

anthologia

#4 Nature Edition



To Overcome Darkness And Step Into The Light

Featuring

Thom Boulton

Jack Horne

Sarah Tindall

Gert Knop

Annie Jenkin

P. J. Richards

Benjamin T. Serpell

Barry M. Wilson

Simon Travers

Heather Grange

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The Nature Edition
Anthologia **July 2017**

The Nature Edition

I think we can all agree that the recent weeks in the UK have not only shown us the glory of nature (as in the environment), but also the horrific nature of people (and the wondrous nature that comes out in reaction to such events). This edition is focused upon both definitions of the word nature and after reading the different contributions to Issue No.5, I came to the view that poets seem to use the two words as almost interchangeable symbols of each other. This is a very poetry heavy edition but in some ways it is quite nice to look at the various interpretations through differing poetic writings. We also have our first play in this edition as well as a great short story. Issue No.5 also features our spotlight on Ben Serpell and his brand new poetry book.

Before you read on and enjoy the treats within this edition, I would like to draw your attention to the front cover. It is a picture of an art installation entitled 'Transformation Man' and is part of the LandWorks project. The sculpture is the creation of a man that I know only as Brett. Brett is a trainee at LandWorks and has been working hard to change his life. He has used art to help him express this transformation. His story inspired me so much that I wrote a poem based on it at a recent sociology conference. Brett then took my poem and burnt it into wood, hanging it alongside his masterpiece. I've included a copy of my poem and a few other pictures of his installation on the next page. Brett's story really is a remarkable one and I implore you to visit the LandWorks page to learn more about what the team do (link below).

We also have some stunning photography in this edition from the lens of Stew Matthews. Each piece really captures the scene and I feel it compliments the writing in this edition of the magazine.

Our next issue will focus on the theme of Tradition. Keep your eyes peeled for the submission window (although I'm happy to start accepting writing now) and you can expect it out in late August.

Have a great summer and I hope you like this issue.

- Thom

(Thom Boulton, Editor-in-chief of The Anthologia)

Links:

<https://penprojectlandworks.org/2017/04/06/brett-says-its-just-nice-to-get-feedback-off-people/>

Transformation Man
by Thom Boulton

Transmute lead to gold,
with wood working tools or
a trowel to dig down deep.

In Alchemy, metamorphosis is
changing the mindset, learning something new,
only by dissolving everything
can you
rebuild,
rock bottom is the first stepping stone.

The newborn phase or
commonly known as conjunction,
serves a function of alteration.

Our masculine and feminine unite,
into a new belief system and
create, a child – needing to be
nurtured to survive.

Feelings can overwhelm,
swallow, engulf,
by manipulating material we
embrace the ethereal and
reveal we have
transformed.

Expression, relieves frustration
metaphor becomes actual,
and evolution, adaption,
ferments into a
bright new star,
just shining through the
unlighted mist.



Woods at Night
by Jack Horne

I stood alone, the forest still,
The darkness adding to my thrill,
And cooled by gentle midnight breeze,
I shook off water drips from trees.
I could not see the sky or ground,
But smelt the plants that grew around,
I felt the wonders of the night:
A magic hidden when it's light.
I heard a shriek and wished for day,
Nocturnal beasts were hunting prey.
I felt the points of little swords,
And blindly ran from fairy hordes,
To stumble on a leprechaun.
Then gladly saw the glow of dawn.
I fled the perils of the night,
The dangers dreamlike when it's light.





Brother Sun Sister Moon
by Sarah Tindall

He makes the man take off his coat.
The north wind withdraws, defeated by his brilliance.
He is an arrogant god but we accept it as his due.
'Don't gaze at me or suffer blindness' he commands.
We offer up our blood sacrifice in spring
to ensure a fulsome harvest at the summer's end.
And in the days of plenty we give our unrestrained praise,
the grateful, shivering people of the earth.
But his gracious sister rules us with a gentler touch.
Revealing herself, shyly, peeping around the night in slivers
until she unveils the full glory of her light.
'Gaze on me, she whispers. Gaze your fill.
Swim in the silvered pool of Diana, Artemis, Luna.
Take my light into your soul and I will move the tides for you.'

I raise my face to the sun and his excellence,
Stretch like a cat and thank him without restraint.
But when the moon is full you'll find me at worship
Arms outstretched in ecstasy, howling like a wolf.

