

Issue III

Res

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Not Quite Sure
literary magazine



List of Contributors

Poetry

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Philippa Greasley
Lily Ní Mhurchú
Guadalupe Miranda
Calypso Morgan

Prose

Irina Vérène

Art

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Note from the Editor

The third issue of this magazine came into place at a time of great disturbance globally. It felt only right to use this issue as a way of highlighting the issues in this world, and our responses to them. We set the theme as resistance because it is the theme we should all hold our own actions by in the real world. Each piece of art we create to express our anger and hopelessness is something that can be considered resistance.

As the editor-in-chief, I have neglected this issue somewhat to focus on myself, which has not felt very good but was a way of me continuing my own resistance. I have a Substack dedicated to world news, things like the ongoing situation in Palestine, and have been working on my personal writing and trying to get my books published - all of which deal with themes that resonate with me as a disabled, working class member of the queer community. Resistance can be shouting at a protest, or it can be typing on a keyboard. This issue is dedicated to the creatives doing their bit: to you.

A reminder in reference to our colour palette this issue: even among this darkness, however, are pieces that highlight our resilience and skill.

- **Holly E. O'Neill**
Editor-in-Chief

P.S. Thank you so much to everyone who has stuck with us in this process, the world really does suck right now and this magazine is something we hope will provide a long-term source of peace away from the rest of the world. You make this possible.

This issue was brought to
you by...

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Poe



try



Wetback

the leaves look like porridge on the side of the highway
too cold for goldilocks, just right for the white man.

Here they come, they say

Wetbacks

they sing, Go back home

Close the border

Open the cages for their plot of land

Open their caskets, We claim an open burial

Wetbacks

as if water dripping down our back was a crime.

the river carried us here

took a few and saved the children

the river carried our weight

stretching fluid arms to reach the other land

Motherland, as it once was.

wet like blood dripping down our skin

inside the suit we call humanity.

Wetbacks

the name shackles us

chained up with metal

Kisses, they say, To send you home

Send them on cargo planes

its mouth waiting to open

vomit the skin you diminish for its brown existence.

We are the color of the earth

Our nature lies with it

Where does yours?

Wetbacks, they chant
like an invocation
a spell forced on us to forget our power.
character is stronger than gluttony
the oppressor, the conquistador, the colonizer
whisper-
This was all meant for me.
manifest destiny washes away from your shores
and you wrestle
the muscle of the ocean to bring it back to you.
you forget yourself
there is no battle between man and nature
she will always win
she will blow the final horn
and you will wear character like costumes-
It wasn't me! Not my fault! Was following orders!
playing a game of whodunit
the finger always pointing back to you

Wetbacks
Their spirit in the water
They have gone home
Gone home-
Home, Home, Home.

Dandelion

Calypso Morgan

They cover
us in concrete.
Muffling our voices.
Isolating us.
Killing us.
so we will be
submissive
to their power play,
suppressed
under their boots.
But they can't
get rid of
weeds.
Our roots
grow beneath
the brutal material.
We crack
the oppressive
bitumen,
and we will bloom
as a small dandelion
between the
confines
of the dark cell.
It will be the beginning
of a multitude
of yellow flowers
flourishing,
impossible
to exterminate,
always resisting

Liquorice all-sorts, assortments in store for us
Every time a morsel crawls with the wherewithal imploring us
Entreating us, repeating us, never fail to feed it us
Baffled meaning left for scrap yet never ever leaving us

Forbidding entropy a entry in the dictionary
Ace of spades later found a whiter lie to tell to me
He told me I could make sense in the way that it mattered
That I could find release in convos and leave my woes unrattled

I never knew how to talk although many disagreed
Fabrications ran the walk from A just to stop at C
Even now writing this thing it pales in in the heat
For the sake of simplicity, I'm gonna pick three

First up, there was Labor, Days of the stuff
Legend of his legends emblazoned in the rough
Fifteen years later, it's all been a blindside
Watch The Impossible Kid blossom behind him
Recently though, innovations were brewed
Integrated Tech Solutions replaced the beast that it slew

I couldn't believed it at first, although I wish that I had
I would've had a better time finding a blank space to land
Be Consistent: what a instinct, misfit upon which its insisted
A lyricist like no other in whose cause I could be enlisted

I got a little piece of paradise that brightens my mind
A corner shop of movies, records and capsules of time
I'm gonna tell the kids one day when I get that shop
Mac said it best: Rock Like Aesop

Too much

I stand under oak trees, which shake their green leaves loose
Pouring sunlight into the small of my back
Waiting at the school door.
Annoyance hidden under fingernails, digging half-moons into
my palms
And screaming inside my eardrums.
They eat disabled children in this place for lunch.

“Do you have a minute?”
He keeps taking off his shoes.
Putting the toy food outside the area for toy food.
Won’t be silent.
Won’t be still.
Would be better. If you wouldn’t mind.
Could he, not, possibly, exist? At all?
Or, at least, not around us.
He’s just a bit much.

