

# **New Beginnings**

**COMP LIT MAG**

**Spring Edition 2024**

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# *Meet the Editors*

## **Emily Black**

Hello and welcome to our magazine! I'm Emily, a Comparative Literature with Film Studies student. I've loved the creative process of designing visuals for this magazine, fusing the visual with the literary is so important to me. I love print as a medium, alongside other analogue creative projects like film photography.

## **Kainat Qureshi**

Hi, my name is Kainat and I am a 2nd year Comparative Literature with Film Studies student. As much as writing has been a form of catharsis, I have always been fascinated by the power of literature, media, and art in the social sphere. I am particularly interested in the idea of identity, and how it is shaped by the spaces we are in. My desire for exploration extends even further to food, and I will always have a list on hand for whatever the mood!

## **Our Contributors**

- Olive Hutcheson
- Kian Afsah
- Sara Saidak
- Brian Lee
- Anainah Dalal
- Lilian Hatzmichael Whitley
- Robyn O'Reilly



# Editors' Note

## Welcome Back!

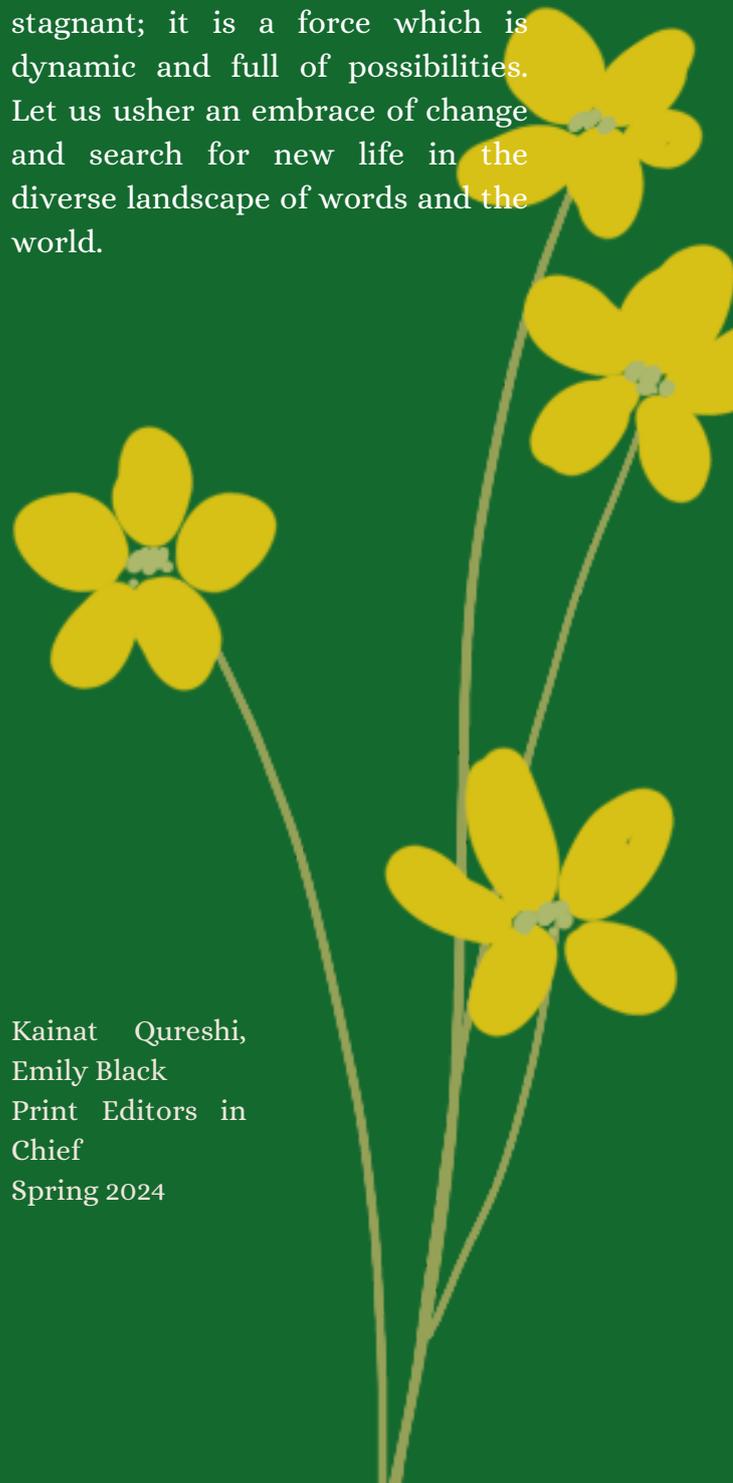
Welcome to the spring edition of the Comparative Literature magazine, where we delve into the overarching theme of 'New Beginnings.' The thematic exploration transcends mere rhetoric; it is a journey into uncharted territory, an exploration of how literature transforms and rejuvenates itself.

