

Letter From the Editors: Welcome

Hello and thank you for picking up *Gēola*, the first issue of HOB. HOB takes its name from the Hobgoblin (or Hobthrush, in Northern English), these are creatures - generally male - whose purpose is to assist with the domestic tasks, cleaning while human inhabitants sleep, their labour exchanged only for food. Hobgoblins are traditionally helpful household spirits, assisting with household tasks, especially associated with dairies and farms. They are volatile, if wronged, they become the Boggart - a creature dedicated to malevolent trickery, but the Hobgoblin itself is understood as a helpful (if unpredictable) creature. After the popularisation of Christianity, the Hobgoblin became blended with the boggart and was associated with harm and mischief, but before that their purpose was to "help maids with their early morning chores". The domestic space is generally associated with the female - the private, ordered domain of women. The hobgoblin, entering this space, assisting to maintain it but likely to become dedicated to its disruption, is a male force. The 'hob' in their name comes from 'elf', but it is impossible not to link it with our contemporary understanding of the hob as a cooker, at the heart of domestic life - a site of care, connection and functionality. We are interested in the links between these two readings, the wild domestic, the domesticated wild.

Winter is a time for domesticity, for turning inward, hibernating. Being in the light when it's there and making your own when it's not. It is also a time for inviting wildness into your home. This is seen in both the tradition of the Lord of Misrule, a figure of joyous festive mischief, and Christmas trees, holly, mistletoe - filling the house with evergreens. In a time of death and decay - celebrate liveliness. Bring the outside in, make it welcome. Celebrate the wild and unknowable - a time for play and a time for digging deep. Midwinter is associated with celebrations, but it is also a time of struggle, of working through the long, dark cold months. Winter holidays (Christmas, solstice, Hanukkah, the more ancient Saturnalia and Yule) centred around feasting and abundance are reflected in most cultures because we need light, warmth, joy and connection to fortify us and to break up the monotony of the short cold days. To carry us through.

It is in the twin spirits of weirdness and connection that we started HOB, an attempt to rewind the home. We kept the submission guidelines broad, asking contributors to stick to the theme of *Gēola*, an Anglo-Saxon word for winter solstice and the surrounding weeks, as defined by Bede, but to engage with it how they like. The work in *Gēola* is wide ranging, from current domestic to neolithic life, from poetry to film. The quality (and quantity!) of submissions surpassed our expectations, and reading through them was joyous and invigorating. We are very grateful to everyone who trusted us with their work, and even more so that that work is rigorous, moving, surprising, funny and varied. *Gēola* includes work that focuses on domesticity, neolithic life, nature, grief, folklore and more. We hope to produce an edition of HOB for each season, so, thank you for reading and we'll see you in the spring.

Aphra HB, Polly Chedgzoy

H O B



Issue 1
GĒOLA

WINTER
SOLSTICE
2023



Our Artists (In order featured)

Louis Holland Bonnett is an environmental historian from Newcastle upon Tyne who loves the woods.

Zosia Kibalo wants to show you around her unknown, grand and whimsical world.

Tom Cowin is a poet and author of two pamphlets. He also work as a gardener and homeless support worker.

Tabby Ewing is a writer and theatre maker currently studying at Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

Rhiley Jade is a writer living on top of a lake in the middle of the USA. She is never without a story.

Kat Steel is a graverobber by day and a supernatural spectator by night .

Sam Times works with sculpture and coloured ink drawings in an untutored fashion .

Margene Stuart is a writer, currently of short stories and recent MA creative writing graduate.

Josef Thompson a filmmaker and playwright based in Suffolk and London.

Ewan Alderman is a valley boy poet and archaeologist now based in London.

Patrick MacDonald makes drawings and paintings recording moments and memories.

Marina Scott is a writer , they run a community poetry group in London and run workshops with the Feminist Library.

Joan Teatheredge is a writer and musician from North Essex, now living in North London.

Sara Duckworth is an archaeology student and goth observer living in London.

Jack Jarvis has spent years in the brutal world of commercial writing: occasionally the real words get a chance to escape.