“Do you have a minute?”
Is a tightening around my ribcage.
A hand at my throat. A disapproval.
A mask that screws my mouth shut, to everything except
“sorry”.
But, listen – hang on, though.
I think this mask was made for breaking.
Have you got a brick?
How hard can you throw it?

Politeness is the first one to drop
Like a drunk at a party.
Acquiescence is taken out by another brick.
And courtesy, leaning on the wall outside, smoking, never
stood a chance.

I heft the next brick in my hand.
We're not too much. We never were. We're exactly who we're
meant to be.

"Do you have a minute?"
I have some fucking bricks.

'Woman' was never yours to box up
Like pressing a storm into a pocket.
'Woman' was always a wild river map
A nervous system.
Expansive. Not narrow.
Flowing with new lightning-paths.
Not amputating them.

The gender binary is a grave you keep digging
For all of us.
Using shovels handed out by billionaires
Who say it's against nature
While scrolling smartphones, oozing yachts, licking cigars,
dribbling headlines.

Here's the thing, though.
They're alone, in the cold, shivering,
Wondering who they are, really,
And hoping against hope no one looks too close.

While we persist and resist and fight and exist
In the glow of "I am".
Let them burn in that glow.

Playful patter, skitter through the night,
Flutter-pretty, circle through the air -
Don't get caught in ignorant cement,
Crushed and crumble through expensive boots,

That's the way it 'should be' - never stick,
Whirl and warble in tremendous bursts
Through orange weather warnings, and trick
The odd drunk eejit traipsing home.

Let the sky open up - open it wide
And let sheets of angry flakes
Suffocate cement and tarnish leather hide,
Let the ethereal glow of the clouds silver lining

Shine ironic across a double sheet of white;
Let it dissolve far too slowly,
Let the lining recede, let pure sun light
The sparkling crystals as they go -

The snow will melt.
The ground will dry again, and
Cement will grow arrogant.
Don't let it melt off you.

Pro



ose



Necessary Change

With the crisp autumn air brushing through wheat stalks and tangled strands of hair, it's easy to forget. Past and present fade into the background, lost among dry leaves and dazzling decay. The future seems written into the sky — an endless promise of transformation, unchained from the shackles of the mortal experience.

This realm is not bound to the rules of mortals. It terrifies the people in his village — and it's exactly what drew Calren here in the first place.

He remembers distinctly what the hardened amber that led him here felt like beneath his hand: A smooth core of crystal-like tree sap, pleasantly warm to the touch, spreading in intricate, organic veins across the furrowed bark of a pine tree. Little had he known that spot would do so much more than just inspire appropriate awe for the beauty of nature.

Through his closed lids, speckles of golden sunlight tickle his eyes, warming his dormant vision. A smile is playing on his lips.

»Are you alright?« Marlyn's voice is deep and gentle, like woodsmoke curling through the air, carrying a promise of warmth and care and safety. »You haven't budged in a while. I didn't turn you into part of the landscape by accident, did I?«

Calren chuckles. »I wish,« he signs with one hand, feeling Marlyn's eyes tracking his every movement.

Marlyn laughs, but her tone is stern and serious when she says: »You don't mean that.«

Calren shakes his head. »I do wish you could turn me into whatever at will, though.« The signs flow effortlessly; much unlike spoken words, which he has always struggled with despite technically being physically able to speak. »I'd happily eat your cursed fae food and stay here forever if things were that easy.«

»Believe me — if things were that easy, I'd enjoy staying here a lot more, too.« Marlyn sits up, brushing dirt from her layered dress that looks like a chaotically beautiful arrangement of wildfire flames and scattered tree bark. Without looking at him, she takes Calren's hand, a touch so affectionate and tender only a true friend could manage it. »But they will be one day. I'll make sure of that.«

No matter how often they talk about it, and no matter how firmly he believes in his best friend's fierce spirit and untamable powers, Calren struggles to imagine how she is planning to achieve what they're envisioning. An illegitimate child of the Autumn Queen and the King of Spring, she doesn't hold much power; not yet, as she always insists.

A human boy himself, Calren doesn't understand the way of the fae well enough to judge. To him, the idea that a second-class princess could bring such grandiose reforms to the realm seems inconceivable. But dreamers like them, they have to hold on to the unlikely and the impossible, don't they? What else is there for them to believe in, if not their

Necessary Change

unyielding drive to change the world until it makes space for them and all that matters?

»So our deal still stands?« Calren asks, interlacing his fingers with Marlyn's as he, too, sits up, half-covered by the field that envelops them both so gracefully, as if their presence was no disturbance, but simply a part of nature, just like the wind, the sun, the animals, the plants.