Fly, Bird of Innocence

by Gert W. Knop

The day's burden
is speechless.
Stars travel moonwards
through a silent sky.
Days burst in loneliness.
Fly, fly bird of innocence,
fly away with me
to far away worlds,
where clearest waters
fill the creeks
after a sudden rain.
Loneliness of the night,
world-whisper,
daydreams,
fragile as glacier-ice.
Fly, bird, fly
to far-away worlds
and take my dreams with you.
Your beat of wings
will ease the stroke of time



From Silence

by Gert W. Knop

From silence only a light survived.
Songs become silent.
And shadows are taking the lead.
Thoughts fall into silence,
like flowers in the field,
lost at the path,
tracks of a bird.
From silence only a light survived.
A shadow on the way,
a game in the leaves,
like a fine mirror.
From silence only a shadow survived,
from light only silence

Vespers on the Verges

by Annie Jenkin

Beneath its wispy blanket
the pond slowly wakes
still rocking sleepy weeds.
A palette of blue sky
and early morning sunlight,
stirs the lustre of trees –
igniting dew across fields.
In glistening scarlet masks
wearing white winged collars
and burnished gold waistcoats
pheasants linger over breakfast.
Robins and blackbirds headline
in solos of musical chorus.
Hedges spruce up their rows
whilst dandelions and daisies
openly parade on verges.
Like a priest awaiting his flock
a grey squirrel sits in a field
waiting for his apple.

Morning Visitor

by Annie Jenkin

In spring's quiet, he hops
through dew laden-grass.
He pauses in sunshine,
selecting a savoury tussock
then spies a tempting dandelion
delicately snipping the stalk.
His big button eyes,
black tipped ears and glossy fur -
radiates softness.
Sustained, he looks once more
then disappears into a thicket.



Orchard Waves

by Annie Jenkin

Sheep like a tide
drift in swirling pools
then rest beneath apple blossom
until the wave starts again.

Summer Musings

by Annie Jenkin

Here upon the rugged clifftops
there's beauty in isolation.
As June sun pulls at sea mist shrouds
a foghorn sounds a wake-up call
and sweet birdsong slips from wild gorse.
Down a jagged rock of blackened hue
the shore line glitters with beads, where
sand dippers and seagulls sunbathe.
Cormorants flitter across water
and shadows follow in their wake.
Seaweed caught by rippling currents
display iridescent patterns.
A lone swimmer cuts through calm sea
his isolation the same as me,
so twinned are we this summer's day
I wonder, what beauty does he see?



Corinna's Going a Maying *(5 pages)*
 by P. J. Richards.

She loved her husband, in her own way. He was young and handsome and faithful – all she required. The only cruel thing he had ever done was to tell her that he hated her favourite dress, but upon seeing her expression, he'd immediately rued his harsh words and bought her a new one. It was green silk brocade with leaves of silver thread stitched over the bodice; a flouncy thing, trimmed with ribbons and fine French lace. She never wore it. Her favourite dress was of simple black linen. Too plain, everyone said, for a woman as comely as Corinna.

Life was peaceful in their household, quiet with no children; and though the servants were discrete, she was aware that the village gossips had their own opinions on the subject. Her husband never mentioned it, not because he didn't want a child, she knew, but that he didn't want her to feel responsible. She was of course.

Sometimes when they sat together in the long evenings; she with her embroidery, he with his books, and the flames in the fireplace cast their fleeting jagged shadows around the walls, she would notice him glance up as if catching sight of something, whereupon she would lean across and stroke his cheek, whispering his name in a voice as honey sweet as the scent of the beeswax candles, to bring him back to her.

Her modest manner of dress and pious ways earned her a Puritan reputation despite her husband's loyalty to the throne. She kept her own council, as always, content that her influence reached far deeper than his politics. And when mutterings amongst his friends about the potential source of betrayal she posed, caused him anxiety – unspoken as always but she could tell – she charmed his misgivings away with pledges of steadfast devotion, soothing his furrowed brow with her cool fingers, easing him in the velvet warmth of their bedroom, until he forgot all words except hers.

She wore black to counter the fairness of her hair, to cast a sombre and chaste shadow over her conspicuous beauty. Whispers behind hands claimed it was an affectation, but she wore the widow's weeds in honour of her late husband and would not allow herself to be coaxed out of mourning, even though it was now almost seven years since her loss - and the same seven years since her subsequent wedding, for a young widowed heiress with a fine house and estate would always be an irresistible temptation.

On the few occasions when she wasn't at her husband's side she could be found in the church, her bowed head covered with a plain linen coif, hands clasped together so tightly in prayer that the knuckles stood out pale as the pearls around her slender neck. Sometimes she would shake, lost in a holy fervour, her beautiful face upraised, eyes showing only the whites, rosy lips soundlessly speaking words of no recognisable tongue. At these times the other parishioners, in respect of her obvious piety - and out of a tacit fear - left the surrounding carved pews empty. The priest tolerated her shivering form, alone in the seat belonging to her family name, but whenever the sun shone through the stained glass windows, and St Michael appeared to wield a lance of light to pin her down, there would be a strange shimmering over the unused places, and the dust motes in the air would part around shapes like small stooped shoulders and heads. Then the priest would cross himself and lean upon the great and reassuring Bible, and would not meet her eyes.

