



*March 2024*  
ISSUE TEN

*Ed. Inua Ellams*

MEGAN MCKIE-SMITH ➤ ABBIE DAY  
LEIGH BRADY ➤ IAIN BLEAKLEY  
SARAH WALLIS ➤ RAFAEL MENDES  
DEBORAH FINDING ➤ TRACEY MCEVOY  
ANNA SHELTON ➤ ADDISON WILLIAMS  
P BURTON-MORGAN ➤ JILL ABRAM  
LOU HILL ➤ ANNA MINDEL CRAWFORD  
GWEN SAYERS ➤ EMMA LARA JONES  
COLETTE COLFER ➤ HEN ST LEGER  
ERIN BRADY ➤ IAN IRWIN ➤ EVE ELLIS

PROPEL MAGAZINE  
ISSUE TEN  
MARCH 2024

—  
EDITOR — INUA ELLAMS

—  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF — ANTHONY ANAXAGOROU  
MANAGING EDITOR — PATRICIA FERGUSON  
PRODUCER — TOM MACANDREW

PROPEL MAGAZINE IS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE SUPPORT OF OUR PARTNERS:



BRADFORD LITERATURE FESTIVAL  
INQUE MAGAZINE  
LEDBURY POETRY CRITICS  
OLD POSSUM'S PRACTICAL TRUST  
PORT MAGAZINE

—  
PROPEL MAGAZINE LIMITED  
PO BOX 78744  
LONDON  
N11 9FG

© 2024

WWW.PROPELMAGAZINE.CO.UK

# CONTENTS

Introduction by Editor Inua Ellams	1
	
When I woke up this morning I tripped over Dad <i>Anna Shelton</i>	3
Easter Leave, <i>Megan McKie-Smith</i>	4
blue corn moon, <i>Erin Brady</i>	6
Ode to Pierre, <i>Iain Bleakley</i>	7
White Bread White Swans, <i>Lou Hill</i>	8
because it's mud season at the girls' facility, <i>Eve Ellis</i>	10
Old Simeon the Stylite, <i>Colette Colfer</i>	11
To the Blackened Field, <i>Tracey McEvoy</i>	13
Google Maps is not your friend, <i>Abbie Day</i>	15
Self-Portrait as a poem edited by Francis Bacon, <i>Addison Williams</i>	16
Self-Portrait as a Failed Exorcism, <i>Deborah Finding</i>	18
Hear, <i>Anna Mindel Crawford</i>	20
under, <i>Rafael Mendes</i>	22
Come, they told me parumpapumpum, <i>P Burton-Morgan</i>	23
Cassandra, <i>Jill Abram</i>	24
Trainee Teacher, <i>Emma Lara Jones</i>	25
maybe the sun, <i>Ian Irwin</i>	26
Tidal Waves, <i>Leigh Brady</i>	28
The Vogelherd Horse Begins His Dreaming Race Through Time, <i>Sarah Wallis</i>	29
the statue, <i>Hen St Leger</i>	30
	
Contributors	31



## INTRODUCTION

I think a lot about censorship. I filter my thoughts through multiple lenses: as a man, a black man, an immigrant, a global southerner and an artist. I also think about the privilege I have as a cross-disciplinary artist: a poet, a performer, a playwright, a screen writer, an essayist, a graphic designer and an educator. I think about those who censor, have censored, or are trying to censor what I create in such spaces, and how then I fight; what it is to tuck in my elbows, push in, then spread them out. I also think about how I find permission — what I tell myself — to legitimise my right to fight, and how then I articulate this to those I hope will fight alongside me.

I think then about poetry, how it is the safest space in which I can fight — where I am often fighting myself — and whether I win or lose, I win and I lose. So it is for all poets and all poems, each one is this: a record of a battle, an internal struggle with oneself, and we come to the poem to relive the writer's struggle, and inhabit its births and deaths with our own humanity, that its record might continue living through us.

When I was initially asked to edit Issue 10 of *Propel*, a magazine I have long admired, my initial response was to censor myself from the role: 'No Inua, you've barely written poetry, for years now. You are not discerning enough to do this.' But a day later, the permission came: 'Perhaps this is exactly why you should edit this issue, you will come to reading open, and you might find the spark to write again' and so I began reading.

