

ERATO'S

MAGAZINE



Erato's Literary Magazine . Created for
&
by students



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Melting

mel • ting (*mel-tih*)



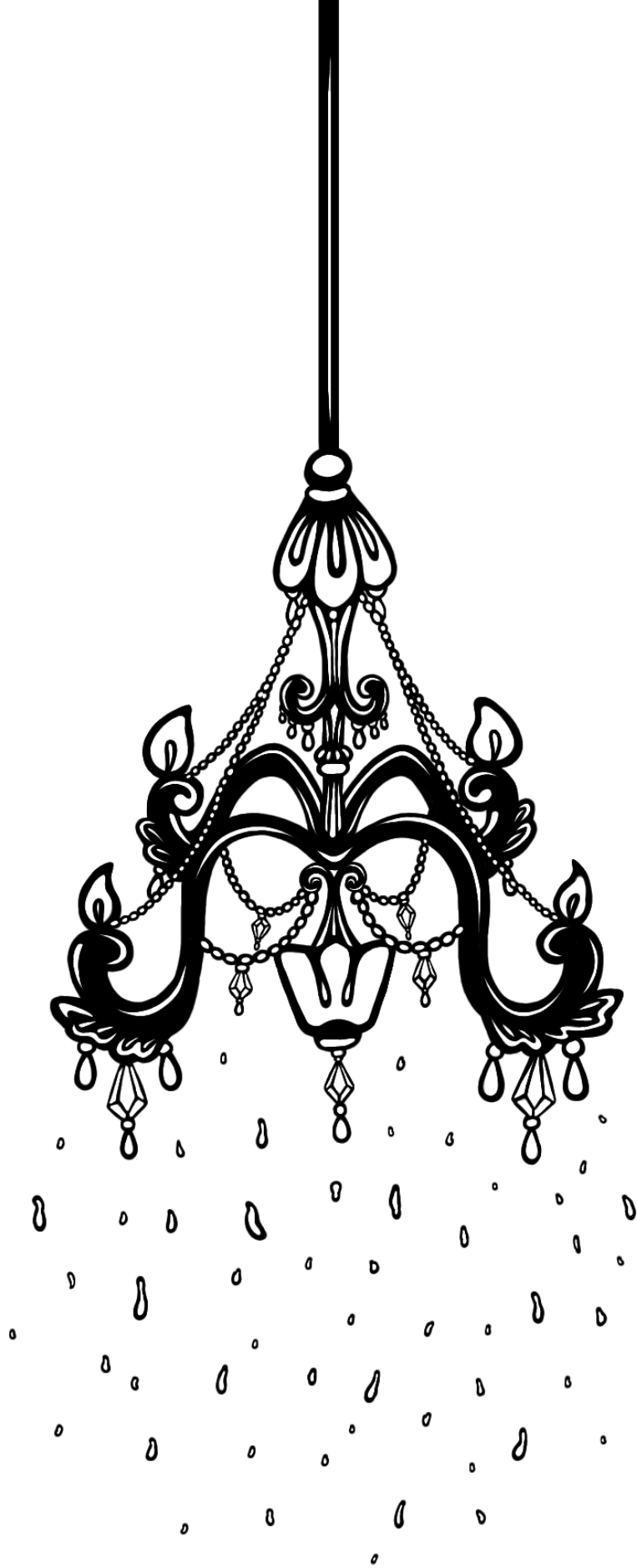
1 : to become altered from a solid to a liquid state usually by heat; to lose outline or distinctness

The snow slowly melted into a pool of liquid.

2 : to disappear as if by dissolving; having a quality that causes gentle feelings (of love, sympathy)

Their anger melted at his kind words.

The theme we have chosen for this third and final edition of Erato's, is the theme of 'melting'. As the contributors for this edition have dreamed up, conceived, written and drawn their art in the upcoming heat of the summer, this edition has given them a place to express all their burning feelings. We present to you, dear reader, works that explore topics from sunny happiness and joy to the passion that a summer (ex-)lover brings and the storm that waits behind a clear blue sky.



F o r e w o r d

from the editors

Dear reader,

And with this edition, the academic year comes to an end. For me, it is also the end of my time at Utrecht University — and thus at Erato's. During three unforgettable years, being a part of this team has helped me to grow, challenged me, and above all brought me immense pride. I cannot wait to see where the next generation of writers, artists and editors will take this magazine. I know it will be great.

Let yourself be carried away into the warm weather by this edition and its theme 'Melting' (it feels ironic and yet weirdly appropriate to revisit these lines as I myself melt under the heatwave).

Wishes of a lovely summer from Erato's and me.

rita xxx

I Followed Her

Ema Novaković

The echo of her footsteps down
limestone alleyways,
the flap of raven wings slicing
a bright blue sky above—

At once I reached out and
almost held her,
slipping on shiny marble
when I missed—
still, I followed her.

A bruised knee, a sticky palm—
I swear I saw her, there was
something there!
A glimpse of dark hair, a flash of a smile—
a ghost?

Those shining eyes—
my heart is bare!

‘Til I heard
The waves crashing against the rocks—
'til the sparkling salty sea
splashed my squinting face!

A slap from some god—
a hint from a star!
To go further I wouldn't dare.

Struck with burning rays of sun
in place of her—
stuck with trembling nails digging into
sweaty naked arms,

fighting the desire to
fall in—

Solely screaming cicadas
stay with me.

Girl, melted

Nena Mandziak

It was pouring when you left last night. Tears of the sky combined with mine. Yet, today when I wake up with a broken heart, the sun greets me from outside. One could take it for a sign that our decision was right. Our relationship was not meant to survive, so the weather is bright now that we are apart. But it just gives me a headache.

Suffocated in my flower sheets, I cannot force myself to leave the bed. It is so warm - one more minute and I might melt. What if I stay? Cover myself with the pillows until I turn gray? Though if I fall asleep again and dream of us... I better stay awake.

I open the window slightly and the wave of warmth welcomes me. Closed is even worse, I am not sure what I want. I go to the kitchen, pour a glass of water. I throw some ice cubes in it and sit back, thinking.

Watching the ice cubes closely, I notice the resemblance between them and my heart. Before we met, of course, but let me recount it from the start.

Freezing

My heart is born soft, but quickly hardens when it goes out to the world. My parents' divorce makes me believe there is no such thing as love. To not get hurt, I keep myself strong. Carefully knitting an armour of ice, never dreaming of being saved by a knight. I do not even dare to touch the ice myself, afraid it will make me too cold or worse, melt itself away.

Melting

For my failure I blame your blue eyes. A sparkle, a sun ray, a sign of the times lands in my hazel iris and warms up my heart. Slowly, but suddenly, the armour turns into dragging drops like butter on a pan or Salvador's long clocks. Like Icarus' wings too close to the sun, my knees buckle at your sight, and for the first time, I let them unwind.

Condensing

What you melted of me runs with my tears when we start to fight. I hate your 8 hour long playlist and you hate what I write. What is left of my frozen heart is slipping through my fingers like the last time we laughed. All my life I was trying to be ice, but with the fire you started in me I finally believed we could be more than a candle's disappearing wax.

Evaporating

The heat that was between us, flies away with the warm June air. I bid it farewell, wishing you stayed, but glad I can freeze my heart again. This time forever.

The process should be circular. From evaporation back to freezing now, but somehow my heart skips it and stays in the melting part. Like a snowman on a spring day I await my end. Slowly, losing energy, I hide in my head, hoping for a thunderstorm or at least a bit of rain. But the sun is too strong, it melts me into one with my phone. Doom-scrolling my sadness away, I linger melted in pain.