Respected but never liked, she held her position in that small domain, as a seed protected in her delicate hands, nurtured for her own benefit. Beyond, in her husband's turbulent kingdom, England was staggering towards civil war in a gathering storm of debts and obligations. Here in her realm, she prepared to pay what she owed.
*

When at last the seventh Winter died and the year turned, she felt a pang of regret. The price of love. Corinna caressed the thought with awe. The tide of Spring was surging over every patch of earth, heralded from countless throats; the birds seeming to sing out the blossom that garlanded the orchards and hedgerows. Even the most humble cottage gardens proffered their abundance like brimming treasure chests, and the rutted lanes were spiced with fragrant herbs.

Under her black dress she wore a shift of emerald green, vivid as the church windows, soft as the new leaves, hidden carefully beneath her skirts so no edge would be glimpsed as she walked along, singing softly.

*'Rise, and put on your foliage, and be seen,
To come forth, like the Springtime, fresh and green...'*

Her head was uncovered, the coif pushed back to lie across her shoulders, she plucked flowers from the hedges as she passed and twined them into her loose hair.

*'And sweet as Flora take no care, for jewels for your gown or hair.
Fear not, the leaves will strew, gems in abundance upon you...'*

The sunrise had transformed the dewdrops to glass, as if the sky had been crafted from a vaulted church window and then shattered into myriad tiny splinters. She smiled and closed her eyes, delighting in the warmth and the ruby light glowing through the blood within her eyelids. She unbuckled her shoes and cast them aside. Feathery grass closed over her feet, cool and damp, she clenched her toes until the mud soaked through the turf and her slim feet were stained brown, only her nails showing clean as small pink shells. She could feel May rising through the ground, swelling like an oncoming wave. Then a man's clear voice sang out over the birdsong:

*'Come, we'll abroad, and let's obey
The proclamation made for May,
And sin no more, as we have done, by staying,
But my Corinna, come, let's go a Maying.'*

Her husband.

Every Mayday he found her, out in the fields and woods by the dawn light, her black dress hitched up for running, legs bare and wet with dew, hair wild and wound with petals, chanting the song for which she was named. She reached out her hand and he took it, and they ran, leaping, laughing, singing together as best they could in breathless gasps.

*'Some have wept, and wooed, and plighted troth,
Many a green-gown has been given...'*

'Corinna!' He laughed with wonder, 'your shift – are you finally out of mourning?'

'For now.'

They trampled a wide dark trail through the silvered meadow, towards the hawthorn wood; first one leading then the other until they were spinning, arms linked, in a mad dance. When they reached the trees they fell, tangled together and giddy with delight. He made to kiss her, but she put a finger to his lips.

'Not yet, my love.' And she drew him further in.

Behind them in the meadow a line of thin trails followed, moving swift and straight as arrows. The trees closed around them as they walked deeper in, growing thicker and darker, the warm air perfumed by their blossom. At last she found a place that pleased her: a sunlit glade, draped with spangled silken webs, and at its centre a ring of boulders adorned with moss as deep and soft as featherdown. She led him into its heart. He smiled and drew her into an embrace. "Listen! You have silenced the birds with your beauty.'

'Then we shall sing for them.' She kissed him, and then they both took up the refrain in hushed, passionate tones.

*'Come, let us go, while we are in our prime.
And take the harmless folly of the time...'*

With his lips still on hers he caught a reflection in her eyes, a shape darting behind him, but she cupped his face and kept him from turning. The glade darkened as if a cloud had veiled the sun, he shivered and looked up - the sky was clear. His voice faltered to silence while she sang on.

*'Our life is short, and our days run
As fast away as does the sun...'*

Other voices joined hers, light and pure as birds'.

*'And as a vapour, or a drop of rain
Once lost, can ne'r be found again...'*

'Sing with your children, my love, they have waited so patiently these seven years.'

Now he dared not look behind him.

He felt small hands, cold and slimed with mud, catch hold of his, and tug insistently on the hem of his coat. He kept his fearful staring eyes on Corinna's face.

*'So when or you or I are made
A fable, song, or fleeting shade...'*

High voices, his hands pulled and clutched tight, he dared not, dared not look down.

*'All love, all liking, all delight
Lies drowned with us in endless night...'*

Corinna smiled. 'Seven beautiful babes, my love, all of them yours, each birthed here in these woods and swaddled in the snows of February.'