I expected three hundred or so submissions, but had failed to register that each could contain multiple entries. Instead I found thousands of poems, which amplified the anxiety-inducing task of selecting only 20. My initial selection was 50 or so poems, and to pare them down I thought, again, of censorship and permission.

In my selection you will find — in Anna Shelton’s poem, the permission to illuminate a haunting, in Erin’s ‘blue corn moon’, the permission to discuss colonialism, in Lou’s ‘White Bread White Swans’, the permission to dramatise classism, in Colette’s ‘Old Simeon The Stylite’, the permission to deconstruct deification... the list of brave, exciting, talented, stretches to another 16 writers, and 16 poems.

I hope in reading them all, you find the permission to speak, to write, and to share, as I have.

— Inua Ellams  
March 2024

# WHEN I WOKE UP THIS MORNING I TRIPPED OVER DAD

Anna Shelton

an improvement, since for weeks I've been unable to sleep  
with him under my pillow, elbows jutting at odd angles,  
purpling feet sticking straight out the side.  
I showered without him, but stumbled over him on the stairs  
going to breakfast; he startled me as I stepped outside,  
sat with me as I listened to birds in the garden,  
interrupted my train of thought in class. At the table he blocked me,  
head down on the hard wood, that final unrelenting view.  
He choked me on my food at dinnertime.  
When I tried to relax and lean back into an armchair  
he was there behind me, making me uncomfortable.  
Ever-present dad, suddenly peripheral,  
my body doesn't want to leave you behind.

## EASTER LEAVE

Megan McKie-Smith

I bend my neck back. Sixty  
percent Afghan whisky  
now in my blood, I'm sure  
there's a door somewhere  
in the sky I can slip through.

Down here, on earth  
in his nan's old deck chairs  
their floral padding and rust  
it's tender silence, until

he says the most beautiful  
stars he's ever seen were over

Helmand Province. This same sky  
these same stars, pulled  
over an ant hill

in the desert where beauty  
was never expected. I think of  
him all fatigues and testosterone

wonder if he told another man to look  
up or kept them all to himself.

He closes his eyes  
the taught cord of him now slack  
he unfurls from man to boy.  
Someone has cowered at the sight of him.

Under the stars, burning  
on a salt night in April, he lifts an earwig  
out of the fire, his shovel  
hand and a twig. He places



its body on a tall blade of grass  
and asks me to cut the onions  
for dinner. For a moment, he looks  
like a person who could choose  
his own clothes for a change.  
The oven clock flashes 12.00, 12.00  
12.00. I beg for its dumb repetition  
to live, suspended with this gentle  
man a while longer  
before his knots begin to tighten  
all over again.

# BLUE CORN MOON

Erin Brady

*I feel somewhat guilty to have to tell you that the phrase 'blue corn moon' has no actual meaning in Indian lore.*

—*Pocahontas* lyricist Stephen Schwartz

she's at one with nature & the wind has colours. we can see them swirling as we try to get our bearings. we stare at her. we've come for entertainment. little white girls with beads & feathers in our hair, dressing in her clothes & howling till our lungs are raw. our mothers told us we were one-sixteenth native american once. the beads are plastic, the feathers crooked. the real princess may have died of smallpox, but we want our endings shiny, our moccasins in patent leather, our moons packaged like tortilla chips, the dreamcatchers we've stolen filtering out all nightmares.

## ODE TO PIERRE

Iain Bleakley

I smoked a puff of Pierre's joint on top of the Unité D'habitation. I don't really smoke but I wanted to say I had a joint on the rooftop of Corbusier, looking out over the sea and the mountains, down at the crow that kept flying and landing photogenically on that iconic concrete staircase; *crowbusier*. Pierre's friend curated an art exhibition here and the collective all got high and scribbled on scraps of paper and said 'bleed the rich' and sold them for 400 Euros a pop and Pierre confronted them and said 'zis is not cool zis is not what art iz for' and told them they should do it proper not like that bullshit. From Corbusier we got in Pierre's car stocked up on baguettes and cheese and octopus from the big supermarché where the checkouts were so slow we thought we would never leave. We got to Les Calanques via a treacherous road in this little Toyota which made a *calonk* noise every time we went over a bump. We got out of the car whenever there was a speed bump and decided Pierre should put more air in the tyres. Pierre is Parisian but you'd never know it in the way he scurries around the cliffs. And he's gay though you'd never figure that out either unless he told you or you said something homophobic in his presence. In which case, according to his stories, there are a range of outcomes from a warning to a slap to getting hit by a rock in the back of your skull. But that was Paris Pierre, this is Marseille Pierre where he visits Corbusier in the mornings and dives into the med in his red speedos after lunch using a special diving technique he learned where he punches the water as he hits it to go deeper. During lockdown he'd swim like an eel and dance on the edge of this cliff where the rocks flatten out. Young wild boar would come there looking for a drink and he'd share his water with them.