Oh you, great sphere of light

Sanny van der Ploeg

Oh you, great sphere of light,
let me bask in your rays of gold,
so bright.
I have long lost the way,
that in which the road is meant to be paved.
On my mission to find it anew, I pray,
that somewhere in between the night and the day,
I discover my will to dream again,
before I cave,
into a longing for a past lover's embrace.

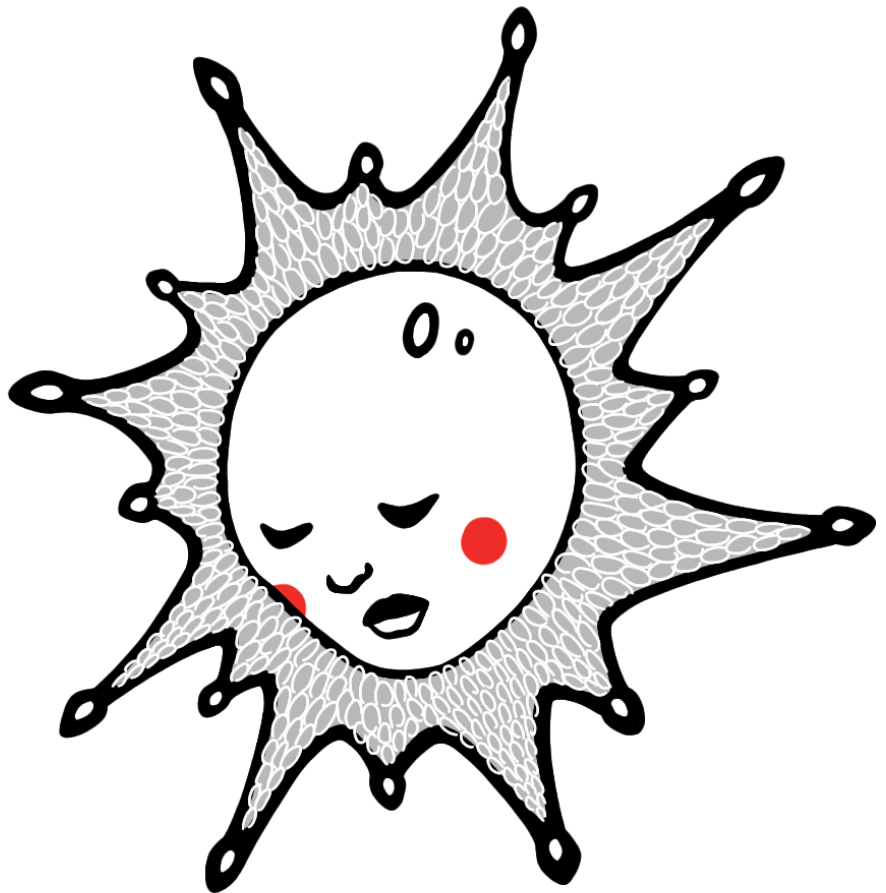
Oh you, great sphere of light.
I can no longer touch your face.
That gentle gesture is mine no more, since we fell into disgrace.
As we undressed a fairytale from its satin and lace,
we failed to keep the faith.
For satin reveals a truth so thin, when lace is replaced by lies from within.

Oh you, great sphere of light.
I wish I knew, that I really knew you.
Not only the old you, but also the new you.
I wish you would know me, like you said you would learn me.
I wish you had told me before, how our ship would fare,
as we crashed into the shore.

Oh you, great sphere of light.
I am left with a need that cannot be stilled.
With a heart that with an endless agony is filled.
A need to remember, hold onto and forget,
everything all at once, and never to look back.

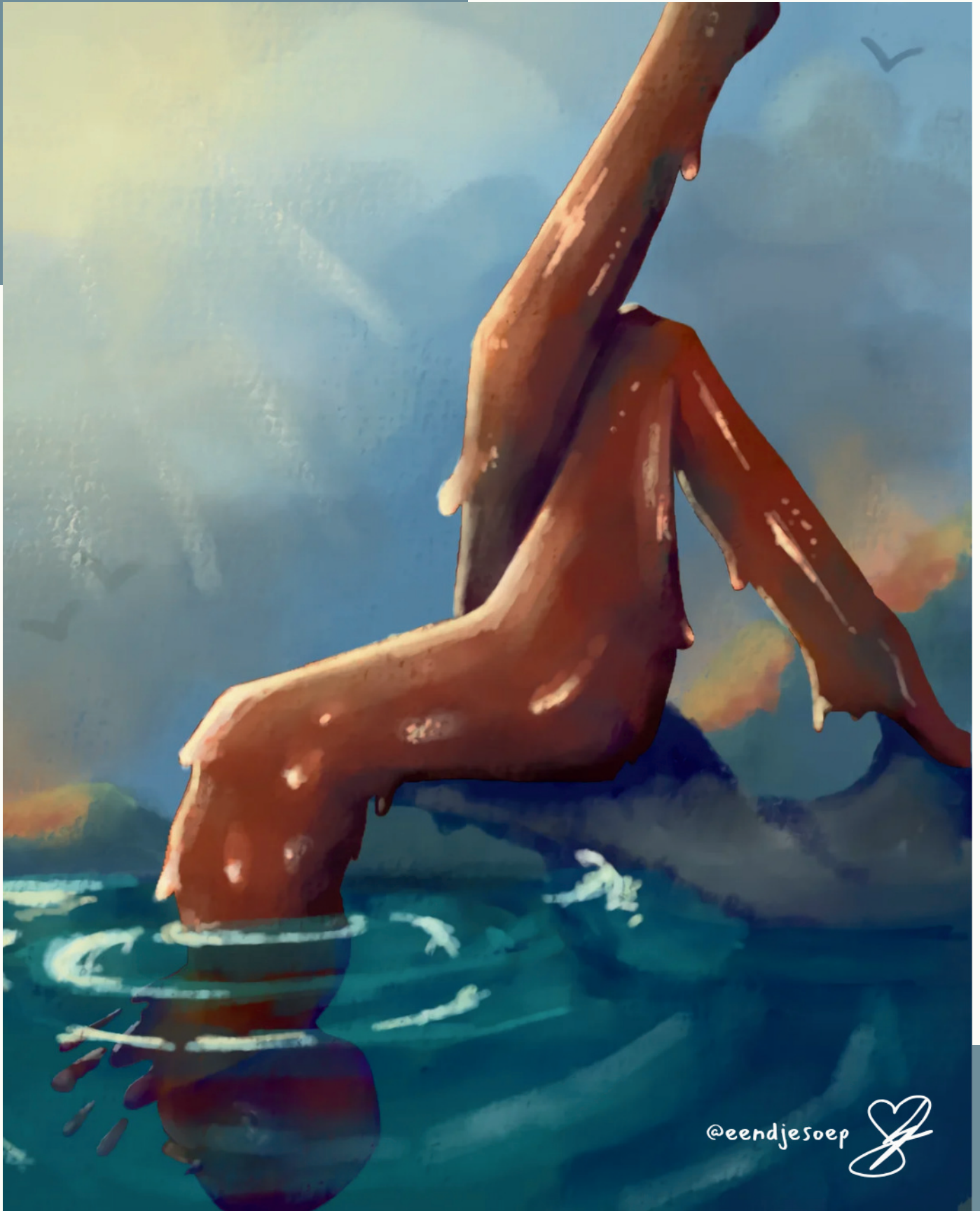
A need to love you, which of all is the most frightening.
A need to hold you, because I know what you are fighting.
You should know that my warmth is still here,
for when the urge to melt is no longer the thing you fear,
and you finally choose to let someone near.

