has appeared in ActiveMuse Literary Magazine, the WUR website and more. She has a degree in environmental science from Wageningen University & Research. She is currently working on her second book, a collection of poetry centred on the theme of the Indian diasporic experience. Find her on Instagram @niranjanabalram.

Vermillion Lit

STEPHEN MEAD

Stephen Mead is a resident artist/curator for The Chroma Museum, and a retiree who, throughout all his pretty non-glamorous jobs, still found time for writing poetry/essays and creating art. Occasionally, he even got paid for this. Currently, he is trying to sell his 40-year backlog of unsold art before he pops his cogs.

PAIGE

Paige is still learning what type of artist she is. Currently, she enjoys taking photographs of cemeteries and abandoned places and making zines. Instagram: hanginthere.banner.