# WHITE BREAD WHITE SWANS

Lou Hill

we're eating white bread in the sun  
behind the allotments  
by the side of the dirty little pond  
birthed by Banbury Reservoir  
now the swans come  
past the spot where Jenkins tied rocks  
round his bail money threw it in  
then hopped the fence  
never to be seen again  
the swans swim white elegant  
past half-empty Lucozade bottles  
bobbing with dogends  
loose threads of tobacco in bright orange  
fizz gold stitches  
this moment amounts to nothing  
but we don't hear that yet  
our afternoon is warm & free  
from shit-talk pretending  
not to be scared all the time  
somewhere a newly-elected minister  
maps our lives a takeaway  
on his lap one eye on the TV ketchup  
down his dry-cleaned white shirt  
but this afternoon breeze brings rocksteady  
mellow sweet from Ambrose's flat  
carries a whisper in its bowel a bad-line

prank call cracked with muffled laughter  
*...ccrrk..hahamph you....hehecrrksh...will*  
*have to choose shhshshha between this*  
*moment & a future...crrrkshhhahahaha!...*  
on our backs too gold everything  
I turn my head  
to see if you heard it too  
your eyes are closed smiling you take a toke  
pass me the joint  
you don't see the sun  
rotting in the sky  
the white swans are near now

# BECAUSE IT'S MUD SEASON AT THE GIRLS' FACILITY

Eve Ellis

girls huddle in the drive before lineup  
wearing their clag-spattered jumpsuits  
workboots caked like small golems

when the first april evening wafts through  
they open their windows shout  
across the bogged lawn shriek at hills

still hairy with bare trees haw like donkeys  
in the mess hall drop plastic plates  
stamp on smeared egg their braying

shakes the whole vinyl-sided dorm  
staff deduct points assign extra chores  
but they open their throats and bellow oh

to be thisfuckinglyloud in the overheated schoolhouse  
throwing dictionaries yanking off doorknobs  
hurling a desk at the wall quaking the floorboards

like spring queens dancing the rage of it  
until girl after girl is wrestled to the ground  
restrained and mudgutteral staff clipboards are out

tonight's the deep freeze of cement time-out rooms  
an icepatch of sorry and quiet but you  
good girl who threw nothing thought screaming

was beneath you sit alone in your dorm room  
watching the pale planet of yourself in the glass heaving  
the mud from your lungs the snowmelt and thick of it

## OLD SIMEON THE STYLITE

Colette Colfer

They found his body stooped in prayer,  
back bones dislocated in three places  
from supplications, hair hopping  
with lice and fleas, holes in his goat-leather cloak,  
his whole body hirsute, skin scabby  
and shedding flakes with maggots oozing  
from ulcerated legs, reeking  
from thirty-plus years exposed to the sky  
under balding hot summers when he drank  
morning dew from the tips of his own fingers,  
and freezing winters when his eyes  
were lashed closed with ice splinters  
on his tiny platform on a pillar, sixty feet high  
in the sky with a cord and bucket for parcels  
of flat-bread, goats' milk and petitions  
for intercession. That nest where he settled  
between heaven and earth wasn't fit  
for the birds. But he was a lightning rod  
of God. Some days he stood arms outstretched  
like a crucifix and the crowds called out to him  
for more miracles, healings, prophecies.  
Although he berated the rich, they loved it,  
came in fancy palanquins in even greater numbers,  
gave more gifts. There were waves of pilgrims  
and day trippers. Some read signs from the study  
of his excrement and urine that spattered

and stained the column base. Pictures of him  
were pinned as blessings on doors as far away  
as Rome and when he died, his corpse,  
a stinking worm-infested mess, was carried  
in procession, exuding light that was preserved  
in his relics and still escapes sometimes in paintings  
and visions of his hairy image, imprinting minds  
bright as a meteorite on a dark sky.