Corinna stooped, stroked her cupped hands through the moss growing on the stones, raised them and washed her face in the dew. Her skin shone, lustrous and perfect against the darkling glade. She closed her eyes and breathed in deeply as if pulling all the life of Spring deep inside her.

She unlaced her black linen bodice and tore away the skirts, shedding them to reveal the green gown beneath. It was the dress he had bought her, stripped of its ribbons and lace, the silver embroidery unpicked. She was all he could see - all he would ever see.

His May Queen.

She exulted in his enduring passion. Laughed with pure joy when the name she had chosen for herself was cried out on her husband's final breath, as he was pulled down into the yielding, devoted earth. For upon this day her love for him was as deep and true as his roots, as bountiful as the leaves he would grow for her, as sweet as the blossom he would bear.

And when the Maying was over and done; when the noonday sun had dried the dew and her tears, after her children were settled down safe in their earthen cots, and the last notes of her song were held; Corinna would lay one more stone within her circle, then wander homeward singing, to mend her beloved black gown.

And mourn her King.





SPOTLIGHT

Last month one of our team got the chance to interview Benjamin Serpell. Ben has contributed to the Anthologia in the past in both the Library and Death Editions. Ben has a new book out called Twin Brooks and from what I've read so far it is a must have for your indie author collection - Thom

The Big Three

What fostered your love for writing?

My love for writing grew out of my enjoyment of reading and my own creative drive. I first began writing as a way of forming lyrics to accompany my musical compositions, which were first fuelled by teenage angst but I later developed a folk/blues sound which in turn developed into my own unique style of Romantic poetry.



What influences your writing?

My writing is heavily influenced by what I read and by my own life experiences. I spend a lot of time in nature deconstructing our presence in the world, understanding creation and the truth of our transient existence. I've grown to find pleasure in simple things like wildflowers growing through the cracks in a pavement. Our world seems to be becoming endlessly smaller and designed to fit within a very narrow ideal, yet nature always finds a way of breaking through, showing its individuality, and breathing a little beauty into our day. I hope this is also apparent in my writing.

The majority of books I read are from the eighteen-hundred's or very late seventeen-hundred's, the first two waves of Romanticism. Many people get confused by the term Romanticism, it is basically a movement through Art and Literature against the Industrial Revolution and the view that centralisation (working in large factories and offices) is better than a rural existence. I think our current time period with the rapid growth of the internet and mobile devices has a lot of similarities, people can get lost in the search for progress and forget to enjoy the pleasantries of life.1

What are you working on at the moment?

My current project is inspired by the Greek myth of Alopé, something on which very little has been written, only fragments of the ancient story survive. I've always found Ancient Greek stories and mythology enjoyable and insightful. I'm writing it in the style of a prose poem but at the same time it is also a classic drama, with all the lines spoken by the cast of characters and no narration. Currently the writing is going rather slow as life has thrown many distractions (and delights) my way in the form of fatherhood, (continued...)



SPOTLIGHT

Continued...

but I recall reading once that Nick Cave stopped writing for two whole years due to the same circumstances. I've completed the first canto and have mapped out the story, so hopefully it will be finished in the new year.

The Scenario

After purchasing an unusual looking talisman from the Pannier Market you end up playing host to a dinner party of dead writers. Each of them has been summoned via the mystical trinket and you have their undivided attention for the whole evening. Who has been summoned? What do you talk about/do? And what is on the menu?

Immediately I'm thinking do I go for the rowdy hedonistic option or the sensible group to whom I'd hopefully owe a debt of intellectual advancement by the evenings end. I think I'd go sensible and summon Percy Bysshe Shelley, Victor Hugo and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, obvious choices I imagine. In such esteemed company the conversation would not doubt steer towards those three great vices of man: life, liberty and love. On the table there would be a good healthy selection of salads for Shelley and just the basic meat and potatoes for the rest of the party, accompanying the food would be a fine Madeira in a rather splendid crystal cut decanter. In a way much like every other evening in the Serpell household.

Ben has kindly let us include several of his poems from the new collection 'Twin Brooks', in this edition of Anthologia.. You can enjoy these poems over the next two pages. Ben's book is available to buy at Blend's Cafe on the Barbican (Plymouth,UK).



Fair Nature's Play

by Benjamin T. Serpell

O what is this? This beauteous wonder I spy,
Peeking from the bed; before my musing eye.
Violet is its colour, wineglass is its shape,
A charming little crocus; that this morning did awake.

Awakened by the chorus; of the blue-tits merry song,
Unfolding from its bud; as the welcome sun gazed on.
A bloom; fragile in the breeze, yet beautiful to view,
An infant of the soil; dabbed with morning dew.

Why hath my eye here fallen? Upon fair Nature's play,
Have I unknown escaped; the burdens of my day?
For true, a joy is born; by this most natural sight,
A violet crocus; unfurled, casting shadows in the light.