Comparative Literature is like a living entity, ever evolving, much like the idea of a present wherein the past and the future intertwine in simultaneous decay and growth. We discard conventional boundaries of nations, languages, and cultures, and extend our inquiry to the dynamic interplay between literature and a spectrum of art forms. Literature spreads its wings and embraces a wider canvas.

In these pages, you will find a mix of voices, each bringing a unique perspective to the theme of new beginnings, reaching a singular idea from very different paths. Each piece provides a lens through which we reassess the discipline, to see how literature can be a force for intellectual and creative rebirth. Beyond a mere exercise in comparison, we invite you to explore the relationship between literature and diverse artistic expressions. It is about feeling the pulse of something new emerging. Seek not only disparities but also the unforeseen parallels that reveal a fresh take on narrative and its transformative potential.

Join us in commemorating the theme of new beginnings, both within the confines of this magazine and in the ever-expanding realm of Comparative Literature. Let this edition be a reminder that literature is not stagnant; it is a force which is dynamic and full of possibilities. Let us usher an embrace of change and search for new life in the diverse landscape of words and the world.

Kainat Qureshi,  
Emily Black  
Print Editors in  
Chief  
Spring 2024



# Our Recommendations

Spring 2024 Edition:

## Films

**Chungking Express**

(dir. Wong Kar-Wai)

&

**Taste of Cherry**

(dir. Abbas Kiarostami)

## Books

**Small Things Like These**

(Claire Keegan, 2021)

&

**Babel**

(R.F Kuang, 2022)

## Plays

**Til The Stars Come Down**

Beth Steel

&

**A Raisin in the Sun**

Lorraine Hansbury

## Albums

**Chaos For The Fly**

Grian Chatten

&

**Cub**

Wunderhorse



# Finding Your New Self, By Discovering Your Past

## A Review of *The Island of Missing Trees* by Elif Sharaf

*The Island of Missing Trees*, a novel written by Elif Shafak, a Turkish-British writer and activist, is a beautifully written story that recounts the story of a Cypriot family whilst also giving important insight into the complex history of Cyprus itself. Ada, the daughter of a Greek father and a Turkish Cypriot mother, who grows up in London, starts to unravel her family's history after the tragic loss of her mother. Her Cypriot ancestry is somewhat of a mystery to her, but with her aunt's arrival from Cyprus, she slowly reconnects with this missing part of her identity. Throughout the novel, the struggles of belonging in postcolonial Cyprus and Britain are highlighted. Not only that, but Cyprus itself is presented as a liminal space where Asia and Europe meet, where Turkish Muslims and Greek Christians struggle to find common ground. Especially amongst the colonial outside influences of Britain, Greece, and Türkiye. The blending of historical context and emotional character journeys is done in a beautiful way and flows naturally. While the context comes in fragments and thus can seem confusing at times, especially without prior knowledge of Cypriot history, in the end, most questions are answered, and the information adds up to have a specific purpose. It also serves to understand Ada's situation a bit better, who herself receives only fragments of her family's history at a time. The generational conflicts are central to the story, especially how they have a continuous impact on the present and the future. But even with difficult topics of wartime and trauma being addressed, there is still this wondrous hope and deep sense of love and resilience throughout the book.





***“To immigrants and exiles everywhere, the uprooted, the re-rooted, the rootless, And to the trees we left behind, rooted in our memories.”***

**Pg 7, The Island Of Missing Trees**



After losing her mum, Ada tries to begin again in a world without an important part of her life and realises in the process how little she knows about her parents' life before moving to London. Over the course of the novel, this shared history slowly gets unravelled with the help of the narration of a fig tree that travelled to London with Ada's father and now resides in their backyard. This unique perspective adds to an incredibly layered and delicate story of forgiveness and learning to live in a state of in-between. The fig tree's perspective also presents the deeply connected nature of plants and animals and how critically the Civil war affected the ecosystem of Cyprus. From the very beginning, the importance of trees is highlighted, and Shafak's dedication at the start of her novel makes her intent truly clear:

*‘To immigrants and exiles everywhere, the uprooted, the re-rooted, the rootless, And to the trees we left behind, rooted in our memories.’*

This novel is here to empathise with people that exist in liminal spaces, but not only that, it reiterates how symbolic trees are for the human experience of many people on this earth. It ties perfectly in with Ada's experience who in some ways may feel rootless, with her father and mother who re-rooted to the UK and thought that Ada would now simply be a 'British child.' But this novel explains that generational trauma cannot simply be evaded, even when her parents tried to shelter her from this troubled past back in Cyprus. As with trees who are connected and feel each other's pain in some form, Ada also feels her parent's loss alongside their love.