## TO THE BLACKENED FIELD

Tracey McEvoy

So, you shipped out  
in all your brown glory  
fresh from the Trini hills.  
Chinee mother and Creole father,  
roots in the high plains of Africa  
and the lowlands of Scotland.  
Born of owners and slaves, locked  
in the mesh of money and sex.

In you – in me – is the blood  
of three continents. I'm told I pass.  
As if it's a test. As if it's not  
good enough to prize the  
blackness in me. Troubling,  
to sing from the seat of privilege,  
when what's inside still aches  
to be free.

I fixate on who came before,  
their wretched journeys across  
land and sea, the horrors endured  
on ships named *Fortitude*  
or *Charming Betty*.

Centuries clawing at the rock,  
genes pooled, we kept evolving.

Pulses beating with hybrid vigour.  
No time to stop, for the future lies  
ahead, just over the next hill.  
And all the time, the blood  
seeped into the earth,  
bringing us home.

I'll winter here, then go  
heart in hand, to where  
the bones are dug deep.  
And there I will look  
to the blackened field  
of burning cane where  
one ancestor raised the whip to another,  
and listen  
as the fire spits sugar.

# GOOGLE MAPS IS NOT YOUR FRIEND

Abbie Day

*Geryon made his way through the fires in his mind to where the map should be. /  
In place of a map of the school corridor lay a deep glowing blank.*

—Anne Carson, *Autobiography of Red*

You are walking in an unfamiliar city, beginning to enjoy  
the sensation of being lost                      and then your phone dies

and you don't miss the easy distraction or your ticket home  
    it's the disappearance of your dot on the map      that leads you  
to the existential crisis      the admission that you actually prefer  
the version of yourself that is round and blue      who knows  
instinctively which way to turn      while this fleshy replica  
you've been left with can't recall a single street name  
    has never had a homing instinct                      is too easily led

Things get so bad you purchase a real-life map      learn  
you have been going wrong for some time      A crowd is shoving  
down the same scuff of pavement as you                      there is no way  
to turn around while still appearing sane      so you commit to the bit  
    that sudden and performative realisation we make for the benefit  
of strangers                      the closed eyes                      the head rolled back  
*I need you to understand that I have made a mistake*

# SELF-PORTRAIT AS A POEM EDITED BY FRANCIS BACON

Addison Williams

Sometimes  
all vulture  
twisting  
shroud  
this son  
of masculinity  
has the faint stench  
of having my mum's  
inescapable  
torn out ribs  
on display  
grudging  
with a touch of love  
begging the furies  
what's left of

I'm nothing  
beak & father's  
my guts into knives  
tying this son  
of Adams's apple  
& poor excuses  
of their father's apple  
smile but instead  
hunched shrug of  
poor posture of this  
saying *look at me*  
pen & badly written  
but mostly confusion  
to carry me away  
my mother

but my inheritance  
burnt orange wrath  
inside a tight tearin'  
of the red earth  
to cliché metaphors  
every man's breath  
orchard & I dream  
my body is all  
shame &  
great masturbator  
seated with my  
daddy-poems  
of sex & violence  
for murdering  
still inside me.

Sometimes  
drunkenly  
of ethanol  
their whispers  
an exhibition  
of god  
a sad imitation  
the prettiest cuts  
which is  
my happy poems  
of money & art?

I'm a stone flamingo  
gawping at onlookers  
soaked rags  
don't they know  
of sticks  
the same way  
of tragedy  
of gristle  
an expensive way  
will never sell  
after all I wrote this

on precarious legs  
in eyeless bondage  
contemplating  
a crucifix is just  
without the presence  
an artist is just  
if they don't sell  
from their life  
of saying  
but what do I know  
unceasingly drunk.