A Hundred Fragrant Bells

by Benjamin T. Serpell

A hundred fragrant bells, hyacinths in bloom,
Pinks coyly blushing till the curfew of the moon.
Scented spring has awoken, breathed its perfume to the air,
Drawn me from my study to my garden's swinging chair,
Where the rambling clematis has taken flower,
Twined me with its runners, and held captive for this hour.
Songsters share their hymns, their pastoral elegies,
And I in Eden; pen tales I know with never please.

A hundred fragrant bells, golden trumpets on parade,
Am I honestly to believe that in chaos all was made?
That there is no formula for the beauty about my eye,
That careless chemicals miscollide as triumphed lovers sigh?
Petals gently peel, tulips bloom their soft skinned pastel shades,
Droplets of dew glisten and sparkle amongst the grassy glades.
Out of chaos, Chaos! All was born,
No wonder Godless man lives so bitter and forlorn.



Could Flowers Be The Answer?

by Benjamin T. Serpell

Could flowers be the answer?
Could a bouquet fair and fragrant,
Scent and colour the verse
That I so long to pen?
Could a clutch of Nature's blooms
Rouse that smile of joy again?
Bring a crimson blush of colour,
To beauty's lovelorn cheek?
Could I have found the answer
For when a poet's pen falls weak?
Is not the truest verse of all
That, that Nature's tongue does speak?

I picture them being passed,
Into her gentle welcome hands,
With sparkles of surprise
Her youthful eyes aglow.
Unfolding the gifter's note
With a rush and wish to know,
Is it he? Is it he?
Come, come fair maid;
What other man of England,
Would send flowers to the sea!

White Violets

by Benjamin T. Serpell

My wild flowers so dear,
Soon to be but memories;
Of my boyhood eye.

Forgotten like the hedgerows
And the verges,
Once tended by those who smiled
As I passed by.

Strangers are to come,
Change is in the air,
Forget me not my violets;
I was an infant to your care.

My periwinkles, my pimpernels;
Farewell, farewell,
Forget me not my wild bluebells,
Farewell, farewell.

Where once I wandered as a child,
I fear I shall not tread again,
My boyhood has now faded,
Must my England fade the same?

A CLUSTERED CLUMP OF MUSHROOMS IN WISTMANS WOOD GIVES WILLIAM WORDSWORTH A MOMENT OF REFLECTION

by Barry M Wilson

And oh I was of course much younger then
When through the woods and valleys of my home
With rucksack packed and stout shoes I would roam
Far from the company of other men.

The company of woodlands made me wise
To the natural world: a clustered mushroom clump
Half-hid behind a grassed and mossy hump
Obscuring the view at first to casual eyes

Lighted on so unexpectedly:

A magic kingdom thrust up overnight
That set a bright flame burning that would be
A beacon to all nature set alight
Here at my feet, in front of me
In this secluded place, an awesome sight!

When first I made my way to Wistmans Wood
Not knowing either what it was or where,
A voice unheard guided my footsteps there
Until, entranced upon a ridge, I stood
Above a tinkling leat that cleft the moor,
And down whose hillside crept an ancient grove
Where strange misshapen druid oak trees strove
To root from rock and fill my soul with awe.

The world I carried with me at that time
Was born in those woods, nourished by its trees,
Nurtured by its rocks, which I would climb
To spy out from my summit distant seas
Which brought me, all untutored, to my prime.
Fed on its silences, its mysteries.



continued...

The smallest cobweb, acorn, leaf and fern
Scorched such reality into my soul
That fired my unquiet heart and made me whole,
Entire, complete, and able to discern
In that one blinding instant all the truth
Of majesty in miniature; oh, that day
Lives with me still though I am far away
In time and distance from my greening youth.

Its crisp carpet crackled under my feet,
It was early winter, leaves littering the ground
Hid holes where little animals could sleep,
Where shades of ancient worshippers once found
A sense of something far more vast and deep,
With mystery and magic all around

That fire still burns at threescore years and ten,
Although I was of course much younger then.

Madame chat

by Simon Travers

In a small French town,
I stopped the car for a cat
pedestrian using a zebra crossing,
unconsciously anthropomorphic,
abiding by the rules of the road.

I got out and said, ‘Madame chat,
You are formidable! Can I get a selfie?
Would you do that again
so that I could video you?
You could break the internet.’

I used the Doolittle app to
translate her native miaow.
I think she said, ‘Be it far,
a morning stretch, from me,
to break a tool that answers
children’s questions and finds
the homesick migrant’s
place on a plasma screen.
Do I have a right to
stop farmers receiving
instant weather reports
or mothers keeping just a
thumbprint’s distance from
their student sons?
Should I be involved in
preventing teenagers getting
hold of back catalogues you’ll
never find in the hypermarket?
Can these soft paws crush
a thousand poet’s dreams or
delete a million million
sentimental memes?’

