



the channel

a creative & critical writing and arts
magazine for the sussex community

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2022/2023

EDITOR'S NOTE

Five years ago, The Channel printed its very first edition, illuminating the experimental and innovative work Sussex has to share. Whilst we are navigating a very different and ever-changing world from the one five years ago, The Channel's ethos remains the same. We strive to showcase a multitude of visual and written media that challenges the status quo and allows fresh new artists a voice in print.

As we welcome The Channel's fifth birthday, we contemplate what has changed in such a short span of time. Whilst the world continues to rebuild itself after the pandemic, we still remain in a state of precarity, with many facing the hardships of the cost of living crisis, inaccessibility to housing, and the climate emergency. These struggles are faced alongside ongoing race, gender and class inequality. Many of these struggles are challenged through the strikes we have seen from public sector workers recently, in which hard-working people have come together to demand the rights they deserve through collective action. Anger and a refusal to be exploited by those in charge are balanced with solidarity, as we have seen personally with many students at Sussex supporting their striking faculty.

The pieces in this year's edition reflect such feelings of uncertainty, yet simultaneously taking ownership of inhabiting the in-between, trying to dissect the liminalities of new places, new relationships, and dismantling of social order. Much of the artwork and photography highlighted in this edition celebrates the community spirit of Brighton, and how so often we come together to find inspiration in the mundane. Anxieties that may arise are snatched away, and transformed into lucid creations

Whilst this last year has not been without its challenges, The Channel has evolved as a print magazine and arts collective. We began the year with an overwhelmingly successful open mic night, bringing people together to share their work. In the Autumn we were delighted to work with Cinecity Festival to review extraordinary films and publish a zine focusing on the magic of cinema. Later on, we collaboratively hosted several writing and zine-making workshops using archival material, intertwining past and present voices. We hope that by our Tenth birthday, we will have continued to connect students beyond the confines of the campus, to our local arts community.

We are delighted to present an edition full of poetry, artwork, photography and critical writing that captures both the struggle of contemporary living and the refusal to be beaten down by it. We rejoice in the vibrant nature of the Brighton and wider Sussex community that allows creative pursuits to flourish. We proudly leave you to peruse the pages of the Fifth edition of The Channel. As a student-led progressive arts and media magazine run from the University of Sussex, we aim to deliver a collection of visual and written work by and for the Sussex community, and beyond.

Abbie Ritch & Fiona Green, Co-Editors

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When we swam together

IZZY SCHULTE

We were summer babies,
Born on the hottest day in June.
Fresh newborn cries in the heat of afternoon
August twilights.
My hand around your little finger , my heart a
ladybird under your palm.
I irritate in the warmth, you cooled me down.
My dried posy of wildflowers hanging off your
bedroom window and the daisy you picked
always tucked behind my ear.
Forever we swim in the tide, the sky pink where
God forgot to separate his whites and reds.

After Rachel Whiteread

Ghost. By Patrick Wright

Like how voile serves as a lens

through which bare sycamores

in late afternoon sun bestow an image.

I recall in childhood the spectra

falling on enamel tubs,

the poignant one-off precision

of light on a wall.

I still find this sacred light is love

where love lands

on your altar.

Look closer, you say

don't falter, here is love.





POEM BY REBECCA LIN

When all is said and done, I seek to fill spaces. If solitude is empty, how rich will fullness be? Drench my glass and let it spill (over chipped edges) while I learn how to drink. Slow, slow, I sip, and we'll see.