Sometimes  
grin  
blinding myself  
lamenting  
of masochism  
malnourished  
wondering  
when my talon  
of a murky river  
realising  
could love  
leaving me  
my loneliness

I'm all toothy-nightmare  
a dentist's elephantine  
with wordless screams  
into a single ear  
at the holy feet  
cement rib-chic  
who would love  
is always embedded  
saying *could you love*  
I've a body  
without sadistic  
with no option  
with a slashed canvas

silver pellet  
cash-cow  
of self-propaganda  
my bestial orgasm  
of a crucifix  
plucked of colour  
this heron body  
in my reeded mouth  
*a monster like me?*  
only a devoted nanny  
intentions  
but to avenge  
of a self-portrait.

# SELF-PORTRAIT AS A FAILED EXORCISM

Deborah Finding

No one could say how it happened, exactly. The circumstances were perfect. The Sunday night service at the charismatic church had been delivered — executed beautifully in fact — by the qualified-by-experience pastor: film-star confident, slick, sharp, smooth. The groundwork of guilt had been laid upon her. The hands were laid upon her in familiar ways. There was chanting in which God and the devil were invited to listen carefully. The pastor's pitch and tempo began to rise and rise and rise until with a push of his palm on her head, he shouted in climax *OUT! Satan, we cast you OUT!* She fell to the floor, the congregation watching their favourite scene unfold, nodding, murmuring their pleasure approvingly. She woke, flinch-dazed, stumbled to her feet, newly raised from the dead, encountering the world afresh. Blinking, she began, "What." The throng waited for the "happened?" that would enable them to chorus — *A miracle! Praise Jesus!* — and applaud the heroic conquering they had witnessed. But she stood upright, lifted her jaw, squared her shoulders, stared hard at them all — at him — enunciated slowly

and clearly, “The. Fuck.”, lack of question mark audible to all, strode out into the night, to the rear-view sound of gasping shock and plastic chairs hurriedly moved in the rush to be of aid, to be the first to comfort him. *You did nothing wrong.*

# HEAR

Anna Mindel Crawford

Hear,

O Israel, the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One. Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever. You shall love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart, **with all** your soul, and with all **your might**. And these words which I command you today shall be upon your heart. You shall teach them thoroughly to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for a reminder between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.

And it will be, if you will diligently obey My commandments which I enjoin upon you this day, to love the L-rd your G-d and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, I will give rain for your land at the proper time, the early rain and the late rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine and your oil. And I will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be sated. **Take care lest your** heart be lured away, and you turn astray and worship alien gods and bow down to them. For then the L-rd's **wrath** will flare up against you, and He will close the heavens so that there will be no rain and the earth will not yield its produce, and you **will** swiftly **perish** from the good land which the L-rd gives you. Therefore, place these words of Mine upon your heart and upon **your soul**, and bind them for a sign on your hand, and they shall be for a reminder between your eyes. You shall **teach** them to **your children**, to speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you **rise**. And you shall inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates - so that your days and the days of your children may be prolonged on the land which the L-rd swore to your fathers to give to them for as long as the heavens are **above** the earth.



The L-rd spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the children of Israel and tell them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout their **generations**, and to attach a thread **of blue** on the fringe of each corner. They shall be to you as tzitzit, and you shall look upon them **and remember** all the commandments of the L-rd and fulfil them, and you will not follow after **your heart** and after your eyes by which you go astray - so that you may remember and fulfil all My commandments and be holy to your G-d. I am the L-rd your G-d who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your G-d; I, the L-rd, am your G-d.

*The Shema is one of only two prayers that are specifically commanded in the Torah. It is the oldest fixed daily prayer in Judaism, recited morning and night since ancient times. Translation of the Shema published by Kehot Publication Society on: [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/706162/jewish/Translation.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/706162/jewish/Translation.htm)*

