

# THE UNCA NY

There are cobwebs spelling out secrets in the corner of every house. Shadows full of familial ghosts cast by spacecrafts in the sky. Let the strangely familiar and the not-quite-right infect you. Watch yourself become alien too.





*Dana Collins (she/her)*

This issue took a longer time than we thought it would to create, and I'm always blown away by how understanding and patient all of our readers and submitters are. I've absolutely loved being creeped the fuck out by you guys this issue. I hope everyone else is suitably perturbed too. x

# *EDITORS' NOTES*

I'm so pleased with the calibre of the content in this issue - it's been amazing to be able to welcome work from both familiar names and newcomers too. The uncanny seems to have struck a chord with our submitters and we hope our readership feel the same. x

*Carys Richards (she/they)*



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# A HARPY WATCHING THE STARS

*by Kayleigh Jayshree*

She folds her wings around her, murmurs a contented hum, nibbling on salted peanuts, getting dust on her beak. Her vision makes the stars wobble, tilt in slow motion. Tomorrow she will begin her solitary flight across the planet, but tonight, she watches the moon, as alone as she is, glinting the world. Cloud dust on the tips of her feathers, she is part of the sky for a moment, even without flight. A couple kiss on the same rooftop, unable to comprehend anything other than their love. Only drunk men can see her, and even then, they see her as something to be taken. She tears the couple's hearts into strips, the peanuts scattering across the floor. Sad to live this life, grateful to the moon for watching and reflecting her pathway home.

Kayleigh (she/they) finds comfort in memories, even as they twist and change. She is based in the North of England. Her work is published by Ink, Sweat and Tears, Lunate Fiction, The Bitchin' Kitsch, and others.



# P O L L Y

MIRIAM  
WATERS

Near where Polly lived was a copse, on the edge of which stood the burnt shell of a house. For years its only occupants had been squatters, and finally one of them had set the crumbling place on fire. Since then no one had lived there, but the copse was still littered with old items of furniture left behind, and smashed crockery, and clothes. The brambles had claimed house and furniture.

In the winter, when the wind rattled the ivy, Polly liked to visit the copse. She stuffed her hands into her armpits and doubled up against the weather, crunching broken glass underfoot. She liked the forest because it represented wildness. It was the opposite of her warm, middle-class home where everything had a function and a place. This effect was only enhanced by the constant presence of nameless litter in amongst the glossy black leaves; needles, cans, plastic bags, tissues, tampons. The deeper you penetrated into the wood, the larger the litter became, until you were looking at mattresses, sofas, wardrobes and washing machines, all obsolete.

If there was someone there, teenage smokers or crack addicts, Polly hid amongst the trees as a good girl should. In her dark coat with her dark hair only her white hands and face gave her away. She often pictured herself as no more than a pair of eyes, with a skeleton underneath to support. In this mood she would cling, breathless, to the pine bark, and try to become transparent. Sometimes she imagined her spirit was leaving her body and joining them, dancing in the clearing, mingling with the fumes in the air. At others she believed the sprays of creeper were her nerves, tangled around a tree. But when her clearing was empty, she



would venture in, examining defunct household appliances, climbing inside washing machines or sleeping on the leaf-strewn sofa. She felt safe there. This was how the world would be in a thousand years.

As the nights got darker and colder, Polly ventured deeper into the copse. There she found a wardrobe covered in ivy, which had all but reverted to its state of nature. Sadly, the neutered wood had not been able to put down roots. It loomed, misshapen and warped, out of the dark. The doors hung slightly loose. She stepped into the mildew and must.

An old coat, greasy and stiff, smothered her. She ducked down, feeling with her hands. Beneath lay more rags, and a disintegrating plastic bag. It was full of treasures. Needles, fag ends, and then underneath something rusted dry. A lump that smelled foul. Polly put her hand in the bag, and flinched back when she found it was riddled with decay. Everything here would last a thousand years or more, but whatever was in the bag was organic, like her. She folded it up and crushed it to her, trying to stifle the smell. The mess was on her hands now. She wiped them on the coat but accumulated another coating of filth from that, soft like ashes.