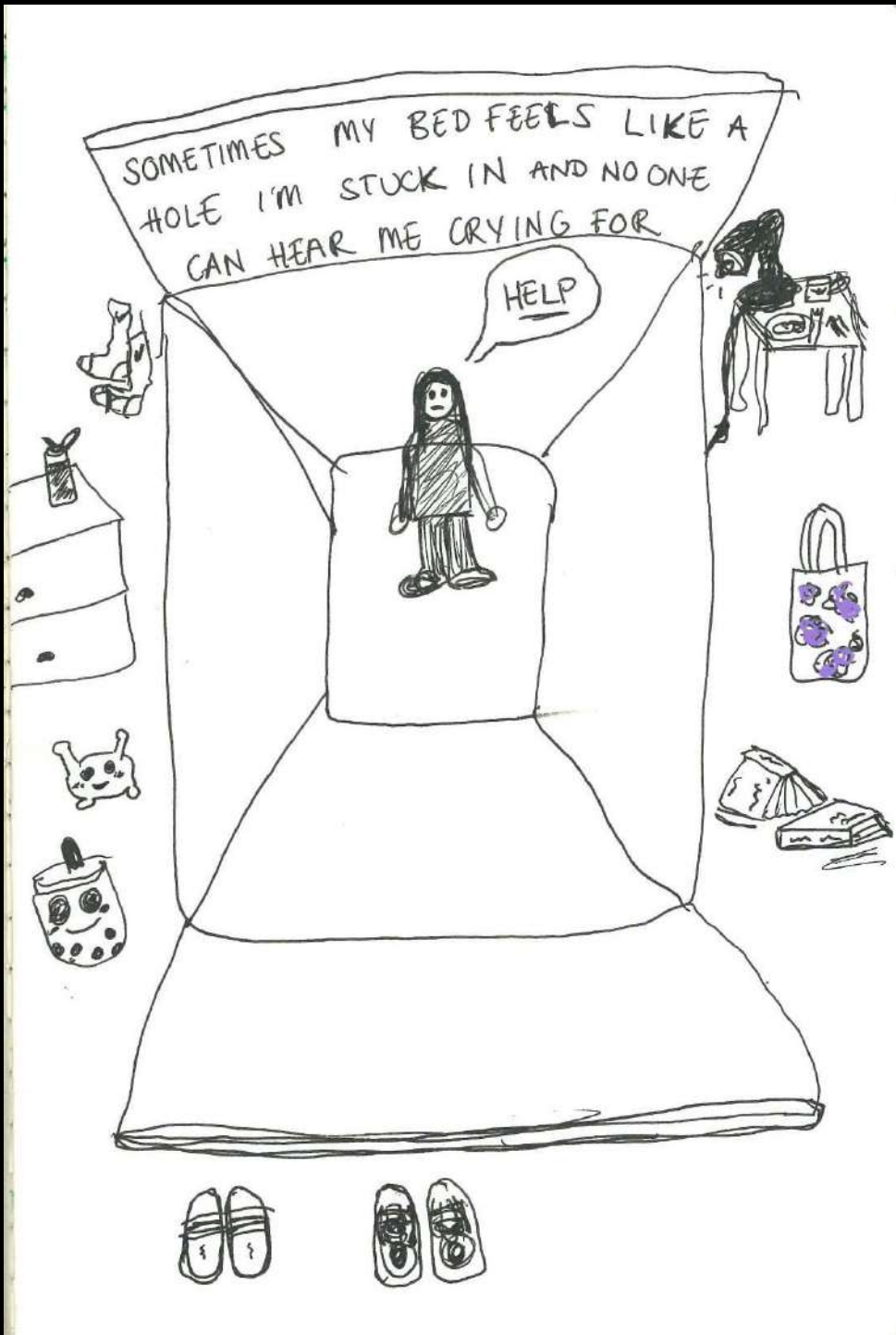
The black contours of me (shifting on flaking paint before that jolting flame) blur then sharpen, wary of unknown shapes. If we turn on the light, show me where the shadows go. And if the bulb falters or burns, will you remember when our darkness met?

When all is said and done, we were meant to spin webs; that's how it should have been. Mother ran out of silk and we scrambled to replenish her efforts. In rebuilding a home, we see threads that have come from within. Without.

And the frayed edges of my days forget how they ever intertwined once upon a time) when they are met with silence at midnight. To yearn for a voice means empty-stomached slumber, so I'll tell you when I dare break this fast.

When all is said and done, I seek to scale mountains. They say it's in the foothold but, still, I look up. My fingers are cold (my shoulders ache) but I don't think I'm ready to stop. Let me climb and fall (and slip and fall) - maybe one day I'll surrender the ropes.

If molten rock awaits, I'll welcome its treacle-glow, for I have endured the heat before. Or an alpine wood; let us bear witness to layers of frosted needles (dusty-teal needles) gain their balmy scent again. Plates collide and summits rise, when all is said and done.



I keep seeing foxes in the city and no, I don't
mean that in some daft poetic way but rather,

I am glad to be looking up again.
Even if it is to lock eyes with these sly, elusive
creatures.

And maybe there's some grand metaphor in there;
the insidious underbelly of the city and whatnot -
the devious wanderer meets an 'innocent' onlooker.

And maybe I've spent too long wondering what is
within and beneath and before and behind when
really,

the foxes have already moved past me.

An Ode to City Critters

by Hannah Cannon

4pm

By Sophie McMahon

I barely even knew you.
I could scarcely pick out the
sound of your voice in a
crowd, or the feeling of your
touch from another's.

But I fell in love with you.

A feeling akin to the sun
romancing the fine beads of
rain that cover my window
panes at 4pm.

There you stand, effortlessly
mosaicked of the pieces from
your past. Glued together at
just the right moment for the
sun to caress, to make you
flicker with a spark that
nobody else has.

I fell in love with every
stolen moment when the world
felt empty. And the calls for
a ceasefire quietened the
waging wars in my mind so
that all I heard was you.

You traced the movement of my
lips as they spelt the words
that you knew long before
they left my mouth.
And from then on,

I was yours.