Omi Pharnote is a felt artist, haiku writer and life model with a hankering for nettle based food and clothing.

J.W Summerisle is an artist, poet and maker of weird stuff from the english east midlands. they have a chapbook called "kinfolk" with the Black Sunflowers Poetry Press.

Georgia Kumari Bradburn is a film-maker, podcaster and writer, they are a member of the Neurocultures Collective.

Travis- James is a cat appreciator and trinket keeper, currently living in Leiden.

Jessica Atwood writes about the day to day, and hopes to bring a chuckle to the mundane. She is living in London, studying archaeology.

Chiara Scoglio is an Italian visual artist, writer and puppetry theatre-maker based in the UK. Their work always attempts to merge words and visuals while exploring their sense of self in a patchwork of inspirations and impressions.

Gemma Sharp is a photographer influenced by cinema and 1960s nostalgia.



Rare Creature Profile: The Lonnen

Louis Holland Bonnett

First reported in the back pages of the *Newcastle Chronicle* in 1887, the Lonnen is an approximately humanoid creature native to the narrow, dirty back lanes of northern industrial towns and cities. Much like the rats with whom it shares its environs, the creature is known to be attracted to shadows, grime, refuse, fog and rotten smells. Nocturnal in nature, it is not known to be aggressive, preferring to watch the passerby from a dark hidden corner, meaning the best time of day to spot it is at dusk. If you wish to attract the Lonnen, ensure your lane has overflowing bins, blocked drains, and cracked surfaces, but be wary as whilst it is not aggressive, the Lonnen is known to be mean and mischievous. If the Lonnen targets you, behaviours may include:

1. Broken glass by your doorstep
2. Bins knocked over and the rubbish thrown about
3. Scratches on your door and/or car
4. Your bin set alight
5. Dead animals left nearby
6. Inexplicable foul smells

Sightings peaked at the turn of the 20th century and the late 70s/early 80s and it is at such time you can find evocative accounts in the archives of local northern press. The creature is commonly described as a slim, shadowy, humanoid form, thought heights vary from 'small child' to 'tall adult'. It is also generally known as having fur, moving quickly and fluidly, having multiple legs, and bearing a 'wide grin'. In *Eyes on the Yard*, Mallory Enid suggested that this distinctive 'grin' is in fact a marking used to scare off predators. In some accounts the creature is described 'melding' into walls, though this is likely to be an adaptive camouflage rather than a literal ability to pass into brickwork. In all accounts a hard rhythmic sound is heard either before or after a sighting. In northern folk tradition this is said to be the creature tap-dancing on the cobbles as a way to attract and/or direct the rats. Hence this local folk passage collected by Enid, printed in the *Sheffield Star* in 1983:

*'Cracked concrete dance as the sun goes dim
Bricks, rats, and shadows are lean-ing in...
If you can't say what you saw it might just have been
The pot-holed grin of The Lonnen...'*

If you wish to rid yourself of the Lonnen, simply clean and tidy the lane outside your house and ensure the drains and bins are well maintained. If this is not possible you can protect yourself by using lavender or other natural sweet-smelling substances to ward your doorway. Alternatively, some early accounts say the Lonnen will spare those who leave it wooden objects to play with such as spoons, spinning tops, bowls, etc. Put your objects out in the evening and if they are gone by morning, you will know it has accepted your gift.



The Triple Faced Vagabond (after Remedios Varo)

Zosia Kibalo

The cat scratches their toe at 5 am sharp every morning. One single claw pricks their skin and makes the wheels turn. The fresh smell of a rose greets their sleepy nostrils, just warming up to the morning breeze. Every time The Vagabond satellite spins, the wheel squeaks, the cat bites and the rose dance the droplets of mist off.

Where The Vagabond ride, the forest turns, leading them into every nook. It is most proud of this year's *Honeysuckles* and *Betula Pendulas*.

What face are they waking up with today. Who is going to talk to lonely wanderers passing through the forest? Will it be Wilhelm the Short Amuser, the jokester amongst the bunch, the riddle master, a quasi-sphinx.