»Of course.« As if rejuvenated by the mere thought, Marlyn jumps onto her feet, pulling Calren up with her by the hand she's still holding. »I will figure it out by spring. I promise.«

One more winter. It sounds like a long time, but Calren knows it isn't; not really. One winter is nothing compared to the lifetime of being himself — his truest self — that lies ahead of him if this works out the way they planned. He will survive. Humans always do, don't they? Marlyn has expressed her fascination with this multiple times — how such a fragile species has managed to persist for such a long time, no matter how harsh the circumstances, and even despite their ceaseless infighting.

»I know you will. If anyone can, it's you.« Calren pulls her into a tight hug, breathing in her sandalwood scent deeply.

Marlyn snorts, but she doesn't pull away. As they part, a dimple-lined grin spreads on her face, showing off the sliver of a gap between her incisors as well as her sharp canines. »True.«

She lets herself fall back with Calren's arms still around her, well aware that he will hold her, and starts shifting, spinning, until they're both turning in circles, the brown and orange and gold of the world melting into a gorgeous blur of warmth and hope around them.

Marlyn bursts into a giddy laugh, breathless as they fall over each other and back into the sun-kissed field.

»One day, I'll rule the autumn court,« she proclaims, »and no one will have to do things like these in secret anymore. Once the magic is fully mine, it will serve people like us first and foremost. Humans and fae and spirits and everything beyond and between. All those who are not afraid of necessary transformation.«

It's such an exhilarating vision to focus on: Their dream made reality for everyone brave enough to share it. Change readily available to all those who dare to embrace it.

Once Marlyn finds a way to use the bit of magic that was granted to her to concoct the perfect spell, she and Calren will be their own first test objects for that stellar future they've been imagining for so long. If they succeed, the results wouldn't be just glorious — they would be revolutionary.

Marlyn would never have to deal with the stubborn growth of her beard again; Calren would gladly take that burden off of her shoulders. He wouldn't have to size up his clothes anymore just to hide the curves he never wanted, and she'd

Necessary Change

finally get to flaunt her femininity the way she always wished for instead. Her adam's apple would smoothen where his would become more prominent, and his voice would drop the same way hers did years ago when her body began to change without her consent.

Marlyn scoffs, tearing a brittle leaf apart between her fingers. »The way my family has been handling things is a disgrace to the autumn court, anyway. They claim to understand change, but they only like it when it suits them.«

»That's harsh,« Calren remarks.

He thinks of his own family, his village — they mean well, but they're scared of change, too. Of all that is too different to comprehend at first. He refuses to believe that makes them bad people, but it does shrink their horizon. It confines their world to what they see and know, unable to open up to anything beyond; it's all deemed danger instead of a chance to learn and expand.

»It's still true.« Marlyn's blue eyes follow the clouds drifting across the sky, illuminated by liquid gold and silken evening shimmer. »What is autumn if not transformation?« She gestures around them, her voice rising above the far away chirping of birds. »We are all supposed to change — trees, animals, landscapes, seasons, humans. Even us immortals. Who says we can't change the way we want to?«

The promise of having his wildest dream fulfilled is so surreal and bittersweet to Calren. While he can't wait to finally live

in a body that represents who he truly is, he does miss his family already. The familiarity of the village and the surrounding woods. He doesn't know where he'll go just yet; just that he can't stay. The people would probably think him a changeling if he returned in such a different body, even more so if he admitted to making a deal with a fae princess. Leaving home behind, even with all the ignorance sewn into the culture he grew up in, will hurt. But it's the price he'll have to pay to see what life could bring without the shackles of normality and stagnation, and he owes that to himself.

Marlyn doesn't talk about the consequences their deal might have for her. She doesn't have to. They both know it'll cause chaos, and the disruption is part of the plan; it's the catalyst of change, and heaven knows this realm needs it desperately.

When spring returns, change will come in tow. Beauty and pain and all — it's inevitable. They're alive, after all, not fossils quite yet. They can't afford to stay trapped in the tantalizing tragedy of amber forever, no matter how brilliant its glow. They're meant for more than soothing expectations set in stone, and the bleeding sap of their lives is still just malleable enough to carve their own path through and out of.

Change has always been thrumming in their veins, inextricably infused into their blood. It's about time they made it happen.

This piece was previously published in Moss Puppy Magazine in Issue 04 'Amberfields'.

Contributors

Poetry

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Lily Ní Mhurchú

My name is Lily Ní Mhurchú, this is 'Snowstorm', a piece inspired by the extremely heavy snow we experienced in Ireland earlier this year that literally drove the whole country to a standstill for a week (we're dramatic like that, what can I say). If you want to see more of my (multimedia) work, you can find me on insta @lilys_lense_

Guadalupe Miranda

Guadalupe Miranda is a Senior at CSUN studying Creative Writing. She has had publications in youth-led magazines such as Art Of Life Zine and Flower Mouth Press. She has also been a staff writer for other youth-led magazines such as The Kintsugi Journal and Youth of Letters. Her hobbies include scrapbooking and discovering new second hand books. You can find her on Instagram @g.honyy

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