LOOK AFTER YOURSELF...

the TH

FOCUS FOCUS FOCUS FOCUS FOCUS
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**UNDER
ATTACK**

watch out.

**WHOSE SIDE ARE
YOU ON ?**

If you're just the little guy (or gal) in the street you'll read the newspapers, watch T.V. and wonder how we got into this mess. After all, you've accepted wage restraint and all that so it can't be your fault. Like me you're probably more than a little confused and fed-up with it all.

A cry from the terraces.



artwork by Millie Raine

I'd just like to
do some- thing very
nasty to
THOUGHTLESS BASTARD
who STOLE OUR

RIGHTS

HOW
TO
COMPLAIN

**UNITE AND
FIGHT!**

**LOOK AFTER
YOUR UNION**

WHAT HAVE
WE DONE TO
DESERVE THIS

END
LOW
PAY

WOMEN
against
TORIES

RIGHTS



BY RU C.W.

my silver tongue

with half truth cast on your back

mottled sky buried with your malaise

back down your bashful claw

owning to inferiority

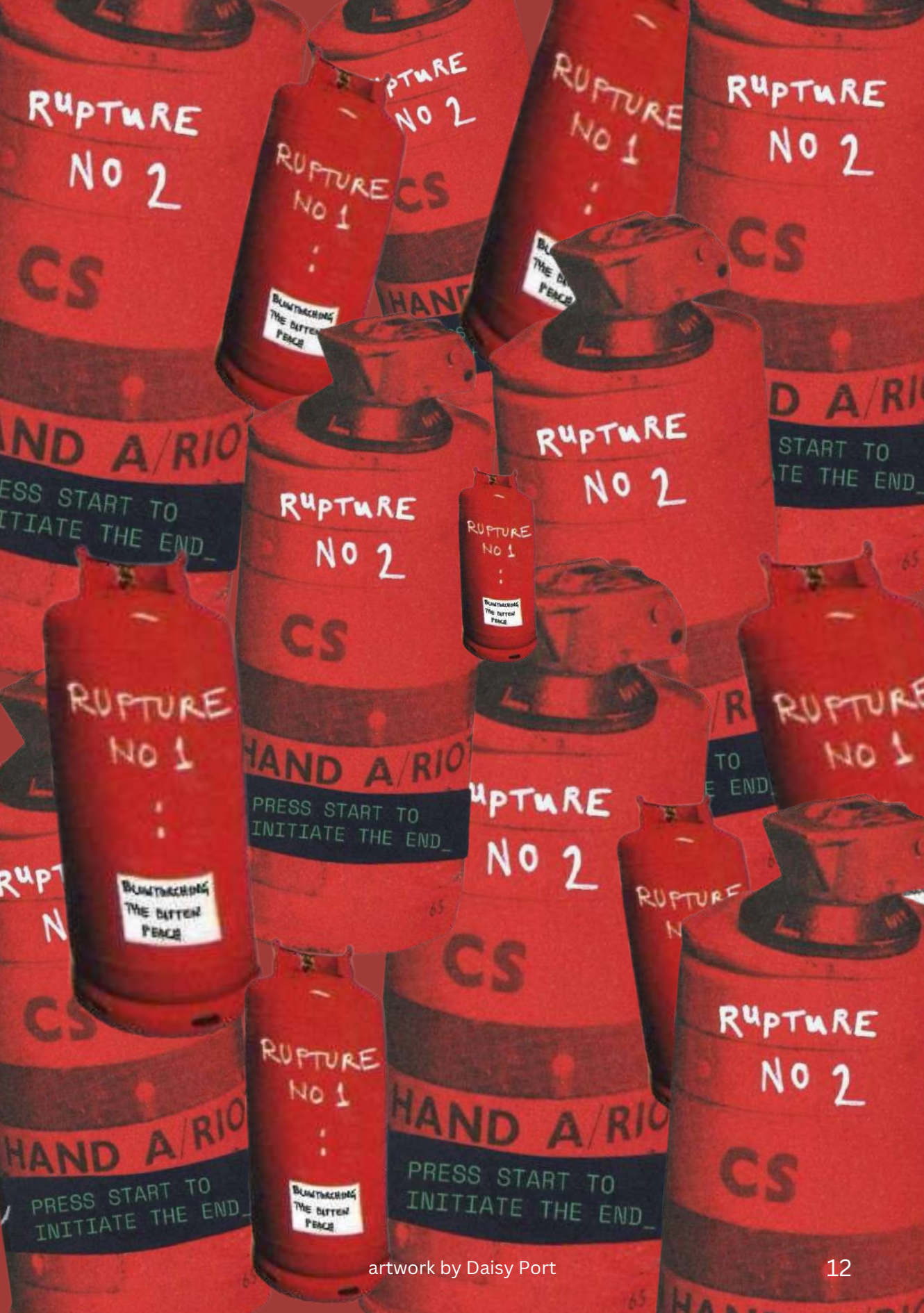
with prodigy grins in concerning sex

which is not understanding -

or being ambivalent or agnostic

i am gender agnostic if it showed itself to me

maybe i would believe



a little orange



Love is to the lost and broken what a glove is to a fist. Papering the blistered skin in something soft, something that feels like a home. Darling, you were like a daydream; a single flame in a starless sea. Light cannot exist without darkness, and our darkness danced together until a shadow formed against the backdrop of the sun.