Oh you, great sphere of light,
As I yearn for your rays of gold,
so bright,
I am afraid I have lost the way,
that in which the road is meant to be paved.
On my mission to find it anew, I pray,
that somewhere between the night and the day,
my heart no longer aches,
to find to your heart its way.





Liquid Cats artwork by Femke Kapteijns



Record Breaking Temperatures artwork by San P.

Asphalt

Hugo Wolters

Do you notice how everything just melts? It's Tuesday already. It's raining again. You need to be in office in half an hour. You have a medical appointment, somewhere this week. Then, weekend again. Then work again. Beginnings and endings fused together. Leaves you wondering if there's something new bound coming, or just more of the same; if your happiness lasts longer than the lack thereof. Every time there is time for consolation, the next cycle starts. Do you remember the first time it repeated? The first *déjà vu*? What age you were? Was it an happy event? Another war? Forgive me, I have a hard time staying silent sometimes. If you go to work today, you should get out of bed now. Yes, it was hard yesterday, as it is today. More patterns. You're not the only one who notices. *Déjà vus* are universal. People think of them funny, though, not draining. They ask for a moment of recognition and giggle when it has passed. Not too much depth, you see. Pretending that their sandwiches taste different than the day before. They seem to be in a better mood, too. Yet, repetition only breeds isolation for you. Do you honestly think they are willingly ignoring it? Or have they found the secret to not be burdened by it? Didn't the birds sing their most beautiful songs when they had their sandwich? I know I'm starting to sound cliché now, I have repeated these words many times. I know you try to learn their secret. It's visible in your eyes, and the bags that hang from it. Have you been able to notice the way the birds colour the sky, the way weeds grow, hold on to life? Do you still dread how you will never be able to fly, go to space? Do you still enjoy the sundown and its silence; does the sky feel emptier after the sun slipped away? Is anything you have ever enough; is anything you have wanted ever enough? What do you want anyway? Time? Freedom? Of what, pointlessness? Aye, I should shut up. Too many questions. But at times like these you're unable to silence me, aren't you? Thinking about life, and how, eventually, it just disappears. Do you still find that cruel? Throwing you in just to snatch you out. Everyone, walking between a beginning and an end. You seem to look out for an ending, these days. Of the repetition at least. Do you worry about that at all? You are still in bed. You should go to work. The roads must be busy with commuters by now. Didn't I tell you already? Who told you that the previous time? Was that your mom, the cashier? The psychologist? Does he see your patterns already? Aye, perception of patterns is dangerous when mixed with pessimism. It's like awakening from a daydream. Yet, repetition on its own is not necessarily bad? Some find comfort in it. Some stay bound to their dreams, stay chasing whatever they thought up for themselves. Notice how you don't know the name of your ancestors two or three generations back? And how your mom still speaks so fondly of them? Did you ever make those ribbons curl when packaging a gift for a friend? Holding the blade of the scissor closely pressed upon it, moving the material along until it coils. Those were beautiful, weren't they? There's a metaphor in there somewhere, but your hand is going towards the drawer already. Is that your medication? Do I need to shut up that bad? You don't even check the label. You just grab a handful. Are you sure your prescription is that many? Will you think of these days as the good old days? Is that putting a finger on a sore spot? Luckily you took all those painkillers. How long until they kick in? Feels like pushing a big red button, right? Like blasting your face off! Temporarily, at least.

Until the dust settles again. Maybe you should've read the prescription. Look forward to the holidays? Have you planned anything yet? The days in your agenda just keep filling themselves. With whatever. And then they pass. Playing, like a camera roll. Walking on the hot asphalt of a road going ever right. The heat, making the road shimmer, far out in the distance. You can see yourself walking there, your feet sticking to the road. Many footprints of molten soles walk with you. At least the shimmers will look funny in a minute. Sometimes even beautiful. In the beginning at least. Other times they look familiar. The pills seem to take effect now. Funny thing isn't it? Everything getting droopy. My voice getting softer. The scorching asphalt, an immovable canvas, seizing more rubber. I'll speak to you further down the road, point to you walking in the distance. I will mention the shimmers again, sometimes surrounding you. Useless. Visual trickery. But, funny. Sometimes even beautiful. Perspective does curious things. Do you notice how everything just melts?

The peculiar case of a man accusing a woman of being a witch

Nikki Pouwels

Burn the witch, make her pay
For the fact she doesn't wanna stay
Drown the bitch, no means yes
Because I'm the one who knows best

Throw her in the water, she will melt
Dim the spark that she once felt
Extinguish the sun for eternal night
Let's hold her down, so she doesn't fight

Burn her at the stake, she will melt
For the flames, she'll have knelt
Let's not ruin someone's future, so bright
Maybe one day she will see the light

At my feet, serve me maiden
Your loss is my win in trading
You're the slut, you're the witch
I'm the biggest, baddest bitch

Burn the witch, make her pay
For a game she doesn't wanna play
Drown the bitch, no means no
Put on your perfect little show

Melting Edges

Nikki Pouwels

It doesn't matter, you don't care
I don't have expectations anymore
Everyone hurts and leaves me anyway
Now I choose those who chose me

Looking back, through the tears
You look five years old again
In the blur of my vision
You look so small again

The edges melting with time
The tears melting with years
The ice broken by realisation
It still hurts, the tears still sting

I pretend I'm so mature and better
But I'm still that child that you hurt
I'm still that unknowing child
Who just wanted to help

Looking back, through time
You sitting there, you look thirteen again
You still wear that smile and your tears only for me
And it hurts

The edges melting with time
The fear melting my mind
My frozen heart keeping time still
My frozen heart, that you won't melt

Statua

Naoka Kádár-Todo

Trigger warnings: traumatic war experiences,
antisemitism

A studio in Warsaw, 1944

Otto bows his head through the doorway's low lintel, stepping across a myriad of rubble. He scowls from the acrid stench of ash, eyeing the crumbling corners of the corridor before moving further into the apartment. The gun rests silently in his hand. It is eager for the slightest whiff of movement.

No sound can be heard, yet he moves as nimbly as a gazelle, eyes twitching fervently as he attempts to see beyond the semi-darkness enshrouding the room. His wiry legs stride instinctively without hesitation; for hesitation will lead to the failure of his duty. Otto's fingers curl at the trigger. He remains prepared to snipe any civilians attempting to escape from the rubble.

The cupboards on the wall are emptied with cans lying haphazard, wiped clean from all residue. He had seen the same heavy misery in all the homes he cleared thus far: the identical frugality masking the gnawing maws of hunger, the drab environment broken occasionally with the colourful stain of a tattered doll or dress. A picture of identically looking women and men smile listlessly, framed crookedly onto one of the walls. He kicks the door of a bedroom in, but besides the heap of rickety bed frames, the room is abandoned. The furniture remains hazily frozen in the stillness of the room – a little pair of leather boots lying forlorn in the corner. The shoelaces are untied and a hole gapes on one toe as the sole is peeling away.

Otto turns to move to the next room, and barges in, slamming into the door with his shoulder. He winces from the sudden onslaught of sunlight. Broken pieces of wax lay strewn across the wooden floor, half molten by the incessant heat of the bombings still echoing dull in the distance. Covered boxes line the walls of the narrow room. Otto tugs the fabric off, revealing large blocks of amber beeswax. He rubs the rugged edges of the material, a sickly sweetness coating the tips of his fingers. His eyes linger across the several destroyed statues that sprawl in every box. Only the largest work is uncovered, jammed into the corner of the studio.