She sat and licked her leg.
‘The internet’s a trust,’ she said
‘it’s always best unbroken.
Someone put that on my
facebook wall last week.’



Mirror owl

by Simon Travers

Mirror owl
in a house of mirrors,
shadow of the
girders and unlit corners.
In your calls
and your exhaustion,

repeatedly,
you show me up as
untamed wonder,
sentimental on a Tuesday,
swallowed whole,
hope thirsty half the time,

wary of the expert
who lifted up your corpse
that I was
much to scared to touch.
I doubt he’ll
use a knife and fork for lunch.

We have an Anthologia first! Below is Heather Grange's creative piece titled 'Outward Journey' but on the next page is a short play written by Heather.

We've never had a play before! - Thom



Outward Journey by Heather Grange

Scientists would call us molecules or particles. Where we come from, where we go, are two of life's mysteries. The dictionary says: fossil resin, colourless, odourless and secretions. We have an affinity with the bees, yellow like them, we attach ourselves quickly to our surroundings. What's in a word: to swoon, to seal, to light, death masks, association with the moon and, like the bees, short lived.

We're not ageist, racist or sexist and there's no telling why some people are more prone than others, we often run in families, is it due to genes, family or lifestyle, who knows? Our main functions are to troubleshoot, filter and protect, an on-going process, but when things go wrong the system gets overloaded, the trouble starts and the pressure builds up which can be followed by vertigo and deafness, but relief is at hand. The home-made remedies, quick fixes, even candles, come out of the cupboards. An age old problem: the Egyptians kept tiny instruments to help detach us, the monks in the Middle Ages concocted herbal medicines, but today there are chemical products on the market. Doctors give the same advice, while not life threatening, there's the potential for things to turn serious. We can change lives. They have the final word: When they say:

"Olive oil," we know our days are numbered.

Grown under the Italian sunshine, matured and bottled, the oil softens. It's followed by a jet of water or micro suction. The outward journey : we glide down and land in a metal dish, or on a soft cloth, the end of the journey, the beginning of another.

Above the Estuary (4 pages)

Heather Grange

CHARACTERS

TED

pilot and chief flying instructor

BERNARD

elderly man, has never flown in a light aircraft before

TIME

1970

PROPS

Head phones, a canister or urn with a top that can be removed. Inside there are some ashes, a handkerchief.

(BERNARD is sitting in the passenger seat in a light aircraft on the right hand side of TED, the chief flying instructor of a flying club, they both wear headphones. BERNARD is holding a canister and when they reach the estuary he will scatter the ashes of his nephew, PETER into the sky. PETER was a member of the flying club for many years)

BERNARD

I know I speak on behalf of the family, Ted, when I say how much we appreciate this.

TED

It's a privilege, it's what he wanted.

BERNARD

It must be fairly unusual?

TED

Not really, we are asked from time to time. It's the same as being buried at sea, no marked grave.

BERNARD

I'm doing this for my brother, well, for them both. I wouldn't refuse him anything. He'll find it very difficult, Peter was an only child, all his hopes and plans for the future, a daughter-in-law, grandchildren, dashed. (pause) Was it you who arranged for the slow fly past above the chapel last week?

TED

Yes, it was Jeremy in the club aircraft. We were all very fond of Peter. I feel for the family, but there's nothing anybody can do or say.

BERNARD

Just be there for them.

- TED Yes, some people do it over a long period of time, after the pilot's licence many of them want to make a career of it, either as an instructor or commercial pilot, that was Peter's dream.
- BERNARD He also wanted to settle down and have a family.
- TED He worked hard, studied, took one step at a time.
- BERNARD Think I'd prefer to be on the water or in a glider, that's another type of silence and freedom, to be driven by the wind has an appeal. Yes, I think sailing would be more to my taste.
- TED Contrary to what most people think, it's almost impossible to have a power failure in flight. You're probably more at risk at sea.
- (They both look down and ahead of them, TED points.)*
- BERNARD There's the pier.
- TED Over the estuary is probably a good place. D'you want to say a few words? I don't know if Peter was religious. I know a Minister came round to see him in St Marks but ..it wasn't for him..... if he had had more time he said.....there might have been something for him....perhaps he was being diplomatic, I don't know.
- (BERNARD takes off the top off the canister, opens a small window on his right, there's the sound of the wind. He tips the ashes out slowly over the side, he has a lump in his throat)*
- BERNARD Goodbye, dear Pete, you're making your final journey. You made a difference to so many people's lives. God bless.

