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AN NCH STUDENT CORONAZINE

issue

03

spring

MAY 2020
ISSUE 03

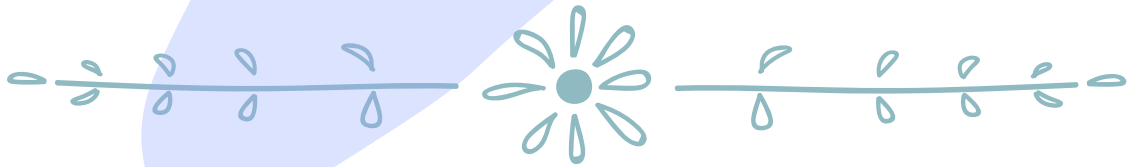
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03

spring (n.)

the season after winter and before summer, in which vegetation begins to appear, in the northern hemisphere from March to May and in the southern hemisphere from September to November.



MAY 2020
ISSUE 03 - PROMPT
RELEASE

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a note from the editor

Dear all,

Against all odds, it seems that April is finally over. I doubt that Kronos himself could have stretched time to the extent that the past 30 days have lasted. Perhaps it's settling into new routines, perhaps it's being away from London, perhaps it's coming to terms with the fact that your family are people too— either way, I am happy to be trudging slowly forward.

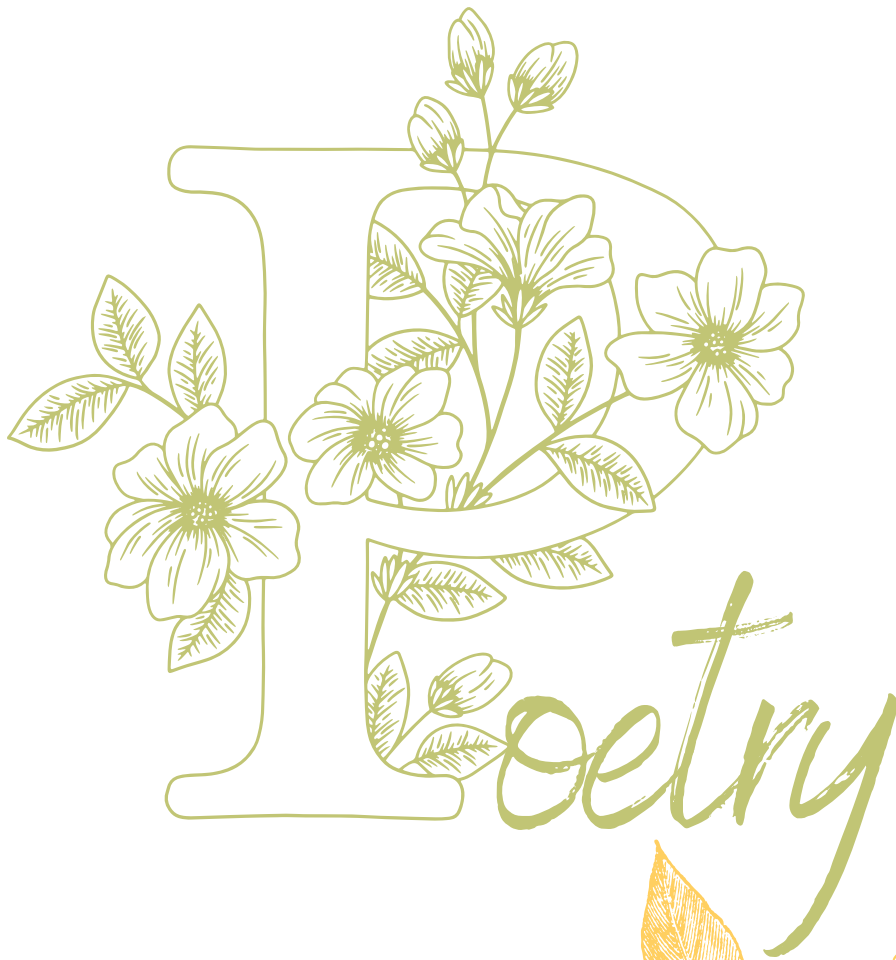
Things - touch wood - appear to be lightening up, in every sense of the word. Here in Switzerland many shops and services are returning to their usual routines, including bars and beauty salons, homes to my two favourite vices. In France, primary and secondary schools will be reopening on the 11th and I understand that some fast food chains in the UK are planning on doing the same. Days are longer and sunnier, nights are shorter and warmer — it's a good time to relax and enjoy oneself a little before the chaos of exams. Spring is, after all, the season of rebirth, of new beginnings and fresh starts.