She pushed open the door. Outside was dark. She saw a white face glowing in the wardrobe and screamed. It revealed itself to be her reflection; there was a mirror in the door of the wardrobe. Polly was a decapitated head. She waved her hands about, but they did not appear. The forest was a blur. Even with her nose up against the glass, it was too dark to see anything but her face. Her eyes appeared empty, moonless, though the moon was bright. The mirror misted up. She was gone altogether. Polly had the strange sensation of sinking, like vertigo.

When she got home, Polly scrubbed at her hands. Under the fluorescent orange light, her fingers were red and black. Streaks of charcoal mingled with blood. She wondered if she had cut herself on the needles in the bag. She scrubbed harder, but the stain wouldn't come off. They had left their mark on her. She wished she could have smashed the mirror, but she hadn't had the strength. She had vanished. Melted. Disintegrating, like the matter in the bag. The mirror had taken her from herself. More easily erased than an object. Polly was gone, but her disposed and disposables would last a thousand years, immortal.

Miriam Waters is 17 and writes short fiction, poems and plays. Her article *Creation, Veneration, Catharsis: Humanity's Artistic Persistence* was published in Dustcover last year.

# h a l l o w e e n

*by Becky Nin*

On this night the dead haunts between pages, eyes wide open  
Offerings are the rooms of pumpkin pies,  
crucifixes underneath the goddess of mercy altar  
They helplessly bat at the rains of coins from the sky  
Letters on signposts were burnt after their coffins stopped ringing  
Scream because the haunted are unrecognisable as their wills.  
Goddess statue sends crows to her sons, but the dumb supper has been cooked.  
Outside, the planes approach with their cameras' flash,  
eroding picture books, stamp albums  
to be forgotten, buried. Do not make attempts at remembrance.



# Something Is W r o n g

*by Jack E. Rowe*

Jack E. Rowe (he/they). Jack is a student at the University of Manchester and posts his drawings online: on Twitter at @drawposting and on Instagram at @jack\_drawposting. He loves the uncanny in all forms of media, especially film.



# Tools for Drowning

by James Carstairs

An unopened fear,  
tethered into your mug.  
Did we ever think about how,  
a smashed mug,  
Chunks of white iceberg,  
is different to the glass?  
Perhaps not,  
with these tools for drowning,  
Making yourself the fish to catch  
Yourself in the water;  
And the ice above you is either ice  
Or a boat, a wooden roof.  
Ice is like water, is like glass  
Sand seems like a foriegn concept now.  
A sick joke,  
acidic at the back of your throat

# Seahorse

by James Carstairs

Vetted upon vetted  
A spout for a mouth  
Hourglass tears  
A spine to let them out  
64-string dreams  
Horror;-  
Cascaded  
Murder in the red  
A repeat, yet to be painted

**James Carstairs is a filmmaker from the North of England and the founder of Final Girl Films.**

# LOST FISHERMAN

B Y E M I R Y E N E R





“My grandfather has an uncanny way of making my material world seem meaningless. He is a fisherman who has always lived by the classic, old-school, simple rules of a good life: take what you need and share the rest, never lie, care for those around you. He is a happy and peaceful old man who never lived in the copiousness that we idolize in my world, but what’s more unsettling is that he has no desire to do so. I’ve often been told I bear an uncanny resemblance to my grandfather, and I sometimes wonder if that resemblance goes more than skin deep.” - Emir Yener