The statue is crudely crafted, most of the silhouette unrefined and rough, yet some parts are smooth and melted. Otto's shoulders relax and he lowers the gun, as he looks at the ill craftsmanship of the Piéta statue. It is nothing like his grandfather's works at home, chiselled to brilliance in the form of a Greek god or patron saint. There is no perfection to this work as though it was only missing the breath of life to spring into movement. The statue is incomplete. Mary watches cross-eyed as half her face has melted into a slump. Jesus sags in her hands like a bag of potatoes, his face uncannily distorted and pupil-less. The body seems to disintegrate from the festering wound on the hands and brow, droplets of wax collected into a gummy mass on the wooden planks surrounding the statue.

The crackle of plaster swings Otto's body into action. He swivels around, aiming his gun at the entrance, yet he lowers its neck immediately. His eyes run down the SS uniform and Otto catches a glimpse of stained cornfield gold locks. The glazed chestnut-brown eyes stare confusedly at Otto. They become half closed as a small rivulet of blood shimmies down the soldier's face. The helmet

hangs limply in his left hand like a plucked pheasant, dented and covered in mud.

“Otto?” the voice is strangely familiar, breaking slightly. The soldier places the gun against the wall and, in a daze, drops the helmet onto the floor beside it. The blood drips steadily from his brow and over the crumpled hem of his jacket. Otto steadies himself, slinging his gun to his shoulder, and pulls the frozen soldier shakily into an embrace. They hold each other. Otto pulls away from the boy, holding his face between his hands. His grimy fingers sink into the even grimmer cheeks, sticky from coagulating blood. The freckled face is gaunt and bears marks of incessant alertness; the eyes are bleary from held-back tears and Otto embraces him again in an even tighter hug.

“Felix, what the hell are you doing here?” finally letting go, he looks at the blood streaming down the boy’s head. “Sit on that crate, let me treat that first.” Felix nods, slumping tiredly down. Otto places his heavy knapsack down, digging the first aid kit out of his pack. “You’re a mess,”

“A piece of rock fell.” he mumbles apologetically, as Otto attempts to wipe the trickling blood off his face. He vividly remembers how their mother would dab at Felix’s scrapes earned during school football matches. Otto folds a piece of sterilized gauze from the army-issued first aid kit into a triangle, just as she would do.

“Did you get separated?”

“Something hit a wall and by the time I got up, the others were scattered.” Felix winces from the press of the gauze but forces himself to keep still.

“Unlucky as usual,” Otto remarks. He hides his surprise – Felix would cry from the smallest hurt and sorrow, sobbing inconsolably on the day Otto departed for the army. A shadow of a smile settles onto Felix’s face as he leans his head tiredly against his brother’s side. He listens to the soft whistle of air pumping steadily in and out of his lungs.

“Oma died.”

“I’m sorry,” Otto replies dejected but unsurprised. His eyes focus briefly on the uneven outline of Mary, trying to remember the prayer their church’s priest would say during funerals. “Is everyone else doing alright?”

“Mammie is.” Felix said. “And Illie is helping her whilst Papa is working.”

“What about Opi?”

“He’s been in his workroom since Oma died.” Felix’s voice falters, and he looks around the room instead. “Is this a workshop?”

“I think it is, but hold still for a bit,” Otto notions hastily towards his knapsack as he ties the end of the bandage. “I have a bit of chocolate left in there.”

“Where did you get this?” His voice is elated, and he rubs his grubby fingers eagerly into his uniform.

Felix slides the meagre chocolate bar out from the front pocket of the bag, and breaks it into two, placing a fragment into Otto’s mouth.

“I have my means,” Otto shrugs, sucking at the hard piece of chocolate. Grainy and bitter, it tasted nothing like the chocolate bars that their grandfather would purchase at the confectioner’s after one of his paintings got commissioned. The square bars would smudge stickily over their fingers, the brown-blue chocolate wrappers still lay hidden under his mattress at home. On the evenings when the barking and incomprehensible bellowing of his family would be arguing downstairs would slither through the bedroom door, he would climb into his brother’s and sister’s cots and hush his crying siblings to sleep. Exhausted and bleary-eyed from crying himself, he would breathe in the crackling corners of the chocolate wrappers. He would smell the wrappers after the smell was long gone and the chocolate bars would not come anymore, Opi’s left hand broken from rheumatism, fruitlessly trying to make up for the right hand he lost elbow-up in the Great War.

“Did you kill the people living here?” Felix asks without accusation in his tone. Otto shakes his head.

“They must’ve fled. Can’t blame the poor devil for leaving all this trash behind.”

“It wouldn’t look so bad without all the damage.” Felix responds, measuring the work’s proportions instinctually. “Don’t look at me like that, I’m serious. This is better than some works I’ve seen the lads make in Dresden.”

Otto squints, but Mary continues to look back cross-eyed at him. The statue was nothing like the alluring marble statues scattered across their hometown, softly smiling at passers-by.

“That rock must have hit your head really hard.” he grunts.

“Pretty or not, we can’t leave it as it is.” Felix adds. Otto’s stomach lurches as Felix points to the signature etched at the base of the statue, Alon Goldman. Felix sets to shredding pieces of fabric and wooden shavings that fill some of the boxes in the room, whilst Otto pulls his lighter out of his pocket, lighting a cigarette. He ruefully looks ahead of himself, hoping that the smoke will suppress the nauseating sourness which has settled in his mouth.

“You still have not answered my question though, what are you doing here?” Otto says, hoping to break the quiet crackle of wooden shavings.

“Herr Gering had to close the workshop.”

“Didn’t he pay off the magistrate?”

“It was no use. The Führer had decided that the war effort shouldn’t be wasted on our work, so we were all laid off within days. The factories are already packed with folks from everywhere.”

“They must have known you were not of age.”

“The Führer needs all men to contribute,” Felix responds enthusiastically. “Mother and Father were proud.”

“You could have figured something else out.” He inhales a mouthful of smoke. “You promised to look after them all whilst I’m gone.”

“I would have had to leave them soon anyways.” Felix sighs, throwing another heap of paper onto the growing pyre.

“You have to go home, Felix.” Otto says softly. “You got away with a scrape this time, but next time you may not be as lucky.”

“I know, but there is no going back now. I’ll be sixteen in a month so there’s no use of you doing anything.”

Otto lights another cigarette, looking at his brother wreathed in smoke. Already the same height as him, he stands rugged and his fingers already callus like his grandfather’s hands. As the smoke blurs his vision, Otto can barely distinguish his brother from the thousands that he had eaten with from the same mess-tins, soldiers he had held in his arms as they were painted with blood. Soldiers he had slaughtered dozens of civilians with as the days and weeks had welded into an incomprehensible sludge.

“Opi must’ve said something to change your mind.”

“He didn’t even come to say farewell,” Felix says. “He just kept mumbling to himself and looked at me like I was a dead man. He’s nuts, I’m telling you.”

Otto does not reply and reopens the box of cigarettes, offering one to Felix. His brother looks surprisedly down at him, but grins, taking one and latching onto it. Otto clicks the lighter to life, edging closer to Felix as he lights the cigarette. He taps the spot beside him on the study crate.

“You always said cigarettes are revolting,” Felix says, spluttering slightly from the smoke.