Everybody takes; takes, takes, takes. But you took your time with me. I think you might have turned me into a peach: ripe and sweet and bold. Who cares if I am a little orange? Blue eyes, locked on mine. I don't remember when - I tend to lose track of time. I leapt through the blue-green haze and found a soul that didn't have a home, for you too had lost the licence to your fingers and your toes.

I like to think I taught you how to love, as you did me. Not each other, but the blanket of skin that draped around our bones.

I felt like a kid again. Yes Miss. No Miss. Five plus five equals ten. There is no recipe for love but surely if you go and dance in the sun you will learn not to fear the strength of your own spine. Even the cracks in the pavement turn into rivers of gold in the right light. My cracks ran a little deeper but they began to feel like a memory.

I thought we could stay like this forever; maybe I was foolish but then again love is not made for the wise. You could stay a little while longer and bring me eggs in the morning and I could fold your clothes.

No?

Okay.

Call me when you get this.

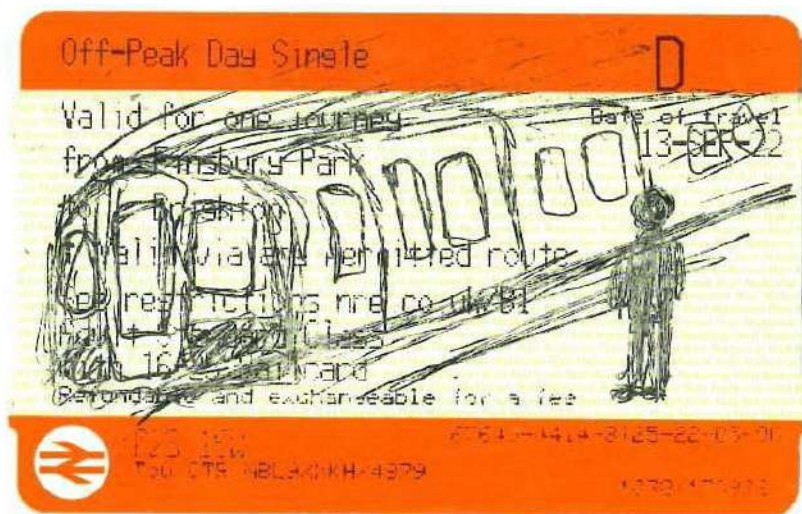
At least we learned to find ourselves before we lost each other.