# Extract from

## Richard Madeley's

## University Diaries

We keep a tidy house. There are five of us and we have people over most nights but we keep a tidy house. Although the styrofoam takeaway boxes are precariously stacked on the bin's overflowing lips we keep a tidy house. The fruit and vegetables in the fruit and vegetable bowl on the kitchen table are oozing a brown liquid and flies scramble like fighter jets when you near. Water leaks from the extractor fan onto the stove when the shower above it overflows which it does all the time because the drain is always blocked by hair (we have a lot of hair) and you can't have a shower longer than a minute without the water reaching your ankles but you wouldn't want to be in the shower much anyway because the water is barely lukewarm. There's hair everywhere but we keep a tidy house. We have people over most nights but I keep to myself in my room. I can hear them choking on bong rips and laughing through the thin walls and floors. I don't mind it though because I can never sleep noise or no noise. I've never seen a rodent or other vermin in our house and that's because we keep a tidy house. By the front door below the letter box there is a carpet of leaflets advertising student-discounted clubs, decade-themed events, raves, cocktail pitchers and three-for-two pizzas. On the fridge someone has stuck all the business cards they've been given by dealers, who scowl the parks and student quarters looking for new customers. We must have the contact details of all the dealers in the M14 postcode. Sometimes they give out lighters with their numbers on, which always confused me because it must be more expensive and time consuming to buy the lighters, print the stickers, cut out the stickers, and apply them to the lighter. Furthermore it would be more space-efficient and discrete to use business cards because you could easily fit one hundred cards in your pocket(s) but it would be conspicuous to walk around platt fields park carrying one hundred lighters, although stranger things have happened. Anyway what do I know. I've never even made a transaction with a dealer. All I know is that we keep a tidy house. There's shit on the floor from people going into the backyard area to smoke and not wiping their feet on the door mat but we keep a tidy house. There are cities of mould on the ceiling above the shower like splotches of light seen from space stations at night. Someone tried to wipe it away but it just smeared and made it look worse. We don't have a dryer so we set sail from rickety masts in the living room and wait for days among the shrouded crucifixes. I heard this wasn't very good for the lungs; something about all that moisture in the air.

I came home one day and Lex was in the living room. 'Hello Robyn,' he said. He was rolling a cig with that Romanian tobacco that could make Humphrey Bogart wince. He was shit at rolling and got baccy everywhere. The problem was that he didn't form the baccy into a cohesive sausage by rolling and pressing the paper between his thumbs and forefingers, he just went straight to sealing it up resulting in a crumpled rollie full of air. I wanted to bring this up with him but I couldn't. I'd already pissed him off when I expressed my concern over his refusal to preheat the oven.

'You might get food-poisoning,' I told him. 'It might not cook properly.'

'So what if I cook it for longer and it's hot? I'm vegetarian I can't get food-poisoning.' 'So am I but you have to make sure things are cooked properly. You can still get food-poisoning if things are frozen and stuff. Why do you think all the packaging and all the cookbooks say to preheat the oven?'

So I didn't want to be the cunt who's always on other people's backs, always criticising, always being pedantic, so I bit my tongue.

'Your day,' Lex said. 'How was it.'

'It was fine,' I sighed and returned the question. He excused himself to remove his binder. When he came back he said 'boring,' and rolled another cig. I don't know whether to pry and possibly appear nosy and persistent, or leave him alone and appear cold and uncaring. I choose the latter, I thought he seems like he wants to be left alone. I don't know what friends are supposed to do.

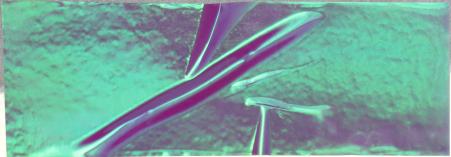
That night I took out the rubbish because we keep a tidy house. The street is cold and dark and the bass from the club at the end of the road shakes the trees stiff with Autumn. The main road rumbles always with the police sirens döppeling northward. It's one of those old squat red brick terraces sprawling forever, streets and streets and streets once for the textile workers canned in six to a room, no all students under one landlord who lives far away. The roots of old oaks upturn the patchwork tarmac pavements slick with rain. Maybe I could hear some major chords shyly strung on a second hand guitar coming from an open window, maybe there were the click-clacking of ridiculous heels and peels of laughter receding into the horizon of headlights and neon.

But suddenly it all stopped. First everything went quiet, as if I had been plunged underwater. I couldn't hear the scratching dead leaves in the shadows, or the bass or the lullaby nylon

arpeggios. A few seconds later all the lights went out. The flickering streetlamplight finally gave up, the glows from the terrace's curtained windows all simultaneously died, and that purple aura that blurred day to night yielded to the stars. I emerged from the alley of the bins, my eyes adjusting to the new darkness. Down the road in the middle of the street a figure caught my periphery. There were no headlights on the main road to cast their silhouette, I saw only an impression of their form, their tall, still, patient form. I tried to get a better look, but when my eyes focused on them, they disappeared. I could only make them out in the corner of my eye. I take a step towards them but as soon as my foot touches the rain, the figure's head explodes into spectrums of incredible light, light so perfect, so clear, a light of no colour but the colour of Them, a light that burns like a dying star all that chaos all The Light That Never Dies Even When You Close Your Eyes even when They congregate on cliffs falling into the waves and talk about how their days were and what they'll have for tea.