“They are, but they also taste darned good,” Otto wants to soak in his brother’s face with his eyes before he would inevitably depart, now that his job was done, but his gaze was drawn to the statue.

“I wonder how long it took the chap to make this,” Felix muses. “And how he got all these materials in one place.”

“He must have saved it up before the war.”

“Why would he do such a thing? He had a family, didn’t he? What’s the use of all this when your family is starving?”

“He must have been a devotee,” Otto responds. He smiles suddenly.

“What’s so funny?”

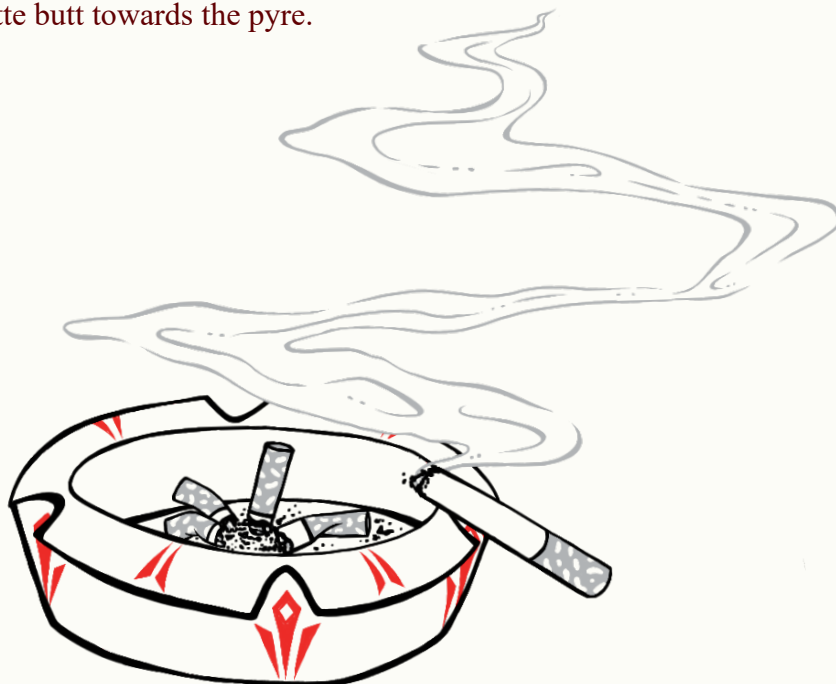
“Do you remember when Albert stuck a piece of gum onto the statue before Sunday School?” Felix nods. “The reason I excused myself to the toilet was because I thought God would strike down upon him with a bolt of thunder. I didn’t want to get burnt to a crisp.”

“Well, He hasn’t struck us, has He? Devotion doesn’t matter in a war, Otto. I know it feels sacrilegious, but if it’s not us, someone else would do the same.”

“I know,” Otto answers. “You don’t have to spell it out for me.”

“I need to get going,” Felix leaps to his feet, coughing from the cigarette smoke again. He stomps the cigarette butt out firmly with his boot and clumsily slings the gun onto his shoulder. He holds his helmet with one arm, hugging it to his side like a football, and turns towards the exit. “Are you coming?”

Otto holds the crumbling cigarette as its end glows amber. He turns away from the Piéta as he throws the cigarette butt towards the pyre.



*In Park Green Field*¹

Flore Spekman

The longest day of the year has gone and we are moving towards the darker days again. But that darkness is a slumberer. It comes in slow jerks. Until, all of a sudden, you were surrounded by it this whole time.

He was on his way. Limping, as if he was crippled, he came from a long distance. As if he could hold time for a while, if only he went at his own pace. He was not crippled, just slow.

At the end of the path he would see me standing there, leaning against the lamppost that just turned on its light.

Approaching me, knowing I was there waiting, he would start walking faster than before.

The early dusk was falling and it was getting darker now at around six o'clock.

Above was a late air, still a little blue and lighter than the black trees that got more colour down below than up there.

The streetlights illuminated what lay at their feet and encircled it with a vague border.

It seemed like a park, grassy and with its yellow lights.

In many aspects it was.

People came here, animals lived here. It was neatly landscaped nature.

It had paths leading to and from the city. It had different kinds of trees, harmoniously grown together.

But it was a green field, according to the official sign at the entrance.

It stood above a drawn map of the surrounding area.

There he was. He had arrived after an eternity, still sooner than expected. All the blue had disappeared from the air and the darkness was clearly visible. He walked beside the light, a little out of sight but I recognised his dragging. I waited there, in the casting light of the lantern, with the green field in view like a visual holding tune. Why was he this slow?

¹in verse: the short version

There were many park entrances.

He said this, as if he could choose his life. I of course corrected him.

‘Green field-entrances,’ I said to him, ‘This is a green field.’

It looked more like a park, he thought. Having stood there for a while,

I was inclined to agree. Still, it was no park. The sign at the entrance was very clear about that.

Did a green field not mean the same as a park? Did they not both signify some grass, some trees, a pond of some sort, and a communal meeting place for people despite their lack of any true interaction? Did it bring us closer to agree on the name of our surroundings? Did we come closer to defining where we stood by

our disagreement about it? Would time be the only thing spared? These kinds of questions welled up inside me.

Night kept falling and we walked back. I watched the ground trying not to stumble. He looked around. We approached the gate of the head entrance. The welcome sign spelled out in big letters: “Park Green Field”. It had gone above our heads as we passed through and went our separate ways. He walked at his own pace with me, a step or two ahead.

Cataract

Amelie Rempel

One year has passed and I have grown
beanstalk-like, rose-cheek-colored
and a day stretches, lanky like my limbs

One year and one year more
each one I win and wish for many more
each day a pearly drop, of these an endless pool
and each thing I see leaves mind-staining scores

Further years carefully collected
I have gathered many things, the colors
of many places, many faces
but seen time and time again hues tire
and even soaked fresh into the lens grow stale

Now I am rich in time and know
to learn one new thing is to lose one thing new
and while the world shrinks, hours that used to drip pour
and watered-down days spill in wasteful torrents
that rinse the stains, leave bleachy traces
while I know in fear, I'm near the limits of my richness

Yet everything my body does has slowed
fog is in my brain and in my eyes
and my flesh has shrunk
the pale skin kneeling to the whiteness of my bones
I stopped looking into mirrors, nothing left to see
that blur of ghostly shape, so sunken-cheek-grey
and slim like half a moon, is no longer me

I wish I could milk the clouds from my eyes
but only tears dribble, mourning those pearly-drop-days
in which time stretched in a limb-like leisurely pace
and my eyelids did not yet melt down my face
towards the soil they will one day decay weepingly into
and I was stained with every echo of every hue
before drops turned into a swelling stain-rinsing raid
Now, white rot in my lenses, the last colors fade.

Stained Glass Frames

Nina van der Hof

The first time I noticed the dancing colors, I was melting inside.

It was the middle of summer, a hot July in the French countryside. My parents, my brother, and I had spent the day exploring the region, and our final stop had brought us to a picturesque small town with an even smaller church. Nothing more than a central room and altar, but nevertheless an opportunity to burn a candle for Oma and admire the pomp and circumstance around us. The church itself, despite its size, was Gothic, and its beauty drew the four of us inside in the first place. That beauty extended toward the vaulted ceilings, statues, and finally, the main object of young me's attention.