# UNDER

Rafael Mendes

**under** *preposition* 1. less than: a fortnight to the college fee's deadline, she is underburdgeted. night shift comes to an end with dockworkers queuing for breakfast rolls. they banter in a mélange of Slavic languages and north inner city accent she fails to untangle. she opens the deli's oven, checks the temperature of rashers, sausages, black puddings, and wonders: if a stack of purple notes comes my way, would I return it? 2. receiving or undergoing the action or effect of: she enters a one-million-euro terrace in Blackrock. the owner gives her a tour of the grounds. walking past the external patio facing the ocean, he says *you don't need to clean the hot tub*. she wonders if a hot tub is similar to a whirlpool, like the one in the hotel where her mother first uttered *chemotherapy*. she adjusts earbuds into her ears, sprays citrus-scented all-purpose cleaning into the tiled walls, and scrubs it as Freddie Mercury sings *under pressure we're cracking / can't we give ourselves one more chance* 3. in or into a position below, beneath, or lower than something: the notification lights up her phone as she empties the club's bins located under an emergency exit. *she's gone*. she relives the morning before when the muscles at the sides of her mother's mouth contracted in a grin as she held the student card in front of the camera. she hears the light thud of a goldfinch against a windshield. somewhere.

# COME, THEY TOLD ME PARUMPAPUMPUM

P Burton-Morgan

For a festive treat I get myself a little blonde drummer boy as a snack. Great rhythm, naturally. That he's a submissive little bitch is just a bonus. He likes to be smacked, pale skin stretched taut, both of us vibrating with the impact. Reddening. Parumpapumpum. Then cuddled. He picks up his kittens to carry them gently out of the room, rugby player thighs bulging in small black boxers, a Christmas ad for wholesome masculinity. Twenty seven & bisexual so yes of course he's all about the ass. Parumpapumpum. He mostly goes for colourful-haired non-binary pixie types, he says (as though I am a Pokémon). I remind him of a boy, boys plural. Weirdly affirming. The great comfort & joy of subby bisexual boys is that they bring their own advent calendar of Grindr-induced casual-hook-up sex trauma, which makes for a much gentler, safer prospect. Consent is so sexy. Bollocks like baubles, ass cheeks spank red. He even asks my permission to come. Parumpapumpum.

# CASSANDRA

Jill Abram

*If you move the tiller right, the boat will go left* she said, but he didn't want her telling him what to do. They had to wait for a bigger boat to pull them off the bank.

\*

*Turn right here* she said, but he couldn't imagine it would be down that dirt track. It was more than a mile before they could turn around.

\*

*I didn't do it* she said, but he, who had done it, told them it was her before they even asked. He was given a promotion and she was taken off the project.

\*

*It really hurts* she said, but he couldn't see anything wrong and discharged her. She collapsed in the doorway and was rushed to hospital.

\*

*No!* she said, but he chose to believe she didn't mean it.

## TRAINEE TEACHER

Emma Lara Jones

For the children's sake  
they tried to be nice  
although she was just  
a bean bag  
and everywhere she went  
she leaked  
annoying little beans  
across the class and corridors.  
They could have offered  
to stitch her up.  
They swore they offered  
several times  
but she wouldn't listen  
until one Tuesday  
    they watched  
as the last bean  
    rolled out of her.

# MAYBE THE SUN

Ian Irwin

is a disc  
of unbridled  
fury  
a surprise  
turn  
for  
the worse  
a mirror  
reflecting  
our vanity  
perhaps  
this only sun  
is an outpost  
for spectres  
scattered  
sarcasm  
of a soft age  
maybe the sun  
will shrug us  
off  
an irritant  
considering a  
distant dream  
maybe it does  
not  
consider us  
at all  
relentless  
its frustration

embodied  
by a gurning  
ball  
demanding  
worship  
consumes  
our attention  
hung like  
a fat  
emperor  
greedy  
&  
bored

## TIDAL WAVES

Leigh Brady

My identity flows like a wave,

*in*

and out, when I think of the

*duality*

I see — in the nation I've adopted,

*I've*

taken on a new self, becoming

*lost*

to the old culture, I thought I knew

*myself*



# THE VOGELHERD HORSE BEGINS HIS DREAMING RACE THROUGH TIME

Sarah Wallis

A man once long ago looked at a mammoth ivory tusk and dreamed a vision of a perfect miniature horse by firelight, galloping silent miles along the quiet sandy floor of a dark cave, a model from a time when hooves commonly crunched in the snow-bound landscape and humans were kept captive by weather, in the ice covered caves of winter, there he dreamed summer, movement and hunting and speed racing by horseback, knees dug in – hours of carving later – he had dreamed freedom into being, fine head, arched neck, forelock, haunches, and tender fetlocks released from an ivory cage, listen, hear him gather himself up to canter, silver spurs shiver in the snow, and at a gallop, he sets off into the history of the world.