*It's also a season that seems to hold religious significance across all times, all cultures, all places, from the ascent of Christ to the descent of Persephone. One of my all-time favourite takes on the vernal religion is Ari Åstler's 2019 film *Midsommar*, in which a group of friends travel to Sweden for a midsummer festival but end up taking part in a ritualistic pagan cult instead (we've all had those nights). It's stunningly beautiful and deeply disturbing; I highly recommend it to anyone with an eye for detail and a strong stomach. In the meanwhile, I hope the skaldic florals of this issue's theme do it homage.*

Once again I thank everyone for their contributions and messages of support. I apologize to Samuel Doering for missing his beautiful essay on Home in our last issue and hope you all enjoy reading it in this one as much as I did.

STAY SAFE, STAY CONNECTED

Victoria Constock-Kershaw



MAY BABY

Katy Glynn

*I'm a may-baby, born in Spring,
When everything else is being born,
All busy, hibernating, tucked away in Fall.
Pouring over projects in October,
To have them pop-out and march,
All youth, vibrating and warm.*

*I'm a may-adult, grown in Spring,
When everything else is being born.
Already busy, fretting away,
Mobilising days into decades.
Pressing hard and pushing on, like mars
I was fiery, now weary and worn.*

*In Spring, when everything else is being born.
Amid the flowers, to stumble on a stone.
Engraved upon it the month of May,
All pretty and flowing and dancing away.
Followed the name, ever so grave,
Beneath hard block letters, I laze.*



PASCAL'S LAMENT

Elliot Riley

*When did they differ?
To eat to live or to live to eat,
Shouldn't they be the same thing?*

*Hamotzi is said
Life and love left scattered on the table
Of life given and life shared
We eat the same bread
This is my body.
These are my rules.*

*Don't mix meat and milk, he said.
You'll come to resent that golden calf
Those hollow, glowing tablets.
A happy life does not come cheap
And where's the joy in knowing your prize?*

*For this? Lamb? No, you want mutton.
For how long? He said
Until it is done.*



SONNET COVID-18

The Bard of Bexley

*Shall I compare this to a normal day?
It is not lovely and my temper's shot:
I pass the days, hours, minutes locked away,
The cruellest month, it seems, has lost the plot.
Sometimes too quick the eye of hope does shine,*

*One wonders if it knows how much we've sinned;
As ev'ry year we chance ourselves 'gainst time,
Burn ozone and eat foods that should be tinned;*

*I promised hope to those whose lives I made,
But now the secret's out, the truth they know'st:
Death shouts aloud 'You're standing in my shade!'
The debt's unpaid, and you're the ones that owe'st.*

*If herd immunity dare come so near,
I'll drown my hope and heart in wine and beer.*





Boing



I STILL CALL AUSTRALIA HOME

Samuel Doering

Each time I listen to Peter Allen's I Still Call Australia Home, my heart warms and I tear up. The first verse is particularly resonant for me:

*I been to cities that never close down
From New York to Rio and Old London Town
But no matter how far or how wide I roam
I still call Australia home*

Hearing this takes me back to being a young boy growing up on a farm in the sticks. When I cast my mind back to home, it's a true out-of-body experience. When I close my eyes, I am transported. ...

I can recall the mid-century wooden windows in my bedroom that rattle in the breeze and let in both the fine dust and the aroma of farm animals. I can hear the seeder humming through the yard, or a ute speeding off to douse a spot-fire. I can hear galahs flying overhead as Dad mows the lawn. And the flies - oh god, the flies - swarm and crawl.