Still clutching my mom's hand, my eyes traveled along tall, colorful window frames. My body was bravely recovering from the 30-degree weather outside, and the gnawing sensation of sweat was everywhere. And yet, any thoughts of sunscreen, mosquitoes, and blazing hot car seats disappeared when I saw the frames. A mesmerizing dance of colors towered over my small frame, showcasing the art – intended to honor ancient stories; glass carefully manufactured out of molten metal and sand.

The story in front of me starts with a woman holding a bundled child, like countless stories told and created over time. Infinite manifestations and variations of the exact same prompt. The bundled child is where it starts, and the course of the rest is up to you to decide. Some interpretations, even, worked out to the point of mass following, belief, buildings like this church, real-time depictions through a colorful dance.

The windows have always been there, varying per individual and life stage, and I see them all.



It's been a while since that particular frame, but now, I'm finding myself in an even bigger dance.

The gallery stretches out before me, seemingly infinite. Vaulted, Gothic ceilings gradually reaching down and meeting the stained glass on one side. The opposite side colored as well, albeit through indirect reflections on cool stone. The colorful frames, for their part, all in one neat row on the visitor's left, colors ricocheting off the stones on the right. The frames, shaped through a simple mixing of fire and natural resources, but brought to life all the more by the dancing sunrays.

That same sun being the reason why I would be inside on such a lovely day. A small moment of escaping the heat outside, the hazard of being reduced to a puddle of sweat looming over your head at all times. That time of the year when the cycle has reached its peak, right after the shy introductions of spring. When the story has reached its comfortable middle section, after months of

exposition through pollen, weather changes, and the constant chaos of switching between light and thick coats.

Funny, I thought, walking down that cool hallway for the first time, how innovatively an omnipresent force like the sun can be used to our advantage. An arduous process of shaping the glass frames into whatever strikes your fancy, inspired by surroundings you learned to know.

One: hold a piece of straw just right in its path, and a flame catches fire, the first step unlocked.

Two: store the fire in a sustainable way, a simple furnace will suffice.

Three: gather the right materials: sand, ash, lime, and metal oxides.

Four: leave it above the fire, and wait. Wait a bit longer, and something will happen; changes in texture, solid to liquid. Molten by the sun's indirect forces. All that is left now is to pour the result into a frame to your liking, mix the colors to your liking, and shape the story into your own. A flower. A sunrise. A building. A mother with a child. A-

I stopped dead in my tracks. My eyes were unwittingly pulled toward the frame after the mother. Another scene, but different.

Walking over toward the frame's front view, my eyes met the two-dimensional ones of a young child, sitting on a bicycle. I inched closer, squinted. A particularly strong sunray fell through the child's yellow face, entangled with blues from the sky, greens from the bike, reds from the child's shirt. The scene was too high up to dwell on the details, but I would've reached out, felt the cool glass for myself, and examined the colors that shaped a face and body, vividly reminding me of someone.

I pulled my eyes away sharply. Continued down the hall, feet carrying me at a rapid speed, steps loudly reverberating off the marble floor. The remaining frames flew by. I scanned them in my stride. A 5-year-old kid with a candlelit cake. A young teen standing on a school square. A teen alone in a room, staring into a mirror through a strange play of perspective.

My feet came to a halt again. This time, my hand could reach the window frame with the two-dimensional teen, making contact with the molten oxides.

And just as I did so, the colors changed.

Dancing around, dimming everywhere but one spot. Around the eyes,
blue hues appeared, enhanced through the rays of the outside sun.
Spreading from the eyes toward the cheeks.

My hand jerked back as if from a scorching hot metal pan, and I understood.

I closed my eyes, and when I opened them again, the frames surrounded me.



Moving backward, I was unexpectedly met by another reflective color frame, the glass's coolness contrasting with the heat outside. That heat, however, still found its way into every corner under my skin. I turned and turned, and walked again, closed my eyes to block out the light, blindly fumbling around as if playing Minefield.

Eyes still closed, my back forcefully collided with yet another stone-cold frame. I braced myself, expecting shatters, falling backward into the sweltering sun outside, waking up from this surrealist mirror palace. I commanded my brain to send a message to my muscles, bring my hands up to protect my face... no movement.

I tried again and again, frantically hitting that metaphorical send button until the keypad broke. At last, I instead let my arms relax, and yet they remained in that same position, perpetually facing forward in the midst of a macarena routine.

And then, I felt the first sensation.

Muscles contracting, eyelids forced shut, no matter how much I would want to open them and face the frames reflecting my journey.

Arms, legs, torso, all frozen in place- but not in a Medusa way, cool and hard as stone. The temperature seemed to rise instead; my features softened rather than hardened. Bones reverting to their original flexible state, before dissipating completely.

If I listened closely, willing my rapidly transforming ears to function, I could hear the crackling embers of the furnace. And the very last sensation I felt before fully melting into the wall was the sudden heat of the sun, breaking through behind me, shining through my glass skin.



Now, I can see again, although admittedly limited to the reflection of myself, stretched out across the stone wall in front of me, features inhumanly extended across my sight.

Not that I'm exactly human anymore, though.

One major perk of being two-dimensional would be the lack of expectations. No body to feed or exercise, no fellow souls to appease, no social conventions to adhere to. Not to mention the peaceful restriction (such a negative connotation!) to the present time.

I am lost, motionless, stuck in a macarena pose for all eternity. But I'm holding up fine.

I prepare myself for a long, comforting eternity of relaxation, any lingering memories of an active, breathing body dissipating like little dust sparkles illuminated by the outside sun, gently entering and leaving my vision from time to time. I've only just started melting my old thoughts away-when a soft thumping sound unexpectedly penetrates my inanimate senses.

Slow-paced footsteps on marble, accompanied by the sharper ticks of a cane.

Thump. Tick. Thump. Tick. Thump. Tick.

And then, I see them standing in the hall in front of my frame. Through an old habit, I close off what was left of my two-dimensional vision, the feeling I once called embarrassment rushing through my chest. Judging from the glimpse I caught of the figure, along with their ragged breathing, they have long since passed their younger years.