by georgina wilson





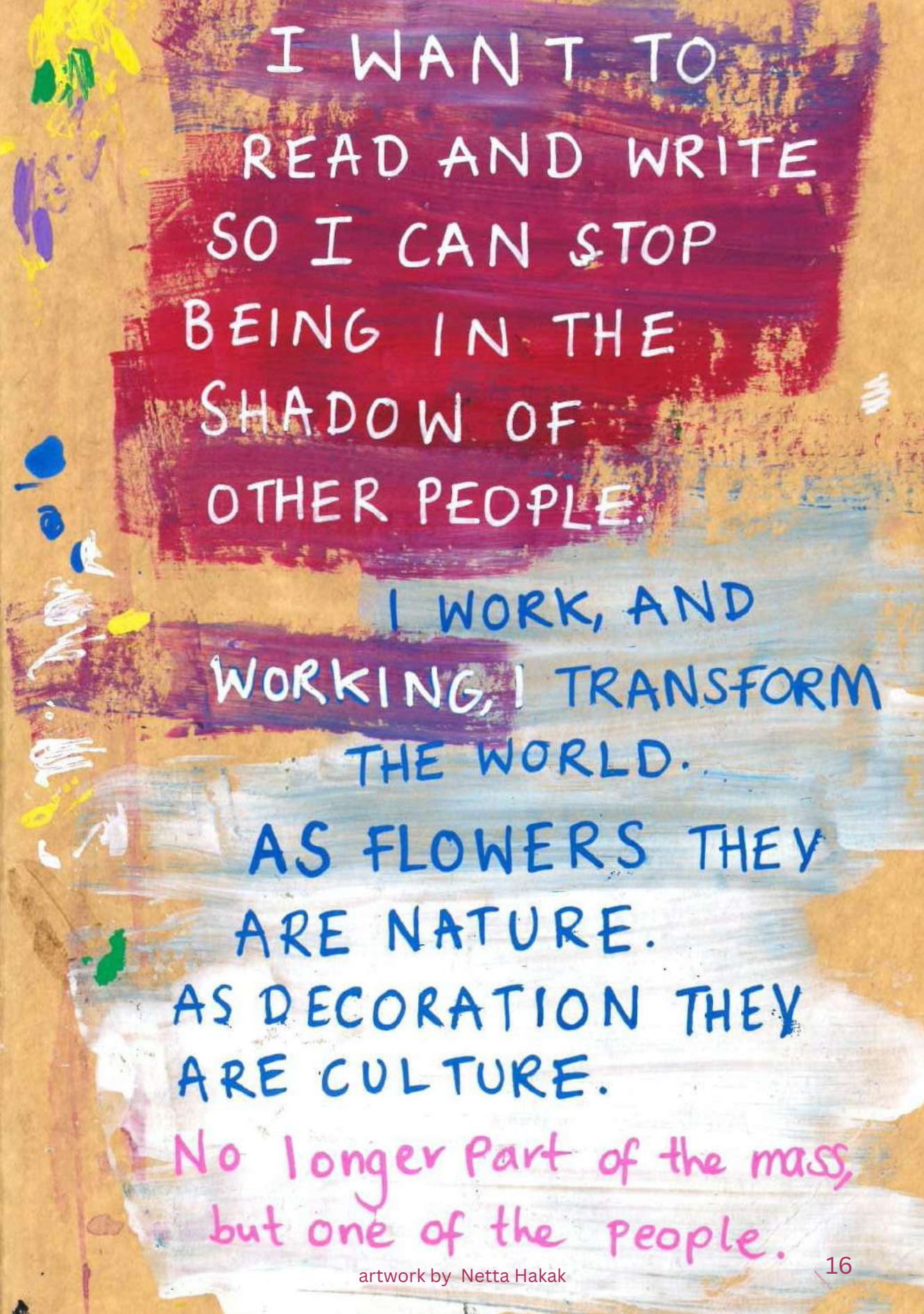
YOU RUINED THE NORTHERN LINE



EVERY
WEEKEND
I LET THE
NORTHERN
LINE
RUIN ME.

WHAT DID I EXPECT?

NOW I AM A PRODUCT
OF YOUR CREATION.



I WANT TO
READ AND WRITE
SO I CAN STOP
BEING IN THE
SHADOW OF
OTHER PEOPLE.

I WORK, AND
WORKING, I TRANSFORM
THE WORLD.

AS FLOWERS THEY
ARE NATURE.
AS DECORATION THEY
ARE CULTURE.

No longer part of the mass,
but one of the people.

TAKE A BREATH.



Brighton

UNIQUE FLOOR SURFACES
SNOOPERS ATTIC

THE PEOPLE

DOYLES

SNOOPERS ATTIC

photography by
Maisie Lee
Megan Carter
Tillie Lam

Dissociative **F**emini**S**m and the aesthetics of illness

"BABE, DO I LOOK HOT WHEN I CRY?"

I've been sitting on the edge of my bed, wrapped in a towel, smoking cigarette after cigarette, watching summer bugs fly around my room aimlessly. I'm engaged in behaviour that causes my self-esteem to balance on the edge, precariously, at all times. I'm putting my makeup on to go nowhere, wearing my nicest dresses to lounge around the house. I am reading, but not talking to anyone about the books. I narrate half-finished stories to myself but don't bother writing them down. It's my summer of rest and relaxation, my fleabag era! I always get extra depressed in Summer. I expect the miserableness and anxiety I experience in Winter to dissipate as the sun becomes warmer, but this rarely happens, and I become more miserable as I remember: the problem is not a lack of sun, but innate within me.

I've always had an uncomfortable awareness of watching myself in my worst moments. À la fleabag, I'm turning deadpan to the camera in my depressive moments, winking at my audience - hey, isn't this funny? I'm dissociating, in real life and online. Online, I am placing my selfhood through the lens of a commodified version of womanhood. There is comfort in complex, dislikable female figures, because it makes my own mental illness and dislikable traits feel more palatable. When I like a tweet that says 'having the feminine urge to get a lobotomy' I think to myself - god, yeah, that'd be nice, and I feel a warmth for the other 50k women who have thought the same. It's okay that I'm eating Aldi own brand sweets and two cigarettes for breakfast, lunch, and dinner; it's esoteric, it's cool, I'm just experiencing the feminine urge to self-destruct. I am detached yet firmly trapped in my body, looking at myself from the outside. I feel every uncomfortable squirm, but I feel it like you feel something brushing against your cheek while you sleep - scary, but only for the split second you are lucid before you fall back to sleep. Dissociative feminism has been described as a dark self awareness of female pain. It takes form mainly through memes and online content, utilising humour from a slight distance:

Perhaps it creates a community of women who feel like there are others who can understand their nihilistic feelings. Perhaps engaging in these forms of gendered stereotypes (the feminine urge to bash your head against the wall, for example) is a liberatory practise. I think both these things are true and untrue at the same time.