# THE STATUE

Hen St Leger

please, do not topple the statue, the statue was not designed for toppling, insurance does not cover damage in case of toppling, please, do not run your hands over the statue, it may rub off the oxidised layer and remind us of how much gold was stolen to build it, please, the statue is embarrassed enough about this already, please, do not graffiti the statue, it cannot read, please, do not attach items of a sexual nature to the statue, the statue cannot derive pleasure from this, the statue only enjoys being a statue, please, do not tip the statue into the water, the statue cannot swim, please, if you would like the statue removed, use the proper channels, online petition, prayer by torchlight, somewhere else, please, throw yourself in the river, and think about what you've done

## CONTRIBUTORS

**ANNA SHELTON** is a teacher and writer from Cambridge. Her poem 'Black Fen' inspired her first folk song, which she performed at the 2022 Cambridge Folk Festival. She has been published in *Coven*, *Streetcake* magazine and the 2024 Sidhe Press anthology *To Light the Trails – Poems By Women In A Violent World*. She is currently writing her first pamphlet, which was longlisted for Verve in 2023. Find her on Twitter/X [@AnnaVShelton](#) and on Instagram [@AnnaSheltonWrites](#)

**MEGAN MCKIE-SMITH** is a writer and audio describer from Newcastle. She's currently working on her debut pamphlet.

**ERIN BRADY** is a translator and writer who was shortlisted in the Writers' and Artists' Short Story Competition and for the Wasafiri New Writing Prize (Poetry) last year. She has also been published in *Acropolis Journal* and *Mslexia*.

**IAIN BLEAKLEY** is a poet and dancer originally from Edinburgh who resides in London. He has had poems commissioned for Worldwide FM and Loose FM and work published in *The Rialto*, *Ink Cypher* and *The ghost furniture catalogue*. In his spare time he enjoys rolling around the floor and rearranging supermarket receipts.

**LOU HILL** is a poet, musician, carpenter. His poems have been published in *The Poetry Review*, *Swerve Magazine*, *Grass Mag*, and *Ink, Sweat & Tears*. His most recent spoken-word record 'Dogends' featured on *The Late Junction* (BBCR3), *Tom Robinson's Introducing Mixtape* (BBCR6), and BBC Radio London.

**EVE ELLIS** is an American poet and educator living in London. Her debut pamphlet is forthcoming from ignitionpress in 2024.

**COLETTE COLFER** is from Hook Head in Ireland and takes much of her inspiration from the sea and the ancient monastic community that once lived on the peninsula. Her poetry has been published in *Poetry Ireland Review*, *The Irish Times*, *Southward*, and other publications. She was runner-up in the 2019 Patrick Kavanagh Poetry Award.

**TRACEY MCEVOY** is a writer and poet, living on the south coast of England. She has a Master's in Creative Writing from Kent University and is completing a poetry collection about her family's relocation from London to Georgetown, Guyana in the 1970s. Titled *Threshold*, the poems explore the dislocation of crossing continents at a transitional age and contemplate identity as it bridges different worlds.

**ABBIE DAY** is a poet from the north of England. Her poems have been published by *Unlost Journal*, Fly on the Wall Press and the Mead Gallery and longlisted for the Brotherton Poetry Prize 2023 and the *Passionfruit Review's* Being in Bodies competition. Abbie holds an MA in Creative Writing from the University of Birmingham and is working towards her first pamphlet, a lavish wardrobe of interactions between clothing and the body.

**ADDISON WILLIAMS** is a poet, writer, and musician from Canterbury. His poetry has been published in *Butcher's Dog*, *Gutter* and *Firewords* Magazines, with short stories published in *Acid Bath Publishing* and *The Wells Street Journal*. He has also written spoken word pieces for The Gulbenkian and The Marlowe Theatres.

**DEBORAH FINDING** is a queer feminist writer with a background in academia and activism. Her publications include *fourteen poems*, *The Friday Poem* and *berlin lit*. She is widely anthologised, and her debut pamphlet, *vigils for dead and dying girls*, is out now with Nine Pens. She won the Write By The Sea single poem prize, the Live Canon competition for her forthcoming pamphlet, 'amortisation', and has been shortlisted or commended for the Troubadour, Live Canon, Hexham, Hammond House, and Ver Poets Prizes. She is poet in residence at London's Soho Poly Theatre.