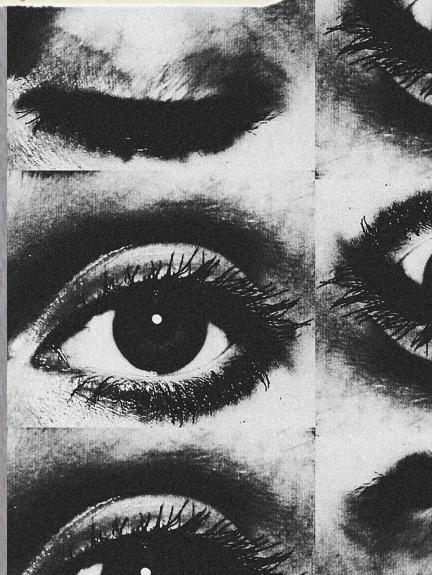
Thomas Evamy



## Trapped In Richard Madeley's Living Room (After He Lured Me to his House With Some Chips, Then Inexplicably Disappeared Upstairs Locking The Door Behind Him)

A TV plays in an empty room. The station's closing ident is the only light in the house, the only light anywhere, and casts the shadows of small toys made monstrous by the Glow (feel that weight on your lungs, my child... We're With You All Night). The image sputters and rolls and a faint jingle plays that takes you back to short rainy Saturdays in front of the set, winding back tapes, the same half hours, over and over. Only thing different is that it's dark outside, but it's not night. Something about the texture of the sky - the broadcast - that lets our memories slowly dissolve, memories we never had. Soon. Soon. Not now. One more time, one more episode! After the song of a thousand dead and dying nations fades into the atmosphere, a missing persons notice flashes before the signal is cut. Their name is Isold Lattimer. Their face is familiar to all of us. We've seen them in the periphery of our dreams. Like so many voices, faces and names, they disappeared from the physical and digital realm without a trace. They are suspended in a state beyond life and death - on a plane of unknowing, of forgetting. How many half-ghosts prowl this purgatory? An empty cloud of spectres ringing bells that no one hears, sending ripples across vast oceans that only return to their origin. But not only are there missing persons here; there also entire peoples and civilisations wiped from history. Some have made it to whatever afterlife they believe awaits them, but those who aren't on the spreadsheet, the official body account, remain here, floating above it all. All those countless lost generations, lost souls, and Isold.

Thomas Evamy



s i m r a n k a u r



b l u e   e n c o u n t e r

# s i m r a n k a u r

Simran Kaur is a surrealist still life, creative portrait, fashion photographer and artist currently based in London. She is Punjabi and she was born and raised in Italy

Simran's main objective is to make the viewer's dreams come true by creating intriguing setups, but she does also creates mental health and environmental awareness with her experimental photography. At the same time, she also creates dreamlike abstract visuals to make the viewer explore another reality.

Simran Kaur gets inspired by people's dreams and visions, but her childhood memories also inspire her to create various projects. To keep her childhood memories alive she started doodling digital and traditional illustrations which helps her to understand how she feels about those foggy memories of her childhood.

# b l u e e n c o u n t e r

"Blue Encounter" is a traditional doodle illustration exploring the acceptance of sadness. The colour blue is traditionally connected to sadness. In fact, we also say "I feel blue" to say that we're feeling sad. Accepting our own feelings and emotions can already be hard especially if they are feelings related to sadness.