The feeling of self-estrangement and hyper self-awareness that I'm describing has been felt by women since the dawn of media consumption, and it has only been amplified by the internet. In the 1970s, in his seminal text *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger observes 'Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at.' Far before the dawn of the corners of the internet we all exist in, women were watching themselves exist. It's a feeling of dissociation, which I mean in a non-pathological or medical sense. Women step out of themselves, thinking – 'What type of woman am I being or not being? What does my existence look like from where they're standing?' The gaze that pervades our lives is only worsened by the experience of being a mad woman. Mentally ill women have always been romanticised. Think of an artistic representation of a mad woman from pretty much any point in history – messy hair, vacant eyes, white, probably in a flowing nightgown. This beautiful and tragic woman is alluring! The mad women of the 21st century does not exist in a vacuum, but has been influenced by the shadows of the doomed women of yesteryear: Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf, even Hamlet's Ophelia. The famous mad women to whom we owe so much to have become only that; their lives are overshadowed by their deaths, the full scope of their lives replaced by a romanticised image of mental illness. The full scope of being a mad woman has always been reduced, repackaged, and romanticised for palatable consumption by general society. The internet is aestheticising and repackaging mental illness at dizzying new speeds. When I chose the handle *hysterical666* for my social medias, it took me away from the reality of my illness to something that is simple, a catchy phrase, a fun little identity.





The past year has seen two pieces of media – Phoebe Waller-Bridge’s *Fleabag* and Ottessa Moshfegh’s *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* – explode in popularity. Despite good critical reception from both, in 2016 and 2018 respectively, the two pieces of media encapsulate something intrinsic to the experience of young women in the 2020s that has caused their popularity to skyrocket online. (Not to brag, but I did read *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* in 2018 before it became annoying online.) What is this mystery quality these pieces of media hold? Why are vast swathes of young women turning to these destructive, privileged, and troubled young women to pathologize their own pain? It is not a new phenomenon, but simply a contemporary way of women watching themselves exist. Cast your mind back to the golden era of Tumblr


in the mid 2010s. In my mind’s eye I see pages of Effy Stonem edits. Aesthetic pictures of Lana Del Rey records.

person behind
internet has
through
are
-nces
and
confu-
It’s

The odd copy of *Lolita* thrown in, so you know the person behind the picture is a complex, troubled woman. The long allowed a way for us to curate a version of media consumption; the type of women you depends on what you consume. Your experience become filtered through a variety of media, therefore your experience is less painful and sing. Consumption is a form of detachment.

a way of repurposing experience and pain, dissociating from the material reality of our lives and watching it through a warped aesthetic lens. Rayne Fisher-Quann’s essay *Standing on The Shoulders of Complex Female Characters* describes the aesthetics of consumption as:

“one girl on your tiktok feed might be a self-described joan didion/eve babitz/marlboro reds/straight-cut levis/fleabag girl (this means she has depression). another will call herself a babydoll dress/sylvia plath/red scare/miu miu/lana del rey girl (eating disorder), or a green juice/claw clip/emma chamberlain/yoga mat/podcast girl (different eating disorder).”

A woman with long brown hair and sunglasses is drinking from a glass bottle. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting. The text is overlaid on the top left of the image.

But as I've said, female detachment and the commodification of womanhood aren't new phenomena. But through cultivated Internet personalities that are preoccupied with the dark side of female existence (or being 'eminent' in your self destruction as this creator has so articulately put it) we are losing the bigger picture. To be a mad woman in any form is to battle patriarchal pressures and assumptions.

If you're depressed and you can't wash your hair, that experience is amplified by an expectation of feminine beauty; an unwashed woman is somehow worse than an unwashed man. When we reduce our lives down to quirky Tiktoks of novels and an 8 quid bottle of Smirnoff, we are placing the complexity of experience directly on ourselves. There is no consideration of the presence of race, class, or patriarchy in our lives. I don't doubt that repackaging your existence into an intensely online personality is a form of dissociation, a coping mechanism for the pressures of womanhood.

We all do it, to varying extents. It's appealing to be in your fleabag era, or to be in your summer of rest and relaxation, to exist as your most unwell self and to wallow in it. But, what is missing in the online aesthetics that centre media like *Fleabag* and *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* is that the characters recover. For most of what we see, they are not nice people. They are too focused on their interior experience, they are cruel and lacking empathy. But they don't stay this way forever.

They get better, they attempt to make amends with themselves or others. We are not without responsibility. Dissociation cannot last forever, and it certainly doesn't help us reach a feminist future. We are all products of our social-cultural environment, and we also perpetuate this environment through the discourses we engage in. If we are treating our self-destruction, our illnesses, the difficulties of being a young woman as easily consumable content for online identities, the complexities of these issues becomes lost. Dissociative feminism and illness-as-aesthetic helps no-one achieve a better material reality, but it certainly does help the agents of patriarchy perpetuate neatly consumable forms of womanhood.