(long pause, takes out his handkerchief, wipes his eyes, watches and waits then puts the top back on the canister, closes the window)

TED

His fabulous last flight! We'll head back now, his dad will be waiting. We must be grateful for the people we've known in this life. The Catholics have got it right, they celebrate a person's life. I shall always be glad I knew him.

BERNARD

It seems appropriate, doesn't it, he should end it here with wonderful views over the estuary through the clouds in full sunlight, so close and so far, where he wanted to be and where he often spent so much time? It's very peaceful, another world in the sky, it's where he belongs. (pause) We're all part of nature. (pause) Thank-you, again, Ted.

TED

It was his last wish, the last thing I could do for him. The dead are always with us.

(he turns the control column)

The End

©

A walk in the woods..

by Louisa Owen

A walk in the woods, join me if you wish
as I stroll by fountains in the garden.
Down a sweeping lawn, through a kissing gate.
I turn to wait
holding out my hand
for you to take,
as we enter into
cool, serene green.

A carpet of bluebells,
the flowers crushed beneath our passing feet
releasing their fragrance,
beguiling and sweet.
The scent blends, lingers
with pungent earth
fresh, youthful, floral.

A rustle in the undergrowth,
the scuttling of nature.
Birds overhead call out
chattering at the disturbance,
flitting around in abundance.
Their musical exuberance
Addictive.

Sunlight slants through the trees
shadows playing, changing.
A breeze whispers in otherwise limpid air,
lifting tendrils of hair,
cooling your skin.



Holy Nature

by Louisa Owen

Church pews, Cults,
Guilt bound dusty books
Uncomfortable Restrictive,
I won't be found
bowed or repentant.
Majestic Mountains are Nature's pulpit;
Ocean shores,
Wild waterfalls
there for all to marvel.
Winsome woodlands,
Birds and babbling brooks her glorious
choir.
Moody moors,
Mist vanished valleys and dale.
They're my kind of holy
deserving of devout worship.
Every creature and me forever faithful.

Natures Symphony

by Louisa Owen

A symphony
A lullaby.
Bird sing the chorus
angelic and sweet.
A lamb bleats
keeping up the beat,
a cry to his Mama,
her answer the key change
in the middle eight.
Wind and rippling streams
echo melody, harmony.
Behind it all
a faint percussive roll
of thunder.
Perfect acoustics.
This was the song played for me today
I kept it on repeat.



Pigeon Pie
by Carol Butson

The urban pigeon is a flying rat, ragged, dirty, dumb
Misshapen feet with ugly club claws, soot stained, missing legs,
Strewing the ground with noxious mess, slippery, rancid, stinking
Feral master of his kingdom, an aerial annoyance
Try not to show avian prejudice, try to tolerate this bird
But to call it a rat is an insult to rats, it's a down sized, cunning vulture

Contrast this urban vagabond to its handsome country cousin
Cut from a totally different cloth, though the same beneath the feathers
Like a country squire, the wood pigeon, with its cooing, haunting cry
Attractive, unless you are a farmer, tormented by this feathered foe
A skilful, brilliant raider of crops of every kind
Kale, corn, peas, swoops lightly down and strips them all in hours

Behind a hedge at dusk with loaded shot gun at the ready,
Waiting for our feathered friends, to blast them from the sky
Peppering the air with hot lead shot, but all to no avail
They fly off with a startled cry, then return when all is quiet
Wise, wary, devilish quarry, swooping, dipping on the wind
With one eye peeled for metallic glint on sun reflecting muzzle

Forget the ragged urban cur, with its tough and stringy meat
Shoot young birds at end of summer, not old battle hardened veterans
Wood pigeon is the bee's knees, the cat's whiskers, a gourmet delight
There's only one place for a wood pigeon, and that is in a pie
With flaky crust and steaming gravy, and a glass of foaming ale
There is no better feast than pigeon pie, with its plaintive, mournful coo

The Markswoman (3 pages)

by Z.M. Wise

Walks a dazzling game,
yet she speaks words of silence.

Hair of miniature spikes,
true beauty lies within.

Talks with the Inner Allies:
Alter Ego, Doppelganger, Psyche, Conscience, and Gut Feeling
about the prospect of a viricidal wipeout.
Manly massacre: a cry of warning!

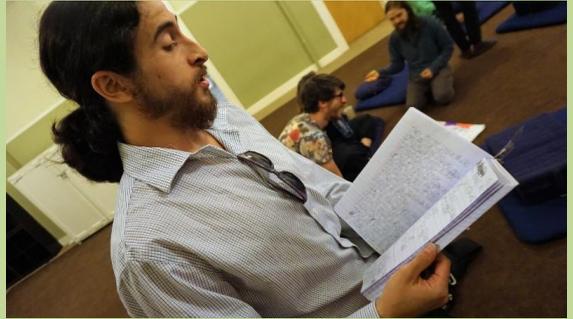
Voice taken in exchange for a
solemn vow to euthanize the Ones.