**ANNA MINDEL CRAWFORD** lives in West London. She began writing poetry three years ago. Her work explores themes including her mother's long term illness, personal experiences of neurodiversity, her Jewish heritage, and the loss of her parents. She has had poems published by *Visual Verse* and City Lit's *Late Lines* and *Between the Lines*. She was awarded first prize in the Clevedon Literary Festival 2023 Open Poetry Competition.

**RAFAEL MENDES** is a Brazilian migrant based in Ireland. He has been selected for Poetry Ireland's 2023 Introduction Series and was awarded the Lacuna Bursary 2024. His work has recently appeared in *Skylight 47*, *Poet Lore*, and *The Trumpet*. He's a PhD candidate and teaching assistant at Trinity College Dublin.

**P BURTON-MORGAN** is a non-binary writer & director based in rural Somerset. In 2005 they founded midscale theatre company Metta Theatre and have written/directed over 40 productions to date including plays, musicals and opera. They won the 2020 WGGB award for musical theatre book-writing on their hip hop musical 'In The Willows'. Their first verse play 'You Lay Your Hand Backwards on My Heart' was shortlisted for the Bolton Octagon Prize in 2016 and later turned into an audio drama, their second verse play 'Wondr' premièred at Edinburgh Festival in 2017, and in 2022 they were commissioned to write a long form narrative poem to accompany Handel's Messiah in the West End's Drury Lane Theatre, starring Arthur Darvill and Martina Laird. Their poetry has been anthologized by Arachne Press and in 2023 they completed their debut novel *O - A Queer Odyssey* and signed with United Agents, with whom it's currently out on submission to publishers.

Poet, producer and presenter **JILL ABRAM** is autistic, has Jewish heritage and lives with fibromyalgia. She grew up in Manchester, travelled the world and now lives in Brixton. She has performed her poems across Britain and beyond, including at Ledbury, StAnza, and Verve Poetry Festivals and in Paris, New York, Chicago and online. Publications include *The North*, *The Rialto*, *Magma Poetry*, *Poetry Scotland*, *Poetry Wales*, *Ink Sweat & Tears*, *And Other Poems* and *Harana*. Jill was Director of the influential collective Malika's Poetry Kitchen for 12 years. Her pamphlet, *Forgetting My Father*, was published by Broken Sleep Books in May 2023. [jillabram.co.uk](http://jillabram.co.uk)

**EMMA LARA JONES** lives in Felixstowe. She was shortlisted for the Bridport Poetry Prize (2023) and has poems published in *Artemis* and forthcoming in *Strix*.

**IAN IRWIN** is a Bristol-based writer and educator. He has performed at various events across the city. Ian was selected as an Out-Spoken Press Emerging Poet in 2022 and his poetry has been published in *The Alchemy Spoon*, *Trasna*, *Blue Bottle Journal* and the *Poetry Pulpit* anthology.

**LEIGH BRADY** is a writer from Dublin, Ireland, currently living in Edinburgh, Scotland. She has completed a MA in English literature from Maynooth University. She is interested in short form fiction, especially gothic, sci-fi, magical realism, and Fantasy. When she is not writing she can be found immersed in musical theatre.

**SARAH WALLIS** is a writer based on the East Coast of Scotland, UK. 2023 works include poem art at Osmosis, podcasting with Eat the Storms and a winning story at The Welkin, now a nominee for Best Short Fictions 2024. A poetry chapbook *Poet Seabird Island* is due from Boats Against the Current Spring 2024.

**HEN ST LEGER** (he/they) is a poet and journalist based in London, UK. Their work has featured in *Poetry London*, *Magma Poetry*, *Ambit* and *Agenda*, as well as *Masculinity: An Anthology of Modern Voices*, published through Broken Sleep Books.



---

# PROPEL MAGAZINE

---

PROPEL MAGAZINE LIMITED  
PO BOX 78744  
LONDON  
N11 9FG



[PROPELMAGAZINE.CO.UK](http://PROPELMAGAZINE.CO.UK)