



Editorial

Putting an issue together is a small act of arrangement. The manuscripts come in as separate weather systems: lyric, story, argument, tribute. An editor's job is not to force them into one climate. It is to let them sit close enough that a reader feels the pressure change from page to page. This quarter did most of that work on its own. Submissions arrived from Brazil, Canada, France, Greece, India, Lithuania, New Zealand, Russia, Serbia and elsewhere, and kept circling back to the same handful of questions: what a life is for, when success and happiness are not the same thing; what time does to a conscience; what we owe an earth that still shades us; and what a poem, a story or a critical essay can still legislate when public speech has shrunk to a password and a swipe.

Dr. Jernail S. Anand takes on the first of those questions directly. *Fighting Moral Inertia* reads less like a sermon against youth and more like a diagnosis of a society that has mistaken package, EMI and ritual for an ethical life. Happiness, he argues, is not the face of the IAS; kindness, in his account, is what finally makes a life 'worthy of the elements.' Raisa Melnikova picks up the same unease in a different key in *Movement in Time*. She moves through Zeno, Anaximander, Fromm, Schopenhauer, a retold parable of monks and machines, and lands on Dostoevsky's line about time as the relation of being to non-being. What survives that line is one question: have I done what was in my power before I am hidden?

Those two essays set the moral weather for the issue, and the poems that follow do not illustrate the argument so much as breathe the same air. Nature appears here as a speaking presence rather than merely as décor. J. Semmalar, Viji S., Sudha V., Florence Jeyaraaj, G. Suswara Deepika, Mercy Gnanabai and Dhivya Barathan write of nature as mother, rain as a gift and blessing, environmental suffering, and a child through whom the world seems to bloom again. J. Semmalar and Viji S. address Nature as a mother who gives, shelters and nurtures; Sudha V. presents rain as a gift from the sky and a blessing to the earth; Florence Jeyaraaj describes Mother Nature as threatened by pollution, deforestation and climate change; Mercy Gnanabai gives voice to the suffering of the Earth; and Dhivya Barathan connects the blooming of nature with the birth and presence of a child.

The poems also use particular images to make these concerns tangible: a cow and a fence, plastic used to poison and pollute Nature, trees, roots, branches, rain and the small details through which the natural world enters human experience. In *The Tree That Kept Growing*, Dr. A. Arun Daves develops the image of a tree that survives damage, continues to grow, is eventually cut down, and then appears again through a new shoot beside the old wall. The tree becomes closely connected with the narrator's own effort to change without allowing other people's behaviour to determine the person he becomes. The essay states this connection directly: becoming cruel simply because others have been cruel is not strength, and strength can sometimes be the quiet decision not to become "something ugly" because someone else has treated you badly. Later, the narrator recognises that he cannot control who praises, mocks or deceives him, but he can decide what their behaviour will make of him. The same movement from hurt towards continued growth can also be seen in *The Banyan's Advice* and *Like Sunrays in the Evening*, where the tree, forgiveness, and the persistence of something good within the self become recurring images.

Love and distance run alongside that weather. Eva Petropoulou Lianou's lyrics (pearl, oyster, hug, forgiveness, golden bridges) are not shy about longing. Photini Karamouzis Chalkias writes desire through a screen that delivers and infects in the same gesture. Lopamudra Mishra lets rain unspool a life for an afternoon. Taghrid Bou Merhi asks the stone, the wind, the sea, the body, time, the stars, death and love why none of them will explain themselves, and existence answers back 'as if I were the question, not the answer.' Lincoln Jaques hides out in cafés behind a language he cannot speak; Wolfgang B. Sperlich flies home from Shanghai's gleaming surface to 'stone-age Auckland.' Olga



Borisova's birds dream of sky and crumbs rather than winter. Subhransu Maitra finds a 'Kinnari Veena' behind museum glass and a twenty-three-century-old scratch of longing in a cave, then asks spring to coax him out of the city's bubble. Christina Wilson's *To Be Me*, and the longer *There Be Dragons*, take the issue inward: five selves, a pirate ship named *Light*, addiction charted like a route to hell and back. It is not one school of writing. Call it one season of attention.

In fiction, that attention turns into plot. Natalie Bisso's *Taciturnity* pares dialogue down to 'Passport.' 'Menu.' 'No.' The heat of an autumn city still comes through. Dr. S. Florence's *Confluence of Nature and Man* reads almost like a parable: five sons leave the forest for the refrigerated town and come back only when their parents no longer recognise them. Yuri Moskalenko's *Apple Tree, apple, and Lenchka* goes the other way: a winding, cursed, comic-tragic line of women running from hussar to library to a bundle left on a doorstep, until a boy is unwrapped and someone crosses herself. Olga Borisova's *The Role* is a dressing-room flash: an actress playing a poisoned wife watches her own husband dose the berry drink. *Fantasies* asks why we cannot fly, then knocks the roof off a supermarket to find out. The longest story here, Mahalakshmi V.'s *What We Choose to Keep*, belongs most clearly to a campus that still has a garden: a notice, a principal, a cow, an old register, a building that could be moved if anyone remembered that a plant cannot teach if nobody gets close enough to see it. Progress, the story suggests, does not have to start with empty land.

The essays that follow the fiction do not ease off; they simply switch instruments. Musharraf Ali's *Why Are Sexual Crimes Not Stopping?* is the most polemical piece we are printing this quarter, and readers will likely argue with what it says about the free market and the sex industry. That is fair: a journal claiming any real socio-cultural range cannot only run the poems that go down easy. Timothee Bordenave's note on solidified plastics is civic writing of a different kind: naïve, by his own admission, but practical too: waste melted down into something hard instead of left to outlast us. Between those two poles, the more reflective essays stay true to where the issue began: that enough and empty can coexist, and that gratitude does not cancel out the hollow.

There is a reason criticism sits toward the back of this issue. Robert Maddox-Harle's four papers, *Poets as Visionaries*, along with studies of Gopal Lahiri, Sunil Sharma and Vijay Kumar Roy, treat Indian English poetry as public art rather than private diary. Working through Shelley's recovered *Political Essay on the Existing State of Things*, Agnes Maddox in the 1880s, Lahiri's moon and slum boy, Sharma's stone-breaker eating chappati under a tamarind tree, and Roy's wounded oaks and 'modern temples of learning,' the argument comes down to this: poets remain unacknowledged legislators only if they actually accept the responsibility the title implies..

We close with a profile, not a verdict. *Beyond Borders* looks at why Maja Herman Sekulić continues to be read well beyond the circuits that overlook her at home: novels in five languages, poems in twenty-eight, a career that turned down both fashionable victimhood and fashionable attack. One does not have to accept every honour listed to take the piece's underlying point: that lasting work is measured by its life across languages, not by how much noise it makes locally.

If one sentence could stand over the whole quarter, it is not an editor's; it is the board under Mahalakshmi's old flowering tree: *We almost lost what had already grown here because we were thinking only about what we wanted to build*. That holds true for a garden, a marriage, a language flattened into one word, a planet used as a dump, a poet treated as décor, and a journal that could, if it hurried, print only what is convenient. This issue is our attempt to hold on to what had already grown here: lyric, story, quarrel, tribute, and to build alongside it instead of over it.



Thanks to the contributors, to the readers who will argue with them, and to the community that still believes a quarterly can be more than a filing cabinet. The next weather system is already forming. Until then, the pages are open.

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