These characters will touch your soul, through a complicated love story where the lovers, Ada's parents, are trying to survive a Civil war and then deal with the traumatic experiences of that time, it feels very genuine and realistic, the deeply empathetic narrative guides the reader and the unravelling of the mystery at the end leaves the reader deeply moved. Even if the story contains a lot of tragic moments, the overall outlook at the end remains positive, seeing the next generation live on and find new beginnings in different environments. Especially the setting of London feels very relatable as a student living in this hugely multicultural city where many diverse backgrounds come together and make a home next to each other. Each backyard might look a little different and have traces of a former home, as in this case with the fig tree that Ada's father brings from Cyprus when he moves to London. And like Ada and many of us readers, this fig tree has a hugely important history and origin in a foreign land that must not be forgotten yet is now part of London and has formed a new identity surrounded by other new plants. In the end, a form of harmony is found in the differences and creates a new unique space, a place to start anew whilst appreciating and accepting your roots.

Article by Sara Saidak

Edited by Kainat Qureshi  
Alongside Photo Series "Forest" by  
Emily Black



# A New Day

by Kian Afsah

As Anton Carrillo made his way through the ruins of Valesquo, amidst bodies lying in the dusty ditch and bullet holes in walls he'd known since childhood, the only thing occupying his mind was how to attain a gun. The sun hadn't risen yet. In half an hour beaming rays would draw sweat and madness out of anyone touched, but for now, darkness still prevailed. In her smothering embrace one could have thought that Carrillo, this silhouette of elegantly cut clothes and a striding walk, didn't belong in this shadow of a city. Only under a veil of blinding black could be found what gave him away as a son of Valesquo - the blood on his shirt and the empty gaze in his eyes which so many children of the city had looked through in the last few days.

A scream. He turned his head and squinted his eyes. He could make out four shadows in an alleyway: two on their knees, two behind. One of the standing figures saw him.

"Stop. Identifications." a voice rang.

"I don't have any." Carrillo answered.

He was close enough to see the scene clearly now: two rebels captured by two soldiers. The soldier that had turned to him, spoke again,

"Name and occupation?"

"Anton Carrillo. Surgeon." said Anton Carrillo.

"What are you doing out?" asked the soldier.

He was too tall for his uniform. His wrists and ankles showed underneath the garment.

"Looking." answered Carrillo.

"For what?"

"A gun."

The other soldier, who hadn't been paying attention so far, looked up. The black night was slowly turning into a blue dawn and allowed Carrillo to see his face. He was shorter than his comrade, but his features were tougher, a long scar underneath his left eye. Carrillo froze. The soldiers exchanged a look. Then the scarred soldier's voice rang coarse and brutal,

"Kneel."

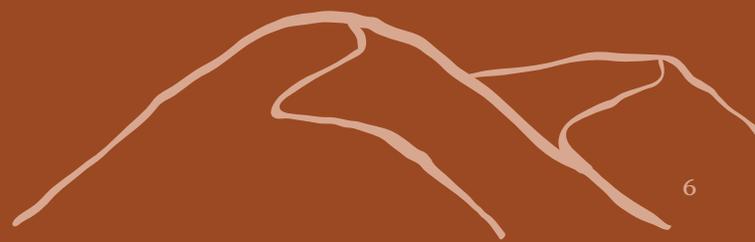
Carrillo didn't react - just looked at him. There was disgust in his expression.

"I said kneel." the soldier repeated and hit his face with viscous force. The surgeon fell to his knees, blood dripping from his nose.

"Where did you get those bloodstains from?" the tall soldier asked, looking at Carrillo's shirt. Carrillo's eyes still fixed on the scarred soldier didn't respond.

You were asked something!" the scarred man screamed and kicked Carrillo in the stomach. The breath was pushed out of him and only after half a minute could the surgeon wheeze in pain,

"You... You should know."