Pots and Pans,

Pans and Cups,

Who is in a

Can?

Or Beck the Stiff Neck, a stickler for the rules, loser of no penny and preacher of his own truths. One cannot pass without hearing her lecture and nodding an exact amount of 136 times. Beck liked to see people nod as she was too stiff to do so.

It's sad really.

The third face did not show up often. The sightings were so rare that the folk tales have not yet given it a name. The red hair circled it in fiery strokes, bit musty on the chin, but still enough to hold it in thought. And wander did it a lot.

Nameless and clueless and speechless it only spoke in meows of its cat companion.

Who? am I. (*meow, me ow - me*)

You? (*mEo*) .

Rumour has it Vagabond journeys in search for their Lady. Nobody knew nothing more about the portrait above Vagabond's necessary *biblioteque* within which one could find "*Hob the Sqob*" a necessary read in a world full of Hobs. On page 56 written are the famous words *The miss disappears in into the back door of green leaves*.

My miss (*meo, me, m-*)

St Hunger' s Day

Tom Cowin

Deep stoneless
a threshold light

at the white phos-
phorous heart of the mist

lapwing flock static
in frost
and thistle lacerations

scything the ghostly
pleasance of morning
mist points light

that is not
the drop's surface

and forever precarious
as the fields
frozen as breath

*

In another speed I saw us
as an unexpected sun
on Pevensey Levels,
with all means
of communication ruined,
lying on their side while
a figure as still
as the hedgerow is
silenced by distance, unease
and stopped
in perpetual inability,
his hi-vis is a blown-out
wash of pixel deficiency.

*

I once ignored what I know now
to have been a benefaction

an entry unfamiliar to me
and dark not trusting i

stuck to the wet path
but know the reopening

of those calcareous clay soils
will come will

redress my ignorance
with the grace to carry me to Bridgit's days

*

Or sometimes you
were further,
a figure in the glare-field
flickering indistinct
motives, that time,
standing near
that ambulance was
so fleeting almost
a glitch remember,
why? His arm was
dreadful raised
in prevention
or maybe attraction
or always there.

*

Such complicated contingencies
invoke the bright coroneae

of flux the ringed glory within
the spectral fogbow

these the Hermanic centrifuge
holds in its own aureole and glories

right round the sky and mainly
calcareous clay soils offer us

sweet-eled to the pale wet-
land's complicated contingencies.

*

Headlights pull ghosts
teeming with ice

roadside
dazzle tableaus in

uneasy full beam
honing cold air

an incision
slips and the way

the eyes move
in the visible world

of morning
that is to be trusted

over sparkle grasses
and gull-glid flatfields

Fall in.

Fall out.

Tabby Ewing

I implode in the winter. My stomach creates a pit of blackness and a dark hole. Rolling and gripping, the drumming of feet, a heavy head, that is only stopped by me touching the coolness of your nose. I like that cold.

A winding strip back home.

I implode in the winter; I fall in the winter. I let the day set and rise again. I find myself alone. But it's different feeling alone than being alone.

In my city I don't feel alone. And I've felt alone in many places. I felt alone in another city with someone who I loved very much. I walked behind her group and tried to pipe into a conversation that I found dull. I remember carrying a heavy bag and feeling the strap against my shoulder, its ridge cutting my neck. I remember the dull drag of my feet against the road, how that road seemed to stretch out forever, how the clouds suffocated the sky in grey. How I felt tired. How every dip, every hill, every same building made me feel heavy and tired.

In my city my feet slap against the pavement like electricity. I remember walking from coach station to tube, a long stretch of road itself, but it dazzled for me. Under the warm soft orange streetlights, you can hear the fire crackle as engines rumble past. It must be so loud but it's that score I want to feel within my fingers. I want to grip onto its essence. I love it when it rains hard. When the sun sets, and the light plays across the buildings.

Do you ever feel like there's magic in the air under a royal blue sky?

I fall in love over again.

I sit on the riverside, with the tide lapping high then low. Grey waters. Artificial light that makes you look ill.