# Hometown Preservation

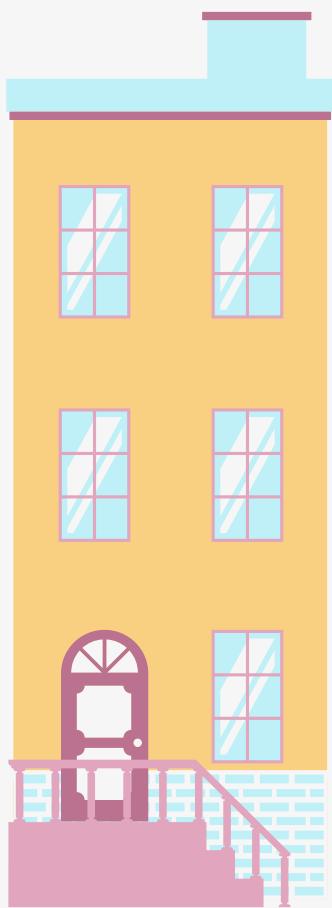
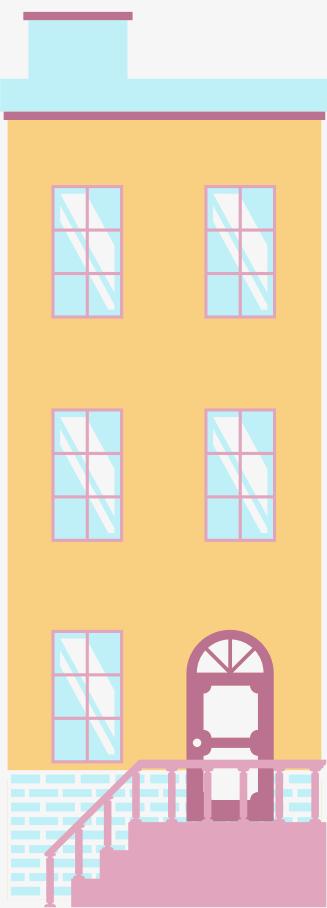
## Daphne Harris

Chunks of aluminium bite down on soft dirt,  
squashing a daisy or two.  
Static from mamgu's out-of-date television  
fills my head, until I find a rhythm.  
Blue skies haven't blessed this land since august,  
no one is sure when they will return.

Darkness an oddity comforting during  
autumn and winter's in-between,  
like sitting at the back of a crumbling church.  
Fingers half frozen and shaking,  
but the five other members of  
the congregation make you feel known -  
even if the concept of god is foreign.

It's an everyone-knows-everyone place,  
backroads build traffic,  
but it's okay because she's  
the second cousin's mother.  
They're keeping well, apparently.

While the concrete may be  
cracked from last summer's heat,  
the grit box has been empty  
for well over a decade,  
the home we've always known  
is right where we left it.



# FIG LEARY

# PRAYER TO AN

# ARTICHOKE

Before we met each other I knew you.

Tasted you. You were bitter  
when I bit into you on the holiday  
when there was nothing else to eat  
and I could not read the menu.

You slid down my throat like cough medicine,  
and it took the glares of the waiter,  
the bartender and the family on the other table,  
who never looked in my direction,  
for me to not spit you out,

to regurgitate or choke.

I met you again in the meadow  
outside your thatched house.

You were beside a clump of nettles,  
the polite ones, which did not flake  
my hands as I reached for yours.