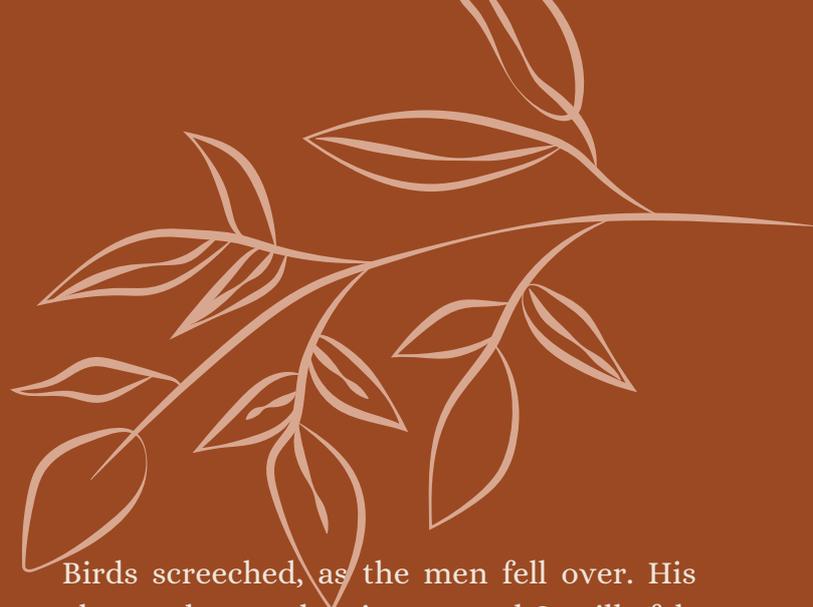


Both soldiers looked at each other.  
“Yours then?” the tall soldier asked.  
“Not yet.” Carrillo answered.  
The scarred soldier laughed.  
“Not yet.” he scuffed and pulled out his gun.

Carrillo, nose bloody, the street cutting into his flesh, looked to the men who shared his fate. The one next to him was fat, wore glasses and was nearing his forties. His face was swollen, and his eyes red and teary. Carrillo couldn't stomach looking at them. The other prisoner was thin, blonde and young, not older than twenty, but despite his age, exhibited a fierce look of fearlessness. He looked up to the tall soldier, who with a look to his watch, gave a head wink to his comrade.

“Let's get it over with.” he said and the scarred soldier, weapon in hand, came closer. Just in this moment the sun began to rise over Valesquo and illuminated his face. His features graced by the soft morning light seemed softer, almost innocent. He couldn't have been older than the young rebel; just a boy.

“For the free city of Valesquo.” the soldier said mechanically, the black instrument he was forcing into the fat men's temple, glistening in the sunrise.



Birds screeched, as the men fell over. His glasses shattered on impact and Carrillo felt a wet sensation on his face. The exit wound gaped open, blood dripping. Carrillo was used to blood, but here something turned in him. The scarred soldier, whistling a tune as he cocked the gun, moved on to the young rebel. As he drew the gun the prisoner screamed and tackled him. The soldier wasn't quick enough to shoot and would have fallen to the ground, had his comrade not thrown himself on the captive. The tall soldier and young rebel, now on the ground, looking like two entangled snakes. The scarred man, his pistol clenched tight in his whitening knuckles, didn't dare to shoot, standing on the side of the road and watching with anxious eyes.

Anton Carrillo could have run away but while the two men were fighting, there boots ruffling in the dirt, he could not bring himself to take his eyes off the scarred soldier. Now that he could see his features clearly in the light, abhorrent hate came over Carrillo's face. His gaze wandered to the soldier's gun, a dark shimmer in the light. The sun had risen fully now, tainting the city in bright, hot yellow, her rays touching them all for the rest of their lives.

Then the young rebel got a grasp of the tall soldier's gun and put it under the man's chin. It was over.



Carrillo recognised genuine shock and anger in the scream the scarred soldier let out as his comrade died. The soldier's raging eyes focused on the rebel, the other murderer, who looked back and out of breath gasped,

"For the free city of Valesquo."

raising the gun. Before he could shoot, the scarred man had already pulled the trigger. The young man died unremarkably. His blonde head plummeting to the ground - a muffled sound - silence.

For a moment it was quiet, then the soldier ran over to his dead comrade, dropping his gun and sobbing heavily. Carrillo could hear him mutter a name under his breath. The gun of the soldier was now lying in front of him; the instrument that had caused so much suffering - in reach. He took it and only as he pulled himself up, did the scarred soldier realize that he was still there. He turned his head, the fury gone, tears remaining. His voice was quivering.

"Make it quick."

Carrillo apathetically checked the magazine. The scar underneath the soldier's eye resembled a dried river who's dam broke,

"You will have blood on your hands like me." he said.

Carrillo cocked the gun. Finally, he looked into the soldier's eyes.

"I know and it's the one you caused."

The barrel tasted metallic and was still warm. Anton Carrillo didn't see anything, didn't feel any pain. He fell back-first onto the ground, a cloud of dust twirling up as he landed on the street - four more bodies for the free city.

