

# Autumn Poetics

ISSUE 2 FALL 2022



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12.12.22



## Why I Never Want to Publish

by Lizet Ahearn



I have no desire to publish anything creative that I have written, whether that be past, present or future work. When I was in public school, everything I wrote was bad. Just flat out bad. Every essay or project that I wrote was clearly for an assignment where I had no creative freedom in the work I created. Everything had strict clear rubrics that I couldn't stray from. I hated everything I had written because it was purely academic work, never coming from a place of passion. Coming to Simmons, I was able to develop a passion for writing after taking a few writing courses, specifically non-fiction. Writing is the one place I can come to terms with some past events that never sat well with me.

Because everything I write is very personal, including this piece, I never want to publish what I write online or in some kind of magazine where anyone can read about vulnerable moments in my life. I feel this way because I'm afraid of being judged and I fear those that I wrote about would read my work. While I enjoy getting feedback from my professors and classmates, the thought of getting comments from random strangers on the internet terrifies me.

Ironically, when I was told I had to submit one of my pieces for a class magazine, I judged all my other pieces and decided that none of them were good enough to be published. I decided to publish this piece about not wanting to publish any of my work. I know I could have just picked one of my other pieces and heavily edited it to the point where it could be somewhat presentable, but nope. A girl who never wants to publish anything decides to publish the one piece she has criticizing the publication of her own work. So while people will likely see published research with my name attached to it, there will never be a published creative writing piece attached to my name. Or will there?

## Falls

by Mary May Bogue

Water falls from the sky  
And I grab your hand  
Pulling it to the door.  
We've always wanted to dance in the rain-  
The stove is on though  
So we can't enjoy the water falling now.

But water falls in the shower:  
We don't dance there.  
You hold me tight so I don't fall,  
Or I scream at you not to touch my hair  
    (I have to wash it my way)  
Or we take turns in the water-  
Rotating so we don't get cold  
As two hours pass and we talk  
About our lives,  
About us.

Water falls as I apologize  
For every time I make a mess  
And expected you to clean the counter,  
Expect you to hold me after I've hurt you  
    (Because I feel bad)  
And I ask you why you're with me?  
It doesn't make any sense.

And we dance-  
Inside, in the dark,  
There's no rain here.  
But you play the song you love,  
Sing it quietly in my ear,  
And we dance  
As water falls.

I love you  
My Niagara





## Mother's Nature

by Jess Buckley

Angry and anxious, I lay in my bed.  
Thunder strikes as big burly clouds bicker in the sky.  
They loom above me, far beyond my reach,  
Much like the bitter thoughts darting through my head.

The clouds clash into each other and spit out pellets of rain,  
Each drop landing with a forceful flick against my window.  
My mother lightly knocks on my bedroom door.  
Her brow is low and tightened.  
Concerned.

Rainwater on the roof drips slowly onto my window sill.  
She closes my door, exhales sharply from her nostrils,  
And pulls her lips down to form a small, sympathetic frown.  
A gust of stormy breeze brushes through a thick bush of rhododendrons outside,  
Releasing a gentle whoosh of peaceful passing.  
I feel my mother's fingers combing through my hair,  
Carefully untangling my apprehensions,  
Clearing the fog.

She hooks her fingers around my ears,  
Softly cupping my cheeks in her thumbs.  
The rumbles of thunder dissipate into calmness  
And I'm unsure if it is my mother's thin pajama sleeve,  
Or the blissfully falling rain,  
That is wiping my worries away.



## Nobody Likes November

by Asiyah Herrera

November; They say, its the month of death

Of endings.

The collapse of Life.

Beautiful black beating wings

A Murder of Crows,

Fall in swoops from branch to branch.

November is a bad omen.

But I was born on the very first day

Of this month, under the full hallow moon.

Born while everything was dying,

Death almost claimed me that day too.

But my blue grey body breathed life

My tiny lungs gulped air.

November could not kill me, so it cleansed me,

Once.

November seems like the beginning of a never-ending night

But I think November loves me.

She bathes me in life, and light and I see the beauty in the death

Of the mundane.

I know that November is full of ghosts,

November purges the world of evil

Chokes out the lies until all the remains is

The skeletal truth.