I implode in the winter. Because it is dark. Because things end. Because things keep ending. Because I have no control. Soon I lose the grip and other things grip to me, my muscles tingle. Hard and it's making me shake.

I fell in love at golden hour in a graveyard. I waited in train stations. I can't remember when I fell out of love.

I'm looking forward to when it happens again. Because as much as I implode in winter. I also fall in winter.

Fall out. Fall in.

Love

Rhi ley Jade

Sick(ness)

I take my hands fake hands small hands hands made of
clay and brittle stones and diamond scrapings and I
place them in this hot water this soup of thistle and
thorn and I pray to clouds and fae and shiny things I
pray it does not hurt too much to feel this sting but if I
do not immerse my hands within this blazing pot I do
not think you will love me the same maybe you will
maybe you will love me more for keeping my skin
scarless and clean and smooth and holy but there is a
part of me that knows you will only ever love me
burning and trembling and scared of the snow breeze

Stoney Littleton

Pilgrims of the sun, they heed the call
up the foot-worn hillside
where long grasses are tipped in white gold
laid flat and long,
and the beaten hedgerow shadow longer still.
It waits above: Earth's great maw,
What lurks inside upon dirt floor.

Palm to snakestone, feel the sun's warmth.
Last guardian of the ancient dead –
ever since Old Gods sailed West.
Inside – Inside – the pilgrim steps
heeding the call to lesser walked depths.
Stale and sad the barrow air;
a timeless taste of buried despair.

Down the canal beneath dusting stone
into the womb of erected passion.

The pilgrim may sit

to think of birth,
and life and death as shadows lengthen
and the world basks in final sainted glow,
for nightfall comes in starving tow.

The last sun has sailed, the primordial waits
beyond.

Kat Steel

Our pilgrim roused by curious light, is drawn
down hillside to dancing flame,
to shadows singing, laughing, dancing there.
Down moon-washed hillside they run
Stumbling to meet long-lost beloved ones.

Coming nearer –
no laughter, no light. No dancing lovers
where singing is only the weeping wind.
The moon now choked by heavenless swathes,
the hallowed ground awakes.
And from the boundary, It arrives,
in silent strides, up foot-worn hillside.

The terror turns the pilgrim back
by instinct – ancestrally obsolete –
back toward Earth's waiting jaw,
to fling feared-self upon her floor.

Hide away inside thick dark,
To accompaniment of heart and lung –
And whispering from the stone un-tongued.
Fear: it grows like downy sin
waiting... waiting...

for what stalks the land in timeless night,
that walked before the moon's birth light.
Its people here, remain here still,
Bound by Its dark inside this hill.
The Earth sits up
to face the pilgrim.

And pilgrims once and all before
arise now from the cold dirt floor,
their starving fingers seek and grope
a forgotten warmth

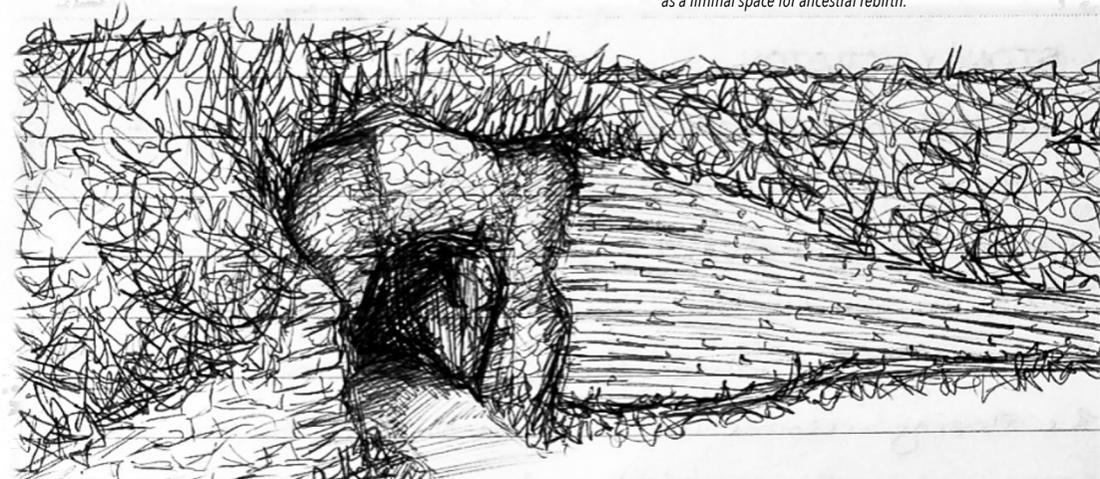
of sun-soaked flesh.
But should the pilgrim try to flee,
It stands in the jaws, waiting for thee.