The soldier was left in silence, not able to move a muscle, staring at the man who turned to death. Then, his tears stopped; the river dried up. He closed his comrades' eyes, and slowly walked over to Carrillo. The gun was still tightly gripped in the man's hand. He took back what was his and did not look back. He didn't notice the family picture looming out of the surgeon's breast pocket. He didn't see the smiling mother in the arms of Carrillo, holding a little girl. Faces he saw before but wouldn't have remembered. As he walked away, one could see him trying to stay in the shadows the ruins had left to spare, but in vain. The sun was high in the sky and there was no escaping her. A new day in the free city of Valesquo had begun.



# N E P H A L I S T

It isn't raining. And yet, the grey lingers in the sky threatening the return of a storm already dealt with, a blanket of comfort from the bright cold above. Last week, it was warm. There was a brief relief, blue skies, a reminder of what's to come. It always feels like there's a new new year once spring hits, blooming greens and new complaints, the small talk of the day turning from "it's so cold out, when will this end?" to "fuck me, it's boiling in here!" to which one must respond "it's a heatwave" or "it is summer."

He is sure that people will always find something to complain about. For him, now, it was the bus delays. Traffic, rush hour, the road flush with lights and horns being honked by frustrated parents on their way home, a bubble of anger after a week of going back and forth from the office, fumbling over presentations and meetings and email after email. After all this traffic, you make it home. It turns out a trip to the pub every day after work hasn't quite hit the spot it needed to. Terry from marketing didn't send the right fucking notice and now everyone's fucked and why oh why isn't the laundry done, why hasn't the dog been walked, and why the fuck don't you teach your son not to drop shit? The bus pulls into the stop. He steps on, taps his card, taps his foot. It blinks and he pulls himself up the narrow stairs, takes a seat at the front of the bus.

Summer. He doesn't know what to think about it. The summers of the past all melted into one like a kids ice-cream, the cone held tightly but unattended as they stare distractedly at the ants passing along the pavement until it drops to the floor, liquified chocolate dribbling into the cracks between paving stones. The ants run to it and the kid starts bawling, wondering why he can't scrape it back into the cone, his mama pulling him away by his small sticky hands. It was a blur of summers in France, holidays in Cornwall, in his friends' basements smoking weed, in parks and beer gardens and typical British lads vacations which were always underwhelming once passed. Sneaking pills into festivals and doing lines while the sun rose at 5am. It all feels like a novelty in the warm air, a daydream, a past life. The cold hits with blunt reality each year, a new era of waiting on street corners shivering, holding cash tight in his pocket. Shuffling into someone's flat, spread all over the floor, ashtrays becoming useless as they snubbed cigs out on the carpet. It felt grotty, sweaty smells of smoke and the irremovable taste of powder dripping back through his sinuses. He snuffles, now, taking his phone out and turning his headphones back on and playing whatever comes on first to produce new thoughts. Opening, closing, and reopening instagram, no new messages, messaging app, his mum saying *Good luck Jude! Dinner will be ready at 8 xxx*, scrolling more, ignoring the various month old unopened messages. Instagram again, Twitter, scrolling. New notification: a message from EE, You have now used all of your data for this month. Never fucking mind.



Phone off. He looks up to see the next stop.

Once he's off the bus, the clouds have begun to part. A dusty red like a warning sign blaring out the apocalypse. He opens his phone and brings up a screenshot of the rest of his journey. Embarrassing to be 24 and still running out of data.

It's not such a long walk, but he's never been this far north before. From his flat, in South London, it would've taken him fucking ages to get here. And he's overwhelmingly aware of being late. He considers turning around and going straight back home, but remembers the message from his mum, and how he'll return home to her early, and she'll apologise for dinner not being ready yet. He cannot stand the thought of her chastising him, or worse, praising him for trying.

The building is old, just like any community centre, and when he walks into the main room there is just a group of people from all sorts of ages standing in pairs or threes chatting. He feels like a new kid joining school halfway through the term. A woman races past him, panting and carrying a Lidl bag which she sets on the side table, taking biscuits and crisps out.

"Hi, everyone, sorry I'm late! Welcome back! Welcome, welcome! Jesus," she says, and the chatter dies down. She chucks a leather bag, a nice leather bag - the kind his mum would own over for 30 minutes in a shop before saying goodbye to like an abandoned puppy - and her scarf on her chair, then pulls her jacket off and moves everything to the floor. "Fucking overground was rammed, did you see that Eric? Seriously. Ok, everyone take a seat, grab your drinks, Tina, I left some vegan biscuits over there too. Thank you for sorting the drinks, Darius."

"Of course, anytime." The man, almost too skinny, and middle aged, smiles and blushes as he holds his paper cup of shit instant coffee.