The way it choked me once, near to death until all that remain was a baby

that would become a girl and a girl that would become a woman whose

mouth deboned the world through words

Of truth.

November brings the ghosts of my ancestors to my doorstep

Knelt in solemn prayer.

I am fascinated with the cycle of life

And inevitably death. The mysteriousness of it.

The way parts of us die, and are reborn anew. The way I let go of corpses

And embrace ghosts.

Nobody likes November, they say the air tastes like

Death.

I say it tastes like the reminiscence of life.

## The Muse

by Natalie Johnson

I have had many childhood friends grow distant, few of whom I find myself missing. Chief among these key few, though, is The Muse. Though I didn't know her name back then, she once sat by me whenever I held a doll, a marker, or a pencil, guiding my fingers or my lips, depending on how I was telling the story. There were no boundaries, no story we couldn't come up with or create together. Over the course of a few years, more and more adults in my life prophesied my future as a brilliant author, who'd write the next *Harry Potter*—this influx of uninterrupted praise, however, peaked before I was twelve.

Gradually, I built a future for myself in my head, with the help of The Muse, whose name I eventually learned. I decided I might even skip college, and simply write and do little else after graduating high school. This was a secret between The Muse and me for some time until I did what seventh graders do, and told my parents and my teachers about these precious inklings. More and more adults worked to erase these mental notes, with many telling me it'd be such a shame to waste my smarts by not continuing my education. Since they continued to praise me, I took the adults' advice into account, deciding that I could begin my endless writing four years later than I'd previously thought—The Muse seemed to remain patient.

As I came closer to adulthood, those who were already there, and even certain peers of mine, became nitpickier. By fifteen, I'd read somewhere that *The New Yorker's* acceptance rate was well below 1%, and I'd discovered the starving artist trope. In the midst of my anxiety, surrounding dying of starvation without a hope of being remembered amongst other hypotheticals and realities in my life, The Muse slipped away, becoming a friend who visited on occasion rather than someone who lived by my side. To be clear, I don't blame or resent Her for this—rather, I applaud Her for spending Her energy on those who won't take Her for granted, or allow others to take Her place.

I try not to chase The Muse, for most beings who are chased will run, and most beings who run, run faster than me. Of course I want to be in Her presence again, and to reap the benefit that is Inspiration, but if I were to hunt Her I fear that She'd hide from me forever. As I stated, She does still visit me on occasion and She is always a delightful visitor. Unfortunately, She doesn't typically come when beckoned by a simple invitation either. Rather, these days, I must prove that I want Her with me, while respecting Her boundaries as I would in any other healthy friendship. In short, I sometimes must lure Her—I must keep myself well-groomed, and focused, and—above all else—patient. After all, She still comes and goes at Her own pace, and I must respect this. I haven't tried to lure Her into a cage, and I don't intend to. I want Her to remain fond of me. I'm also quite sure there's no material strong enough.



## Take Your Shot

by Winter Jones

Hours

Dwindling slowly.

The absence of graphite etching:  
gut-wrenching, turns her core.

Days

Everso gently walk away.

Daring to sneak a glance

Yet not even paying her any mind.

Weeks

Have passed by this point.

Not a single chip in that same tip.

(Have you forgotten your curdled coffee?)

Months

Here's a new cup, did you want cream?

Tried a change in scenery?

Have you found your muse?

Years of being stuck in the blues.

My dear, please just take your shot.

## Chapter Four

by Jane McNulty

Stare at a word long enough and it loses its meaning. Four. The tight ball of anger in her chest coalesced not at the sight of the word on the laptop screen but at the emptiness after it. The page was blank all summer despite the confident proclamations she made in the spring. The page remained vacant for probably over ninety days—she wasn't good with numbers. She was good with words. So much time had passed, though. Was she good with words anymore? If you lay down long enough, your muscles atrophy, she thought, composing the first half of a self-pitying analogy. That's what happened to my "talent."

The more logical side of her brain, the more self-compassionate side, intervened. Remove the quotes around the word talent. You have it. This side of her mind had been strengthened through weekly therapy, the one positive thing to come out of her summer. She felt a lump in her throat form at the thought of going back to college in a few days and lying to anyone polite enough to ask how her summer was.