BY NYA FURBER



DO NOT LOOK AT THE MOON



artwork by Will Brockbank



WAXES

WANING WOMB

BY MAISIE LEE

Halt please a moment to remember this dream I'm having,
It's the only place I seem to know where I'm going and
Always seems new.

Sure-footed imaginings furnished in symbolic expanses
Unburdened at the sea bed.

Just one more taste of dependence before

I'm extracted,

Naked into the waking,

Eyeballs

So utterly detached they hatch

In the winter-

Made my mother a stranger -

And that's the crux of it:

I can't breathe underwater,

Choked by the vision of an ageing

Silenced figure treading the turning tide;

Stoney-faced fFutility meeting me at the surface - I brace

Against the shedding cliffs, intimately annihilating

'til light

waxes across her pillow;

She's a play of both halves

Pushing

Pulling

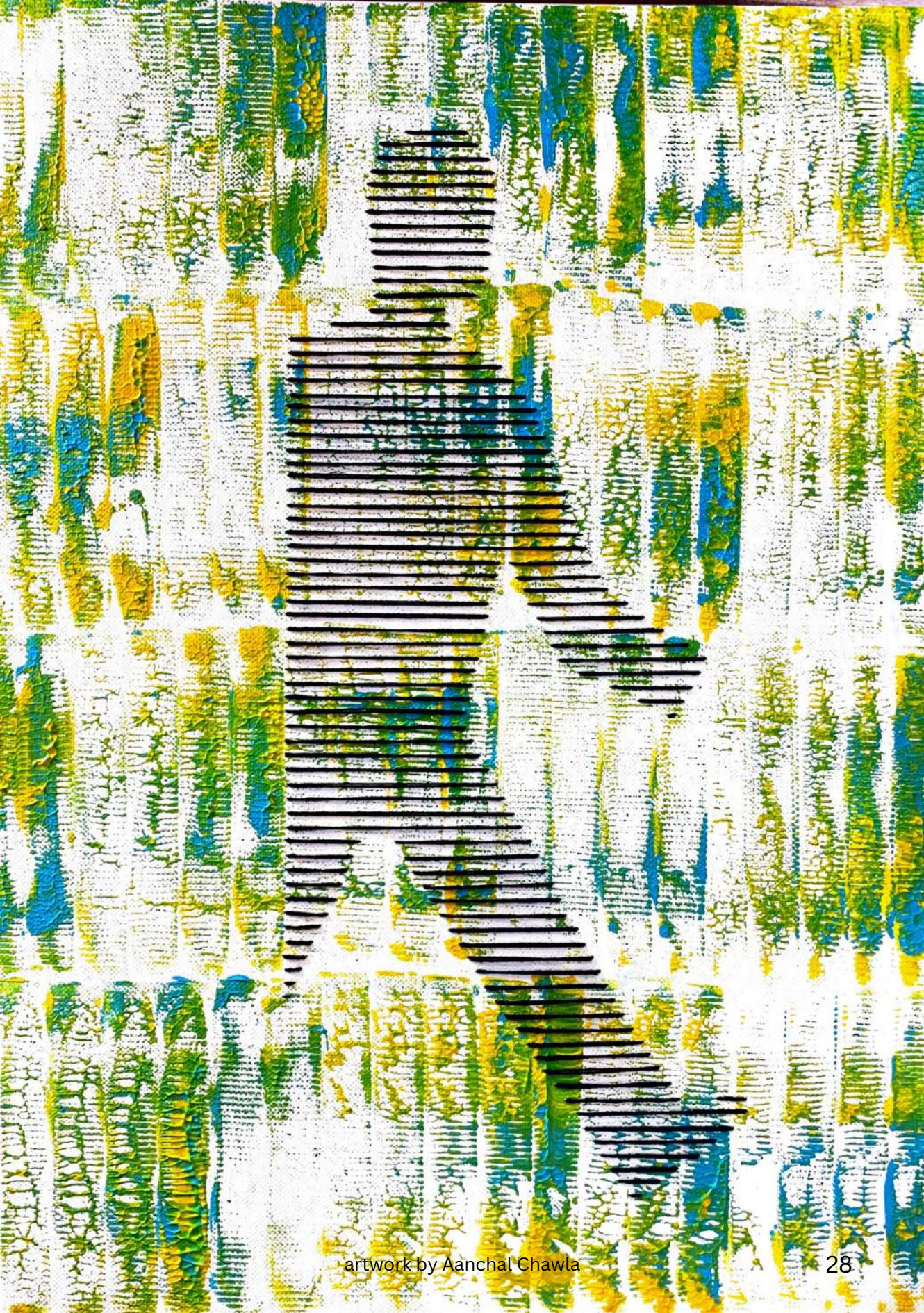