"Guys, come on, take a seat!" She locks eyes with Jude, then checks her phone, then looks back up and smiles. It feels more so like a command than her words. He shuffles over and takes the seat closest to the door. The chairs are plastic and remind him of secondary school. Once everyone has taken their seats, par Tina who remains gathering a handful of the vegan biscuits, she slaps her legs down on her thighs. "Ok, hi, everyone! I'm Charlotte, you can call me Charlie"

**BY  
OLIVE  
HUTCHESON**





“Hi Charlie,” everyone says, except Jude, who realises he was meant to say it and mumbles the last trails of her name. “I hope you’ve all been well, sorry we’re starting late this week. But we do have a new person joining us today, so we’re gonna do some introductions and then whoever likes can share, ok? Ok. So, go ahead,” she looks at him. “Just tell us your name and something about you, why you’re here, what you enjoy.”

He looks at her like a deer in headlights. She smiles and nods. He clear his throat,

“Hi, I’m Jude, and I-”

“Hello, Jude,” everyone chants in unison again. He stifles a snort. It’s just like he always thought - kind of cultish, kind of intimidating.

“Ha, um, yeah hello. I am... here because I need to get sober. I guess it’s now like, what, 2 days? Of like, not doing anything. 2 days sober, I guess you guys say.”

“Would you like to tell us a little bit about yourself, Jude?”

“Um. I’m 24. I was, I guess I am, addicted to like, drugs and alcohol. For a while. And I am... trying to figure out what to do now, like, instead of all that. I don’t think there’s much else about me, to be honest.”

There’s a beat. He’s not sure if he should continue. He doesn’t know what else to say.

“Thank you, Jude. I think all of us can understand where you’re coming from. And the biggest step is showing up, which you’ve done here today. Now’s the fun bit, where you get to know yourself. And all of us! So, who wants to start us off today?”

Darius begins talking, greeting the circle. Jude looks out the window, where it rain begins to hit, and he thinks about summer. The summer in Cornwall. Screaming and crying as his ice cream was gone and his dad was gone and now his best friend, too, is gone.

You can’t scrape melted ice cream back into the cone. The ants have already got to it. You just have to let it go.

# Man Vs Nature

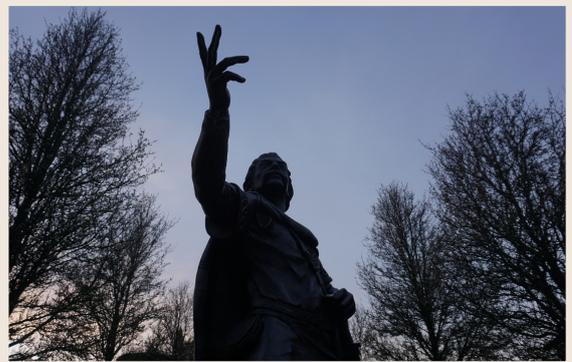
A Photo Series by Anainah Dalal

**Date: 2nd March 2024**

This collection of photographs represents the way humanity interacts with nature, and how in some cases can even feel entitled to dominate it. More than anything this collection wants to question what we impose on nature, and by that means other people as well: religion and capitalism. In that sense, these photos examine what it means to be human in a nature we are actively stifling, and despite it all, does nature survive where we don't?

**Location:**  
**Canterbury, Kent, UK**







# New Beginnings

by **Lilian Hatzmichael Whitley**

Shadows in Spring

I smiled at the daffodils, soaking sun through the  
windowsill,  
Little rays of home, sparking yellow, comforting  
orange glow,  
I forgot it was St. David's Day, I thought they would  
wither in shame -  
But they still grow,  
Taller and taller,  
Their peering heads so lost, always facing-  
West,  
Which seems so far, to these concrete walls, bleeding  
grey,  
I count the days, they turned to months, time filling  
the space, in between the petals,  
Falling grace,  
I knew the Spring would come, still shadows  
shivered, winter lurking behind,  
Cooling my spine,  
Their trumpets' singing brought me back to-  
Melodies of my fatherland, wrapping around wrists  
with lines of forgotten hope,  
Holding onto veins,  
They'd forgotten how their blood flows, rushing red  
in fiery passion,  
Pride in the rain, pouring down, nourishing the  
beating ground beneath,  
The earth felt closer now, as I dug my hand into their  
pot, searching for roots-  
The soil of past connections under polished  
fingernails,  
Promises of life, so willing, promises of truth, new  
beginnings.

Lilian is a 2nd year Modern languages student. She is interested in the formation of culture as a student of languages coming from a Greek and Welsh background. In poetry she explores notions of identity and the boundaries between the external world and internal self.