As I imagine myself walking barefoot across the gravel outside, the grain silos glint in the sun, a choir of freshly-weaned calves call from the yards and an enthusiastic brood of chooks come running over from under the mulberry tree curious to see if I have a handful of grain or some veggie peels. Then I step on a prickly, and I have to hop on one foot to extract the little bastard.

Sheep blurt in the stubble beyond the fence and I can see cattle milling around the hay ring, which is, actually, square. I can hear the big gum tree next to the shed swaying and then I peer across the paddocks towards the hills. I can see neighbours houses far in the distance, and the church a few hundred metres down the road which was one of the first structures in the area. I remember walking home from services there, and I remember the day it closed.

I can smell mum cooking tomato sauce from the fruit garden as I pick quinces. I plonk them in the rumpus room, next to the pumpkins and walnuts and rush into the kitchen to smell the bubbling pot of sauce. I realise the fire needs stoking and I sneak into the pantry to get a Tim Tam before guiltily walking outside to fill a wheelbarrow of wood for the night.

One thing I dearly miss from home is the stars in the sky. The Milky Way would soar across the night sky as stars sparkled in every direction. The Southern Cross, that curious constellation adopted as a patriotic symbol of Australia, would beam brightly. Sadly, the stars are non-existent in London, snuffed out by the lights of the city.

If I'm not home on the farm at Neales Flat, I would often go out driving in my little, faded-pink car - with Pink Panther seat covers - to see friends or run errands. Sometimes the fanbelt screams, or the clutch is a little touchy, but my faded-pink 'buzzbox' gets me from one place to another. Some people chuckle when I emerge from the car, but it never bothers me. When I drive, I give the friendly 'two-fingered salute' to all who pass by and as I speed along, I could pick out the crops in the hills and on the plains: wheat, barley, oats, lupins, canola, peas.

I can recall the changing seasons. The brown and dusty vistas of summer to the greening days of autumn, the dormant and grey days of winter and the lush, roll-of-the-dice days of spring.

I yearn to see the sprawling vineyards of the Barossa once again, I love how they change through the seasons; from the lush greenery of spring and summer to the leaf-shedding, coppery days of autumn and the comatose and clipped weeks of winter.

I keep my eyes closed and I remember how the Adelaide Crows - the best AFL team in my opinion - would be on the telly every week during footy season. During the game, Dad would sometimes rise from his chair to get another glass of port. Mum might flick through a newspaper during the ad breaks and my sister would probably crawl up to read a book but keeping an eye on the score. If the Crows are likely to lose, my brother will probably have snuck off to play video games. If they are winning, however, he would often make a lot of noise.

There was footy during the winter and cricket during the summer. Big Bash, T20 or Test Series. I recall some people complaining that the game is too drawn out, or boring even, but I can't think of anything more skilful than hitting a ball hurtling more than a hundred miles with nothing more than a glorified stick. I think it's exhilarating.

I miss the pleasant family gatherings that Christmas and Easter would afford. A cold, northern-hemisphere Christmas is nice, but nothing beats barbequed meats and cold salads, with a fruity desert to finish off, while relaxing in a t-shirt, shorts and thongs - the footwear, not the underwear.

I often ask myself, what makes home special to me. Is it my mum's home cooking? Unquestionably. Is it the freedom a farm off the beaten track affords? Without a doubt. Is it the allure of eccentric characters, a tight-knit community or a sun-burnt land oozing with hope and ambition? Absolutely.

But, more than food, freedom and folks, it is family. Family means the world to me, and, right now, it is family that I yearn for. They keep me stable, give me guidance and teach me love. Yet now, I don't know when I'll see them again. I had looked forward to three precious months at home again, but, alas, all I have now is memories of home to think of until I can return once more.

All I can do now is close my eyes to Peter Allen's melodious tune and be instantly transported home: Someday we'll all be together once more

*When all of the ships come back to the shore
I realise something I've always known
I still call Australia home.*

*That one Aussie at NCH,
S.D.*

PERSEPHONE'S DEPARTURE

Victoria Comstock-Kershaw

"What's with him?"

"It's Spring tomorrow."

"Ah."