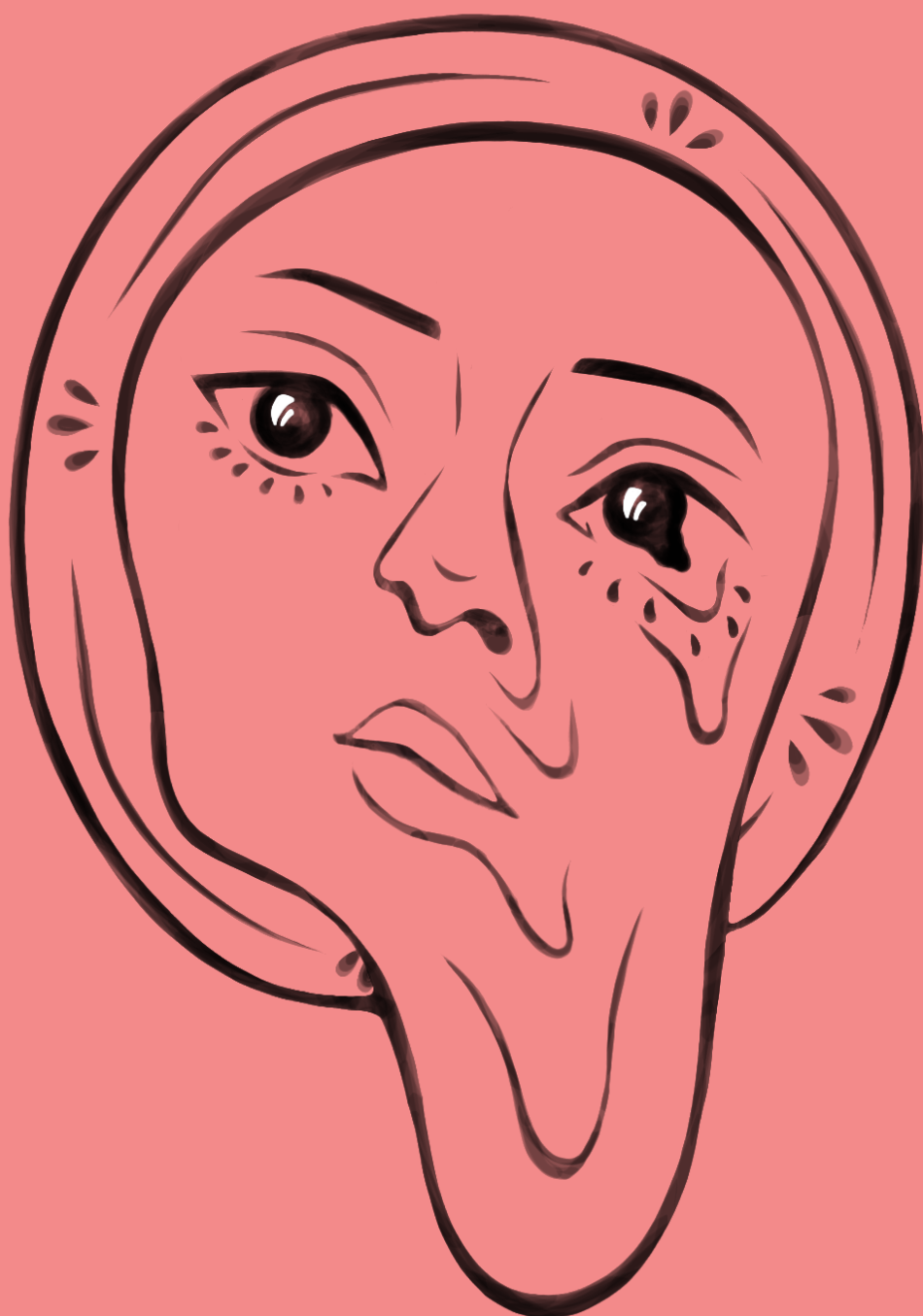
A soft sighing sound, as if from bringing up old memories, dusty cogs of semantic storage jolting back to life.

Then, the strangest sensation yet.

Warmth. A wrinkled hand, still reflecting the sun outside, resting where my cheek is set in glass, now a mere reflection of a long, arduous melting process. But just as I start leaning into the warmth, it's gone again, and my cheek is met with cool air.

The *thumps* and *ticks* continue as they did before, down the marble tiles, but my frame remains – and for the first time in sun knows how long, I wonder what I must look like to living eyes, seeking refuge from the heat in this strange hallway. What does a molten once-person-now-frame look like? Who was I before, if anyone?

As I am lost in these strange thoughts, I can barely register the old footsteps abruptly coming to an end, followed by what I long ago recognized as the crackling embers of a melting furnace.



Summer Rain

translation from Portuguese by Helena Issa

There is something different, special, when it comes to summer rains. Maybe it is the fact that when we say that “the world is falling” it isn’t something entirely removed from reality; the sky does seem to fall in slices.

As a child I remember tasting the smell of the rain in the air. I remember feeling the humidity in my skin. Seeing the day turn gray as if it was ending, a flash of lightning, counting the seconds until a thunder tumbled on the clouds. I remember the preparations this type of rain required: we couldn’t play outside anymore, we had to bring the dog inside, close all the windows and doors, help get the clothes out of the clothesline. The electricity went out quite often when it rained like this, so we always kept enough candles in the kitchen cupboards. We already knew by heart where they were kept – they were white, the length of my forearm, and to ensure we wouldn’t burn our hands on the wax, we had to melt their bottoms to affix them to a cup.

“Eah” someone would always say, dragging out an “eah”, “Saint Peter is cleaning up.”

One second everything was dry, the next everything was soaked.

There was nothing to be done, except wait until the rain passed. These moments were lonesome. I would sit close to any window, the only reliable source of light since you never knew when the electricity would go down, to read the same book I had read so many times before —after all for a book worm, after a couple of years all the books of the house had already been devoured. Sometimes I would let time slip by, immersing myself in my books, other times I would sit and watch the rain fall.

When I got my own room, my lonesome ritual changed slightly. That room had a small balcony, with a hammock that was as green as a gecko. There I would lay down, watching as she approached, with black hanging clouds and raging winds. When she did, I would absorb the way the howling of the park beyond the backyard, I would drown in my lungs its smell, I would count the seconds between lightning and thunder lazily tracking the approach of the storm.

I was a romantic experiencing the might of the pagan gods.

The small roof of the balcony could only provide protection for a short time. And since I didn’t want to explain why I was soaked I would retreat to my room before anyone noticed, putting the hammock away so it didn’t get wet.

Most of the time, I spent sprawled on the sofa, just listening to the flicks of the raindrops, imagining stories of magical worlds. It was a drowsiness of being tethered to the world and floating in the mind. The contrast of the summer’s warmth, and the cool of the rain left my body feeling suspended.

These afternoons were a game of waiting, when will the electricity go down? Will it go down at all? I always hoped the answer would be 'yes'. Which girl doesn't enjoy walking around the house with her sisters, each with a candle in hand, like peasant women, or princesses out of fairy tales — we were too young to have read period novels, if that weren't the case, I assure you they would have joined our fantasies. I felt like I was magic herself, reading a book by candle light, always searching for the oldest looking one in order to complete the aesthetic. Oftentimes I would sit there with an encyclopedia, pretending to understand what I was reading.

Dinners by candle light always had a special something about them, the five of us at the table, the rest of the world in silence. The food in the plate was never fully visible, the colours slightly wrong. I always got distracted by the candle light, somehow it always fluttered— and oh, how I liked, and still do like, that word, there is something so witchy* about it— even in the still air of the kitchen.

With the sun already set for a while— not that it was possible to notice this with the landscape covered by water— everything gained an air of mystery. The imagination that kept me entertained during the sluggish afternoon, backfired on me. The pitch black outside of the glass windows summoning sly monsters who wanted to escape the storm. In that atmosphere, brushing my teeth was on the one hand mysterious, the reflection of the candle magnified by the mirror was hypnotising, and on the other that same fluttering candle in the mirror, the shadows flickering and elongating in sway, utter terrorising.

When I still shared a room with my sisters, my father still read us tales before we fell asleep, and by candle light the tale seemed to gain a breath of magic. Even when swaddled in my blankets, with my stuffed animal in my arms— both being a safeguard in case any monsters came— I started to wish for the electricity to come back. Even if having electricity or not should be relevant for someone about to fall asleep, in the back of my mind it was comforting to know that in a worse case scenario, if I got scared, I could go to my parents, turning on all the lights on my way to their room.

But there is nothing better than sleeping with the sound of the rain on the roof, a (gentle) ocean breaking ashore, the warmth of the summer temporarily drowned.