# So This Was Your Origin Story?

So This Was Your Origin Story?  
Answers were scarce  
But certainly not stares  
And hush-hush murmurs  
You would not prod the world  
With stubby curiosity but instead  
The world would prick you  
With off-white rooms and canteen  
Crowds that tried to give shape  
To the form you created by  
Spinning more rounds than  
A trained ballerina  
Bouncing more times than  
A circus player on a pogo  
We could not see it then  
We could not penetrate the veil  
The flashing pictures and  
The moving lines they were  
Invisible to us who were going  
About our lives not slowly but  
Surely inking deals and charting  
Futures and other such important things  
Without for once being able  
To hear how the sounds  
Actually belonged to the music  
And how the colours lay hidden  
Behind the words and the walls and  
The bookshelves and how they  
Jumped about discordantly  
In your most artistic view  
Of situations



by Brian Lee

Brian Lee is an aspiring writer and poet from Singapore, who scribbles when he should be having lunch. His writing is informed by questions of nature, the human mind, and neurodiversity.

# Stained

Brownness sails into my nostrils  
Invades my organ – s, my organs  
Sets adrift my breath  
Sets adrift upon a battleship  
Upon battleships set assail  
To conquer what I inhale  
To mount their waving cloth  
Upon lucid, murky waves  
Upon brown, beneath the brown  
Burnt, tanned, bronzed, *sautéed*, *bhoora* (1)  
*Bhoora*, *bhara* (2), *bura* (3)

Brownness of the brushstrokes stroked upon my organs  
Smearred into the ridges of my palms  
Tinted across the joints of my limbs  
Stamped over my tongue  
Wringed out of my follicles  
Dyed into the follicles of my nostrils  
I breathe  
Breathe in, breathe through the *bhoora*  
Brownness seeps into the clouds  
Aboard!  
The floating cotton  
The thrones of whiteness  
Descend!  
Tears of *bhoora*  
Dusty, grimy, greasy tears descend  
Sink into the grey crevices of the concrete  
The *surmai* (4) cracks  
*Surmai*, *saara* (5), *sarr mein* (6)

Brownness glides with the wind  
Soaring low, low, lower  
Slipping away into the streams  
Streams of sweat  
Imprisoned within concrete walls  
Travelling for miles  
Along miles of *bhoora* canals  
Where laughters drown  
Where windpipes constrict  
Where they wash with the brown  
Until washed away

Brownness laces the embracing moss  
The contours of the high pillars  
The brinks of stiff huts  
Like sepia photographs  
Stained with ancient soil  
Watered with *bhoora* tears  
Generation to generation to  
Generation one, two, three... *chihattar*  
Year *chihattar* (7)  
To *sifar* (8) –  
*Safar* (9) to suffer till *sifar*

Brownness wails  
Grins, beams, beams of scintillating gold  
Branded on the back with warmth  
Fiery, scorching warmth  
Heat which gazes below  
Burns and decays flesh  
Sprouts life to digest  
From each grain of the brown mitti<sup>10</sup>  
Into each grain of blood  
Each grain of gold corn

Brownness stains the air  
Stains of *chai* (11) stained with coffee  
Staying stood still  
Upon trays of brass  
Broken glass  
Staring back with stained reflections  
Marching through the aroma  
Dipped with *elaichi* (12)  
*Chai lays* (13)

Brownness laminates the soft dough  
Drenched in sugary syrup  
Circling into the tongue  
Sinking into the teeth  
The *bhoora gulab jamun* (14)  
A *gulab* (15) swaying in the breeze  
Trapped within trails of thorns  
A stalk of thorny pricks  
A beanstalk of bristles  
Towering like sugarcane stalks

Towards sweetness so sickly sweet

Brownness chokes the smoke  
Releasing from the choked tobacco  
From the *bhoora* chimneys  
Above moulds of bricks  
Armies of stamped blocks  
Tied as one  
Onto youthful backs  
Prostrating spines  
Wilted into *kaala* (16)  
The *kal* (17) curtained behind the smog

Brownness strangles the branches  
The sticks of pride  
Nestling melodies  
Nestling nectar  
Nursing the dew below  
Cut away for the page  
Cutting skin from its coarseness  
*Bhoora* branches branching away  
Away from the motion  
Motions of war  
Dancing in *bhoora*, *kaala* pupils

Brownness sucks out the moisture  
Drying out the *haraa* (18)  
For the crisp cracking beneath  
Beneath the plastic slippers  
The naked feet  
Imprinted with the ridges of the *bhoora* earth  
Father earth

Weeping without an echo  
Through the Mother tongue  
In thirst of Mother's milk  
*Haraa* bowing to *haar* (19)