The Ones...
The Ones took it away!
They disposed of my purity and
buried it beneath the soil!
Oh, Goddess! Trauma mania!

“This is my family.
This is my gun.
I am imprisoned in this fortress
with nowhere to run.”

The only phobia is deep rooted from within
shivering aftermath,
a devolution of common practice.

Valor stems from her haunted phantoms,
slaying them number by number.



Seems like the other day since
innocence blanketed accidental
parented upbringing.

Their slips spoke stereotypical slander,
spoken salivating shit words,
pouring out of their obligated mouths.
“They told me to be a good little girl,
to remain as pure as an undersea pearl.”

Caress the loaded handle and
unleash rapid firepower beyond
that of an ordinary slinger.

Her garb is standard imitation leather,
but she feels naked without the
guided OM words and dog-faced platoon.

Like the material figure before her,
this wolf in sheep’s clothing sniffs
out unsuspecting culprits.

*Footsteps, dragging and crippled, lead to The Ones.
The Ones...
The Ones will pay for cruel, unjust and vile acts!*

Surrounding their soon-to-be-condemned haven,
we bird call outside.
Around the perimeter, our falsified
ornithological figures hover about.
Shadows: lifelike, in their eyes.

Curiosity becomes our bitch and we
use it for an advantageous action.
A necessary bolt of lightning!

May it strike these imbeciles thrice!
Taste the predetermined Nostradamus wrath of

The Double 4s and meet the retaliation of
those who you mortally traumatized!

Today ends your reign of misogynistic mistreatment!
Recognize and redeem no more, piddling worm monger!

“This is my self-owned divine rite!
This is my gun!
I’ll birth eight reformed civilizations
before this apocalyptic day is done!”

Thus spoke the words of a good little girl,
a markswoman in her own right, taming our homicidal world.

The Ginkgo Tree at Castle Cottage, PL7,
by Thea Bruten

November now,
and yet the Ginkgo tree
still clinging to its butter-yellow leaves -
those tiny fan-shaped ones
whose properties
are used in healing
by those who so believe;
its ancient recipes now introduced
into our modern medicines today -
but for me their beauty lies
in when they fall,
and carpet paths with gold
where squirrels play.
This one tall towering tree
near where I live
a rarity to treasure every day,
alas, no path of gold yet –
our seasons having gone
so far astray.



Apple Tree

by Nick Spargo

It was an old tree, an apple,
My grandfather had climbed it when he was a boy,
But the last storms were too much and it fell.

It looked so forlorn,
An old man fallen in the street,
Strength failed, unable to rise
As people hurry by indifferently.

Some friends suggested leaving it,
For sometimes branches root
And new trees grow from old,
But not this time,
The old tree was dead.

It lay for a year or more,
But, eventually it had to go.
So 'phone calls were made
And a man came to see the tree.
He had a countryman's weathered face and crinkled eyes,
He measured the tree with a wooden stick, and nodded, satisfied.
He used a handsaw,
Cutting away the branches,
And the trunk from the roots.

"What will you do with the wood?"
He straightened up and smiled,
"From the branches, I'll make fipple flutes,
Recorders you call 'em,
So children can make music."
His eyes ran up and down the trunk,
"From the trunk, furniture; perhaps a cradle.
A child that sleeps in apple wood is blessed,
Happy and lucky, successful in all they do."

continued...



“Are the roots no use?”
He smiled again,
“Cleaned up and polished,
And using the shape of the wood,
They’ll make a pedestal for a table,
Where meals can be eaten,
Home-made wine drunk,
And where friends can talk and laugh.”
He stretched, eyes on the horizon,
“Even the sawdust and shavings will be used,
My brother cures and smokes his own bacon,
The old-fashioned way, where nothing is wasted.”

The table he made, with its sculptured pedestal
Shines in the firelight,
The old tree still lives,
And my son sleeps in apple wood.

Oak

by Nick Spargo

Sometimes I just have to get away,
To dream of oak.
Once, in high Summer,
I went out on to Dartmoor,
To the woods overlooking Burrator.
Not the new plantations,
But the old woods.
The woods that are taking back
The bed of the old railway line.
Hawthorn, hazel, elm and oak.

I took nothing with me,
The bus was slow and hot
And I was impatient,
But it was worth it.

In the wood, cool and still.
Leaning back against the trunk,
Watching sunlight reflecting from water.
I slept the night secure and peaceful,
A sense of safety in my dreams.
Safe and strong as oak.

END OF FEATURE