The two Gods watched the figure at the bar. It sat slumped against the stained marble, head upheld by white boney fingers, its blood-red eyes glaring down into an interminable glass of ichor.

"Don't worry mate," said the first God, leaning over to pat the figure gingerly on the back. "It's only six months. She'll be back before you know it."

"S'not like you need her anyway," chimed in the second. "You're top dog! Mr Death Himself! He-Of-Many-Names!"

He-Of-Many-Names hiccuped miserably and watched a droplet of snot fall into his glass.

"No use, fellas," came a booming voice from behind the bar. "He's been like this all evening. Not a thing on Olympus that could cheer him up now."

Dionysus has once been the God of winemaking, ritual madness, theatre and drunken ecstasy. He was possibly the most sensible present. "Can I get you anything, bud?" continued the bartender, turning his back to the figure. Black tendrils of smoke were beginning to rise from the icy floor surrounding it, turning the air deathly cold.

"M'be some peanuts," it muttered. The tendrils faded and Dionysus nodded and ducked behind the bar.

"Darling, you'll be fine. Here, help me out. Swipe left or right?" Aphrodite's words too were slightly slurred, although it was unclear if this was from alcohol or the excessive silicone injections overfilling her scarlet lips. She waved a phone in front of the disheveled Lord of Darkness and pointed at the screen. "Reckon he's worth a shot?"

"Leave him, girl," muttered Dionysus as he dropped a plate of stale nuts in front of the pair. "Your uncle's in no mood for your new-fangled nonsense."

Aphrodite shrugged a set of tanned shoulders and leaned back on her barstool. "No fun, the pair of you. At least you two still get worship. Men will down their drinks as long as they've got sorrows to drown it in. I've had to adapt, see?" The phone vibrated in her perfectly manicured hands and she began to furiously tap away once more.

Dionysus shrugged. "Liver failure doesn't count as worship," he said moodily as he watched the King of the Underworld reach over the bar and pull out a bottle of tequila. "He's like this every year, you know. Spring comes around and—"

"Why won't she staaaaaay?" howled the figure. "She won't—" he hiccuped once more, "stay. Not for me. Not for the dog. The bastard thing's got six heads and she's still leaving me to look after it."

"Three heads, darling." Aphrodite corrected him, eyes still glued to her mobile. "You're seeing double."

"It's her mother!" bellowed the Oblivion Master, kicking the underside of the bar. "Her bitch of a mother! What is it with women and their mothers?" He turned to Dionysus. "Your mother-in-law is a bloody spider, you lucky bastard. Mine's the Goddess of Fertility. Three bloody daughters and she's still not happy. The youngest is going to a liberal arts college, for Zeus' sake! What else am I meant to do?" The Prince of the Void began to sob into his drink once more and Aphrodite patted him on the back. "I'm going to miss her so much," he moaned, wiping his nose on the hem of a black robe. "There aren't many of us left, you know. Hera put a bullet in her head after Grizwold v. Connecticut. Ares is lying in some ditch in Afghanistan with a drone missile in his back. Apollo drowned himself in so much cocaine once the Solar Panel suckers came along that he hasn't seen the light of day since. Nobody believes in us anymore. They left us to die. The same bastards that created us—— they left us to die."

"Now, now," cooed Aprodite, gently taking the bottle of tequila from Hades' skeletal hands. "I promise we'll come visit."

"No you won't," he pouted. "Nobody likes to visit me. They say it's too miserable. Apparently the souls of the dead don't make for good home decor." He paused and snatched another bottle. "She always keeps it so pretty when she's around, you know. Lots of fresh flowers and good fruit in the kitchen. She even lets me tend the garden once in a while."

"It's her job, darling. You knew what you were getting into."

Hades took another swig and grumbled something about global warming.

"Only six more months..." muttered Dionysus as he took away the bottle.

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04

space (n.)

a continuous area or expanse which is free, available, or unoccupied.

the dimensions of height, depth, and width within which all things exist and move.

the physical universe beyond the earth's atmosphere.

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The next issue will be released on **Sunday 17th of May**

Please send all submissions, comments, complaints or suggestions to **vk1613@students.nchlondon.ac.uk** or anonymously via the link sent via email

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