The neighbor's dog barked and she stiffened. She felt her forehead crease as if she were in deep thought. It was all theater, of course. There was no audience out, no one watching her on the backyard couch. She noticed the cursor blinking on her laptop screen. It had been blinking in the same spot all summer while she cried over nothing, day after day.

The falling sun reflected off the pool. She watched the subtle movement of the water, trying to step out of her Doing Mind. She had a dozen worksheets on Doing and Being Mind this summer, trying to help herself like always.

The water flowed. The cursor blinked. There was no end to their motion. In her broken heart, that gratitude that undergirded her life was there. She was lucky to just be in this moment, to have the chance to express herself through written word—to breathe.

She knew there were an infinite amount of things bigger than her out there. She could feel that knowledge tapping at her skull like a fingertip, some higher power guiding her to look around. She was a



believer in the poetry of the world but she had lost her faith when May blurred into June and July hit like a ten-ton truck and August pulled the rug out from underneath her feet. A chill ran up her arm as the sun sank down further in the sky. The water would keep flowing. The cursor would keep blinking, even if she gave writing a try. They would keep going until the water was drained when she was back at school until the laptop got powered off. The power of belief was mysterious, a force greater than her moving her perpetually shaky fingertips to the keyboard.



## The Weather

by Sam Mills

Characters:

Wind,

Sun,

Rain,

Snow

(Sun and Rain sit on rocks at the top of a mountain, Sun never while Rain uncomfortably shifts around)

Rain: Where did Wind go?

Sun: They better not be out ruining the beautiful morning I shaped!

Rain: I'm sure the unexpected warmth worked well with humans' winter wardrobes.

Sun: They all love a good sunny day!

Rain: (Sarcastically) Of course.

Sun: I was listening into a conversation the other day where a mother got her whole family to go on a hike just because of the nice weather.

Rain: I've never liked hiking.

Sun: I think perhaps that's because you've never encountered dirt, just mud.

Rain: Mud is a vital part of photosynthesis.

Sun: And I am the main part of photosynthesis.

Rain: Yes, I know, you're The Sun and everyone loves you.

Sun: You sure have that right my rainy friend.

(Wind quickly enters stage right)

Wind: That got gusty!

Sun: Have you been meddling with my perfect day?!

Wind: Perfect! Ha! It needed more excitement. People we're lounging.

(Makes disgusted noise)

Sun: People like lounging!

Wind: People are bored! I just made two parents almost lose their stroller to the traffic in a gust! Now that's entertainment!

Sun: It's cruel! Wouldn't you say Rain?

Rain: I prefer to stay impartial.

Wind: (To Rain) Please, I've seen you laugh at people who accidentally sit in your puddles.

Sun: I'm sure that was an accident!

Wind: Come on, remember when we snuck out last week and started that hurricane.

Sun: (To Rain) That was you! I thought you said Wind did that on their own.

Rain: You can't really have a hurricane without rain.

Sun: I spent weeks shining on the streets to clear up that mess!

Wind: But isn't it hilarious when cars float around?

Sun: Look at you, with a continued lack of regard for all those people you hurt with those natural disasters!

Wind: I like to think of it as balancing out the population

Rain: That shouldn't be how we look at it. I mean people sitting on wet park benches or watching their napkins fly away may be funny, sure, because it's harmless fun. But hurricanes are not! And Sun you forget your track record isn't great right now either. I mean the drought in California is not just fun and games either! We should enjoy what we can but these are our tasks and we have to be gentle.

(Snow comes out from the door stage left clapping)

Snow: Nice speech Rain!

Rain: Thanks Snow! How was your hibernation?

Snow: Rudely interrupted by some loud argument. I agree with Rain if that wasn't already clear.

Sun: You two always gang up on us!

Wind: It's because their mother is Water.

Sun: It's that just such nepotism?

Wind: For real!

Sun: Want to go help some trees spread their seed around?

Wind: Sounds good to me!

Sun: (to Rain and Snow) Don't you two go anywhere!

(Sun and Wind exit stage right)

Snow: They are so dramatic!

## On my grandparents' house

by Elena Stratoberdha

A corkboard hangs on the vast wall facing your work desk. Filled with eccentric knick-knacks, you'll find taped-up dried lavender, vintage postcards from four states you've never visited, obscure and destroyed filmstrips (not the smelly kind), and an old pastel-colored photograph of your grandparents' house.