Now, the rain I associate with summer, that implacable curtain of water, comes at all times of the year. And for some reason mostly after dinner, wholly unannounced. Therefore there are no more preparations to be made, it is simply a surprise to notice that the world outside is drowning. Usually, as it is quite late when it begins, it is impossible to truly see the rain. You can only hear it, or see the droplets that stick to the windows as if they want to pass through the glass. These last years we have only needed the candles once, so we don't prepare our cups anymore, though we still know exactly where the candles and matches are kept. There is no longer a green hammock to lay in, but from the high windows you can see the lightning tear through the skies in blinding veins, flash after flash not waiting for the former one to unstick from your eyelids. I no longer count the seconds between the thunderstrikes, for some reason they rarely rumble.

The storm evaporates as fast as it came.

*In Portuguese in the word 'bruxuleiar' (to flicker/sway), the start of the word sounds like 'bruxo/a' which literally means 'wizard/witch'

After Summer Rain

Helena Issa

Sometimes it rains, and it is as if the sky falls to pieces, like an iceberg sliding to the sea. Sometimes it rains and you hear the pitter-patter on the roof. Sometimes it rains, so little, that you only realize it when your hair begins to frizz. Sometimes it is easy to understand why older civilizations believed in raging gods. Sometimes you are so holed up in your studies that only when you've stepped outside and instantly become soaked by a wall of rain, that you realise that there's a storm outside.

It is like unknowingly stepping out of a spaceship. You are wrenched from where you had been sheltered by the jarring change. From the controlled environment of the university's library –the same airconditioned temperature throughout the whole year, and still, stale air – and then you are thrust into the freshly tamed wild. The humidity sticks to your clothes, the warmth settles gently on your skin and the air – oooh the air – so fresh you can imagine yourself as a clay figure who is being breathed back to life. So fresh, it rises up as though you are burying your fingers on soft and damp earth. It fills your nostrils and worms its way to your lungs. So fresh the grass looks greener and smells as crispy as when it has just been cut. It parts your lips and rests lightly on your tongue like cotton candy, melting away. So fresh that the world doesn't seem as heavy, the weight rained out of your shoulders. It finds a way to gets tendrils on your ribcage and open your heart to whatever might come your way. It is intoxicating. In that reverie the wish, to lay down in the first patch of green you find, bury your fingers on the soil until it crawls under your nails, doesn't feel that far away. The wish, to squeeze out of your shoes and wrench out of your socks and feel the wet grass and soft mud under the soles of your feet. The blissful feeling rises up through your whole body, electrifying every nerve ending in your body. Perhaps you even wish for the rain to come back, so you can twirl, your shoes on one hand and your bag in the other, with your face up to the skies. To laugh away, let free that maniac cackle that hides between your ribs preserved from when you were a child and wild. A laugh you haven't indulged in since you've grown too old, and become a little too aware of the world around you.

During a thunderless storm you would run out to the rain, re-enact the most dramatic scenes your little mind could come up with. Or you would simply lay down and let the rain blur your edges, soften you into the welcoming earth. I know I definitely did. I would beg the adult hesitating on the threshold of the dry and warm house to grab the shampoo and soap so that I could go to school the next day and boast that I had showered in the rain.

The whole world seems to brighten right after a summer shower. The sun stretches through the tired clouds, youthful as if it were a recently hatched butterfly. The birds reawaken, and you hadn't even realised you missed them until you hear them again, chirping away like a heart flutter. Everything is softer yet sharper, all at once. It is never a surprise to see a rainbow grace the sky before our eyes after a rainy afternoon, and yet it still fills you with a childlike wonder.

Literary Event Calendar

by Femke Kapteijns

JULY

3-5 July: The Book Fairy Festival (*Jamaica*)

3-12 July: Bradford Literature Festival (*UK*)

4 July: Alice in Wonderland Day (*UK*)

5 July: Birmingham Literature Escape Festival (*UK*)

5 July: Dordtse boekenmarkt (*NL*)

7-11 July: Penzance LitFest (*UK*)

9-11 July: Umuofia Arts and Books Festival (*Nigeria*)

12 July: Lillo Boekendorp (*Belgium*)

12 July: Caribbean Literature Day (*Caribbean*)

17-18 July: Lakefield Literary Festival (*Canada*)

18 July: Payson Book Festival (*USA*)

26 July: Limburgse boekenmarkt (*Belgium*)

30 July: Paperback Book Day (*USA*)

30 July - 2 August: Castlefest (*NL*)

31 July - 2 August: National Book Club Conference (*USA*)

AUGUST

2 August: Deventer Boekenmarkt (*NL*)

4-9 August: Soma Nami's African Book Fair (*Kenya*)

9 August: Lillo Boekendorp (*Belgium*)

9 August: Moomin's Day

14-16 August: When Words Collide (*Canada*)

14-16 August: International Dublin Writers' Festival (*Ireland*)

15-30 August: Edinburgh International Book Festival (*Scotland*)

18 August: National Bad Poetry Day (*USA*)

21 August: National Poet's Day (*USA*)

22-28 August: Children's Book Week (*Australia*)

27-30 August: Islay Book Festival (*Scotland*)

28-30 August: Dunkeld Writers Festival (*Australia*)

28-30 August: Kampala Writes LitFest (*Uganda*)

29 August: Harlem Book Fair (*USA*)

30 August: Frankenstein Day

30 August: Limburgse boekenmarkt (*Belgium*)

SEPTEMBER

1 September: World Letter Writing Day

1-30 September: Goed Verhaal (NL)

3-12 September: International Literature Festival Berlin
(Germany)

4-6 September: Open Book Festival (South Africa)

8 September: International Literacy Day

9-13 September: Write Around the Murray (Australia)

11-12 September: York National Book Fair (UK)

11-20 September: Jane Austen Festival (UK)

13 September: National Twilighters Day (USA)

18-20 September: Bloody Scotland (Scotland)

18-20 September: Macondo Literary Festival (Kenya)

18-27 September: Appledore Book Festival (UK)

18-27 September: Jersey Festival of Words (Jersey)

19 September: Let's get Bookish (NL)

19 September - 3 October: ILFU (International Literature
Festival Utrecht) (NL)

S E P T E M B E R

22 September: Hobbit Day

24-27 September: Marlborough LitFest (*UK*)

24-27 September: Göteborg Book Fair (*Sweden*)

25 September - 4 October: Wigtown Book Festival (*Scotland*)

25-27 September: Barnes BookFest (*UK*)

25-27 September: Harbor Springs Festival Of The Book (*USA*)

25-27 September: Northern Beaches Readers' Festival (*Australia*)

25-28 September: Jinja International Poetry Festival (*Uganda*)

25-30 September: Nairobi International Book Fair (*Kenya*)

26 September: NL Spicy & Steamy Book Event (*NL*)

26-27 September: Salon du Livre de Wallonie (*Belgium*)

27 September: Limburgse boekenmarkt (*Belgium*)



A f t e r w o r d

from the editors

Dear reader,

Thank you for coming back to read the latest edition of Erato's magazine. And if you're new, hopefully you'll come visit us again in the following academic year! We have brought you this final edition, pocket-sized but profound, to help you cool down during the sultry summer break. May you find something in it that melts away your writer's block.

When I look back on what the lovely students in the Erato's Magazine Committee have achieved this year through their enthusiasm and creativity, I almost feel myself melting away a bit. Thus, I want to thank all of the editors, visual artists, and writers on the team for allowing me to experience the joys and responsibilities of being a (co-)chief editor. To my successor and the next editorial team, good luck and have fun expressing your own dreams and ambitions.

Once again, thanks for everything and have a fantastic summer!

Adieu, Adieu, Adieu

Femke Kapteijns
Co-Chief Editor, Erato's Magazine Committee

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Erato's Literary Magazine . Created for
&
by students