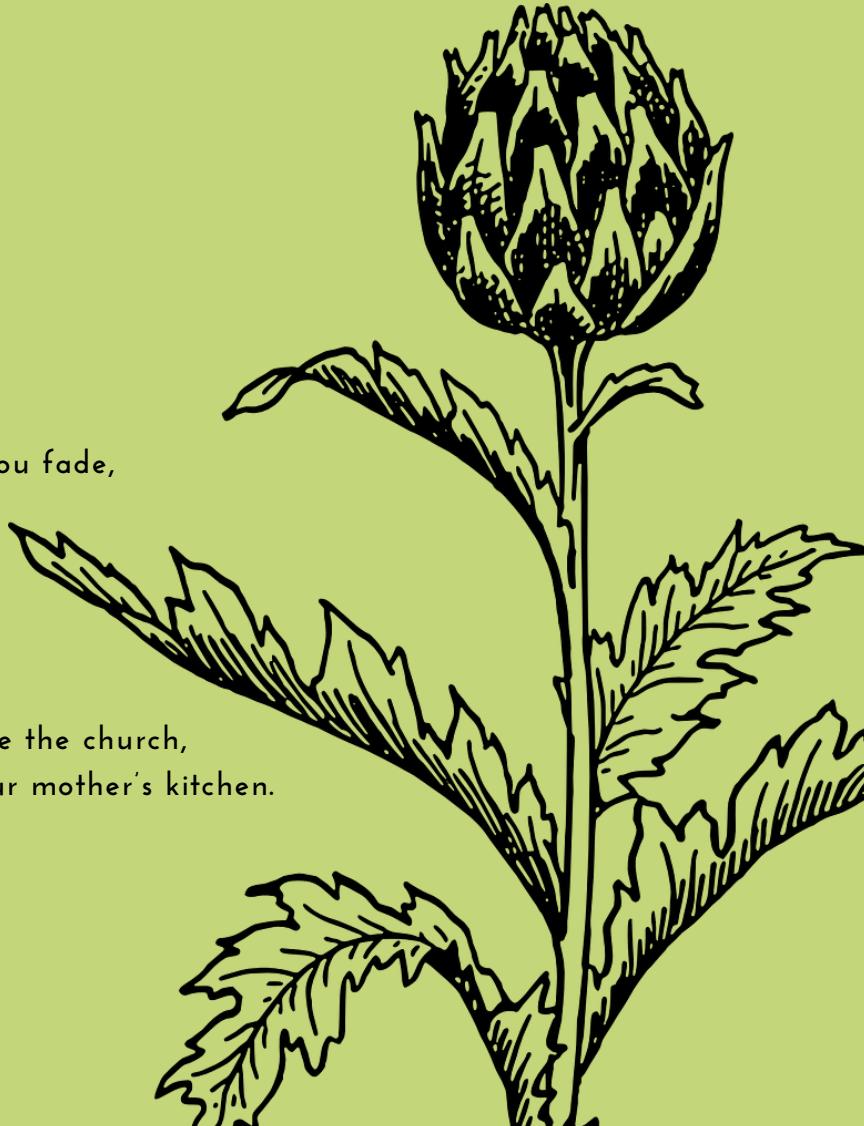
You were green then.

You hadn't faded - I never watched you fade,  
Green and green and green as veins,  
you were clutched like a small heart

and I did not want to pick you,  
did not want to remove you  
from the mud-churned alleyway beside the church,  
or the lemon scented windowsill in your mother's kitchen.

You knew me to chew, to eat,  
and I never opened my jaw.

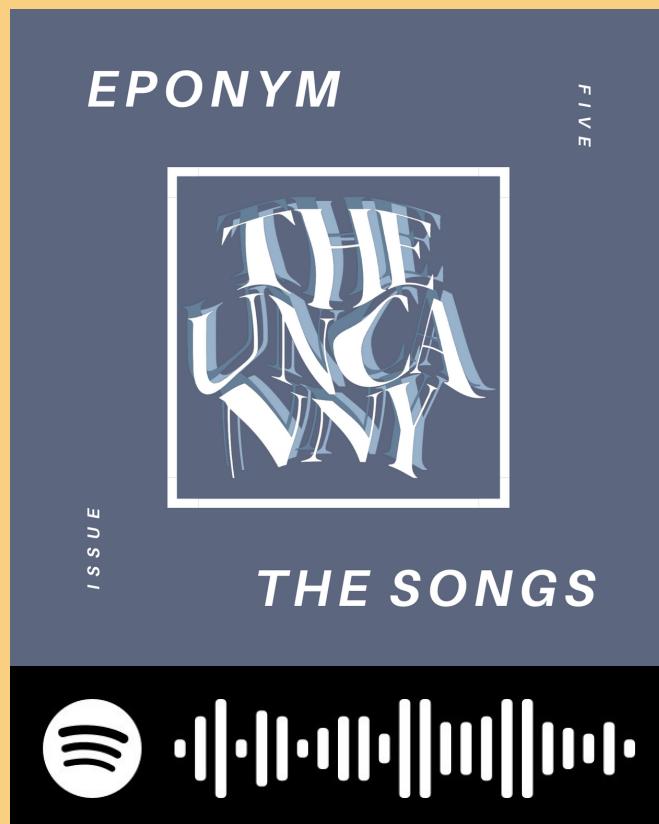
Fig Leary is a Poet from the South of England who is currently studying towards their BA in English Literature and Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia. They can be found on twitter @FigLeary



# EPONYM 5.0: THE UNCANNY

*as always, find us at @eponymmag on  
instagram and twitter.*

*check out our uncanny playlist on spotify:*



*special thanks to our outstanding  
contributors and to our readers for their  
continued support - we couldn't make these  
issues happen without you.*