Dated to 1909, it frames a flat, beige home as the centerpiece. You can only see one corner of the house, the two-facing walls: the large horizontal wall with the thick turquoise front door and the smaller and narrow wall with a tiny square window. The home tries to shield itself from the close and surrounding olive and laurel trees with the low rooftop, but it can't escape their gentle touch and dancing shadows.

Glance away from this home that comfortably sits atop a hill, and you'll see the slow-moving clouds swimming in the pale blue sky of Pogradec. And slowly seeping into the edge of this photograph is none other than the deep and glistening Lake Ohrid that you're told not to bathe in. You don't mind this warning because you're distracted by the branches and leaves of the surrounding bushes.

You'll tread and skip over the lush grass with your scuffed cowboy boots because here it will always be a frisky and clear morning with no sign of snow or rain in sight. The grassroots only grow stronger and thicker so that your hand can grasp a handful from the ground and put them in your mouth, munching and munching until you'll spit it out. You'll meticulously pick away the few bits of grass stuck to your tongue.

Mami's voice chimes, and you'll turn your head to the house and see her signaling for you to come over. She is so young and charming, her bangs thick enough to cover her entire forehead. Her hair is longer and silkier, tied up in a high ponytail. You'll lazily pick yourself up from the ground and run to her. You instinctively hold her soft hand, and she guides you to the four-cornered brunch table under the laurel.

*Gjyshi* and *gjyshja* sit next to each other. *Gjyshja* is knitting *papuçe* that she'll make you wear on your small feet when the warm weather fades away. You know the weather here doesn't change but you promise her you'll still wear them. She smiles at you and fixes her comically large pink-rimmed glasses on her tiny nose. *Mami* will pour a glass of freshly squeezed oranges and give you a slice of *byrek* with spinach.

*Gjyshi* is reading today's newspaper, but you mischievously kick at his feet for attention. He'll put the newspaper down and begin a staring contest with you. You'll blink one second in, and he'll quickly return to his paper. You have the slight urge to ask him how he feels about being a doctor, how he learned six languages in two decades, and how he visited most of Europe—but you're afraid you'll break his concentration.

Now that you've traced just about every corner of this photograph, you'll stop staring because you realize there is nothing else in this photograph but a deserted home on an unnamed hill on a forgotten spring day. You'll realize this isn't a photograph of your maternal grandparents' house, but a manufactured postcard of John Singer Sargent's painting of a Greek home.

You've never met your *gjyshi*, and you'll never get to ask how he mastered so many languages in such a short amount of time. You've never visited this place before or ever held the smooth hand of your young *mami* with plump red cheeks and slightly crooked teeth. You don't own many photographs of *gjyshja*, and you'll try to search your memorabilia for any *papuçe* but it's already too late.

Distressed, you'll try to remember that one day in spring (or was it fall?) when you were seven, seated in the back of a near broken-down Benz (or Ford?) where *The Doors' Riders on the Storm* softly played in the background. You don't remember why you're here, but you desperately want this house to exist. You remember stepping out of the car and staring up the hill where a single house heroically battled the harsh winds of Pogradec. But you also remember that there were no living trees in sight, just a skeleton of a house, completely stripped of its door and window panes.

But you can't remember why you're here or who lived in this house, so you instead ask to go back to the car, where you'll continue playing with your teal-colored Gameboy Color that you stole from your cousin. You hear faint voices calling for you in the background, possibly for a group photograph, but you choose not to join. *You can't remember because you didn't care in the first place.*

Now you'll have to decide: what do you want to believe?



John Singer Sargent, *Corfu: Lights and Shadows*, 1909

## Endless Drizzle

by Iris Worrall

This is how it started:

You, standing with your arms wrapped around your chest, looking at me through your rain (not pouring though, never pouring, just an endless drizzle), looking at me through your rain-soaked hair. I think you said something, asked something - your lips moved, after all, but I did not hear.

This is how it ended:

You, standing there, your back turned to me, hair warm and dry from the sun (the drizzle was not so endless after all - it reached its deadline when we reached ours). I wanted to say something, to ask you to stay, but the words refused to come, and if your lips moved, I did not see.