Pushing a heart,

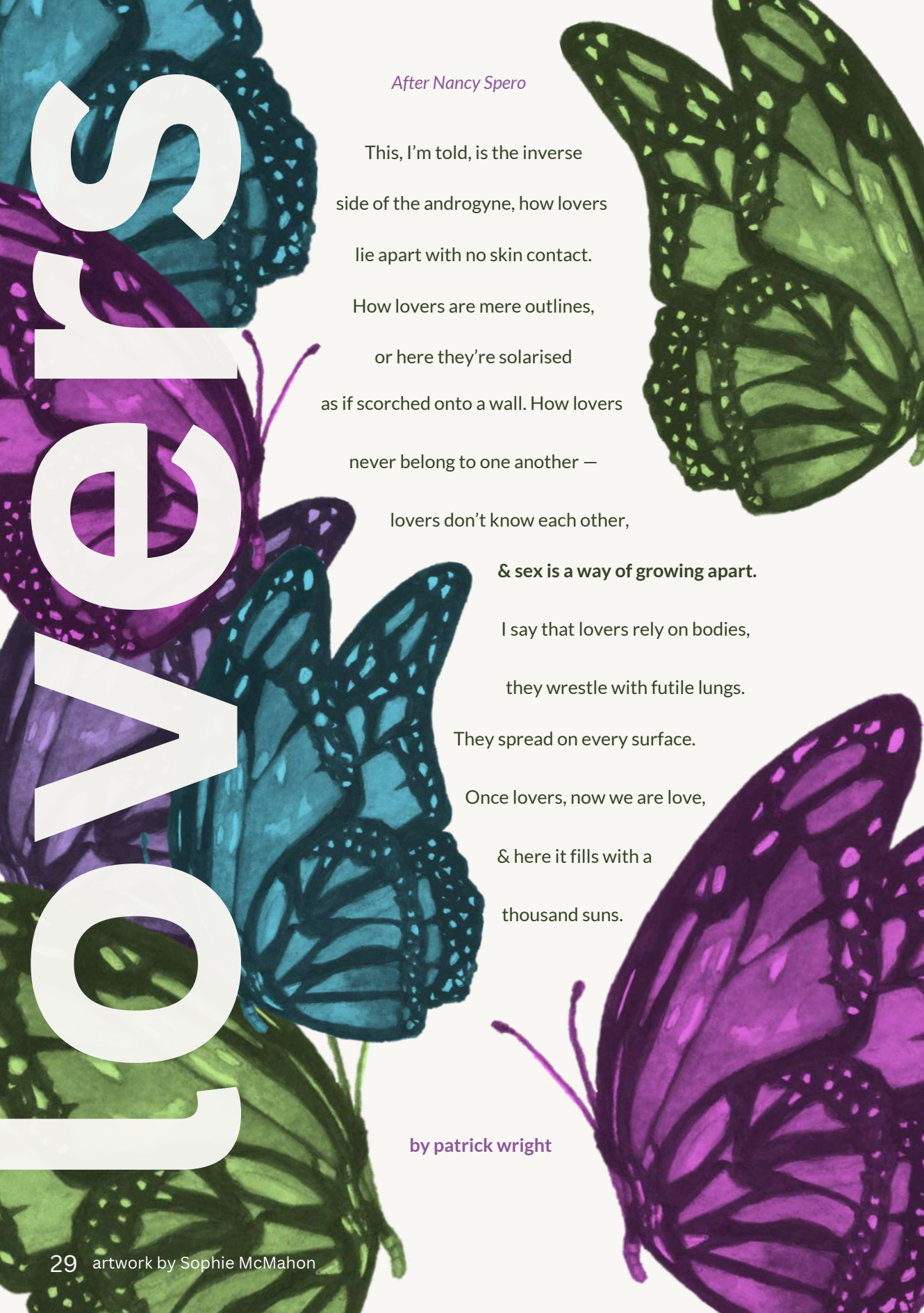
So readily destroyed

To be full again.









After Nancy Spero

This, I'm told, is the inverse
side of the androgyne, how lovers
lie apart with no skin contact.
How lovers are mere outlines,
or here they're solarised
as if scorched onto a wall. How lovers
never belong to one another —

lovers don't know each other,

& sex is a way of growing apart.

I say that lovers rely on bodies,
they wrestle with futile lungs.

They spread on every surface.

Once lovers, now we are love,

& here it fills with a
thousand suns.

by *patrick wright*

artwork by Netta Hakak



figure it out when
I see u.
hiding in my sleep



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Rebecca Lin
Georgina Wilson
Izzy Schulte
Sophie McMahon
Nya Furber
Hannah Cannon
Patrick Wright

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