Brownness announces age  
The age of tanned dusk  
Before tanning dawn  
Down the rusty poles  
Rustic carts  
Drawn by surmai donkeys  
Up and down  
The rugged, straight streets  
Laden with things, stuff  
Items stuffed and off they go

Brownness emerges  
From red bled into blue bled into yellow  
From whiteness  
A wilted ivory  
Of the 'Paki'  
The *Paak* (20) 'Paki'  
Upon the land of the *Paak*  
Stained with *bhoora*

Whiteness stains  
Stains the white pages  
*Safayd* (21) pages from *bhoora* branches  
Stains the pages of history  
Wipes  
Wiped with *safayd* until *saaf* (22)  
Unburnt, so not *kaala*

Not untouched, so not *safayd*  
Something here and there  
Something not here  
not there  
Something stained  
Something *bhoora*  
Brownness bleeds into *bhoora*  
Breezing into the nostrils  
Out the nostrils  
In and out each organ – s, organs  
Whiteness set assail  
Adrift upon ships  
Battle split and left behind

1 brown 2 full 3 bad 4 grey 5 all 6 in the  
head 7 seventy-six 8 zero 9 travel 10  
soil 11 tea 12 cardamom 13 brought 14 a  
sweet confectionary or dessert  
originating in the Indian subcontinent  
15 rose 16 black 17 tomorrow 18 green  
19 defeat 20 pure 21 white 22 clean

In this poem, I undergo an exploration of the post-colonial identity as imprinted upon Pakistan, succeeding the partition of the subcontinent. The poem seamlessly weaves language with an ambiguous consciousness that reflects a reality trapped in a liminal space among the debris of colonization. It seeks to embody the Surrealist cause by hybridizing English and Urdu in resistance to the stains left upon the nation until today.

Kainat Qureshi

Cities  
pictured:  
Birmingham,  
London,  
Belfast, Paris,  
Copenhagen,  
Alicante



# Making Of Life As It Goes

by Emily Black

This series reflects a personal shift in worldview I experienced while travelling Europe, and how it compared to the towns around the UK and Ireland that I had visited in my youth. From Copenhagen to caravan parks, I sought to capture the vibrant human spirit of each location. This allowed a reflection on their cultural locality whilst capturing the universality of urban experience.



# A Level Prize Winner

“Colonialism”

Robyn O’Reilly

Meopham Secondary School

Colonialism, the process of a powerful country overtaking the control of another country in an attempt to exploit their economic prospects or population, involves pushing the hegemonic ideals of the colonisers society throughout history. Through the historical narrative pushed by colonisers, they have the ability to characterise themselves as the saviours, whilst simultaneously characterising those who they wish to colonise as inadequate.

This idea of colonialism is thoroughly explored within the world of ‘Babel’ by R.F Kuang, as the author uses a fictional depiction of Oxford alongside real world history to craft an explanation as to how narrative can influence societal perception: “History isn’t a premade tapestry...We can form it. We just have to choose to make it”. Beyond the aestheticism of tapestries, they are used as reliable historical sources of cultural and social norms. The reference to a “tapestry” rather than another form of art has implications of crafting and rewriting history, accentuating the concept of decolonisation.

Kuang characterises the protagonist, Robin Swift, as experiencing the complexities between aspects of identity as a direct result of colonialism. Robin has to choose between the utopia of being accepted in England as an asset to furthering the empire’s power, and fighting against colonialism. Kuang focuses on how those being colonised are conditioned into believing the view that they are the problem: “This is how colonialism works. It convinces us that the fallout from resistance is entirely our fault”.

The importance of language and the act of translation as betrayal is thoroughly explored throughout ‘Babel’, as Kuang uses linguistic differences to describe the process of colonisation: “Language was always the companion of empire, together they begin, grow, and flourish. And later, together, they fall”. This references the decline of language, shown through the theoretical decline of the empire - as English decreases as the hegemonic language, the importance of speaking a lesser known language holds higher importance. Moreover, the title ‘Babel’ links to the biblical allusion that presents an allegory for the novel as a whole; the Tower of Babel was built as people wanted to be closer to Heaven, and so they ignored God’s commands to stop building. This caused God to destroy the Tower, and therefore this symbolises desire for power in regards to the colonisers in ‘Babel’ desiring the language that would empower them.

Furthermore the process of decolonisation is explored throughout linguistic contexts and secret societies that function underneath Oxford University. Once Robin realises that the British Empire is planning on exploiting his motherland - “It took witnessing it happening, in person, for me to realize all the abstractions were real” - he attempts to initiate the process of decolonisation and Kuang therefore suggests plans for a decolonised future.