It knows all names; it calls to you.
Entranced, the pilgrim begins to fail
and pleads dream's end to no avail.
A ray of gold crests the Eastern hill,
Its path to heaven sprawled down canal.
One by one, the pilgrims journey on,
into the sun-spliced fog.

Our pilgrim stands as roused from slumber,
and comes to the heaven'd gateway.
Solstice sun has cut the long dark dead.
The old spell broke once more,
the pilgrim is free.
To wander back down foot-worn hillside,
and wonder now eternally;

These ancient lands of ancient men
which sleep quiet beneath the living.
Frightened still,
they hide from what?
Perhaps what drove out all the Gods.

*Stoney Littleton: Neolithic barrow constructed to
be only fully lit on Winter Solstice by the first sun,
as a liminal space for ancestral rebirth.*



THE GRATEFUL GREYHOUND

There was a greyhound

And she remembered

Chasing the hare.

Now she wore a collar

And a lead
Attached to a hand.

It was still

in the early morning mist

The fields stretching away.

Grateful for this breath.

Lamp-lit desire searches through high fog,
So, I invoke the suns name but in Vain,
Only to be met with stars in the summer day sky,
their shine is blinding, calling my name.
Warm, familiar.

Controlled by my memories I stand at attention,
reaching in an ornate stretch for stars.
I am grasped from underneath, the cold breath rises,
Downward I peer into the ground.
Cold, strange.

Soil frozen still, enticing hellebores bloom
Through my feet, soon twining with tendons they pull me down.
Through one's own ash and Blackthorne, my skin is
Pierced, my bleeding slits call for summers healing touch again.
I lay, confused.

The moon exudes no shame for its piercing glow, its glittered radiance notices me,
Enticed I mimic, the lunar glow flows from me with every sour shade of midnight,
Yet I thrive with it, I speak its language of ice and dusk.
Does feeling alive under winter mean I was dead in summer?
I stay, found.

I trace the moons craters and streaks, enticed by its power and sway,
it allows me a new life. I become a part of the tides it holds dearly,
once beguiled by sunlit persuasions I now exist candour, permitted by sole moonlight.
I am swept and begin the dance of heartless trepidation.
I exist, content.

From the gothic trees of the coast the creatures leap to me with etched faces,
Their malign movements educate me, their harsh hands already know my shape.
The pain of winter dwellers grants me an afflatus of a new age,
Smooth may be the sunlight but coarse is the nature of winter beasts.
I accept, wholly.

So, my summer thoughts are interrupted with Icy obsession,
Hobthrush and bats descend and take my body with
Intent that marries sadism and love,
The winter winds take my tears before I could ever feel them.
I am theirs, entirely.

So, I danced through winter's longest night and
held close its dark musings with intimate moons blessing.
When each cold touch brings skin on retreat,
What fairer name for a night with moon-lit lovers than
Winter solstice?

What Fairer Name?

Ewan Alderman

Winter is passing.

(Excerpt)

Margene Stuart

The blue night thickens and the joints in her fingers ache for a hand. Receipt of Application: MA in Creative Writing. Her stomach stirs at the heading; she puts her phone down on the nightstand.

Eleanor pulls the linen duvet up to her shoulders and watches Joan in the hazy bathroom light. The white walls of her bathroom pink from a lava lamp, moisturizer pools in the palm of Joan's hand.

Either we watch the Bridge to Terabithia or Mamma Mia! White smears across her cheek as she glances Eleanor's way.

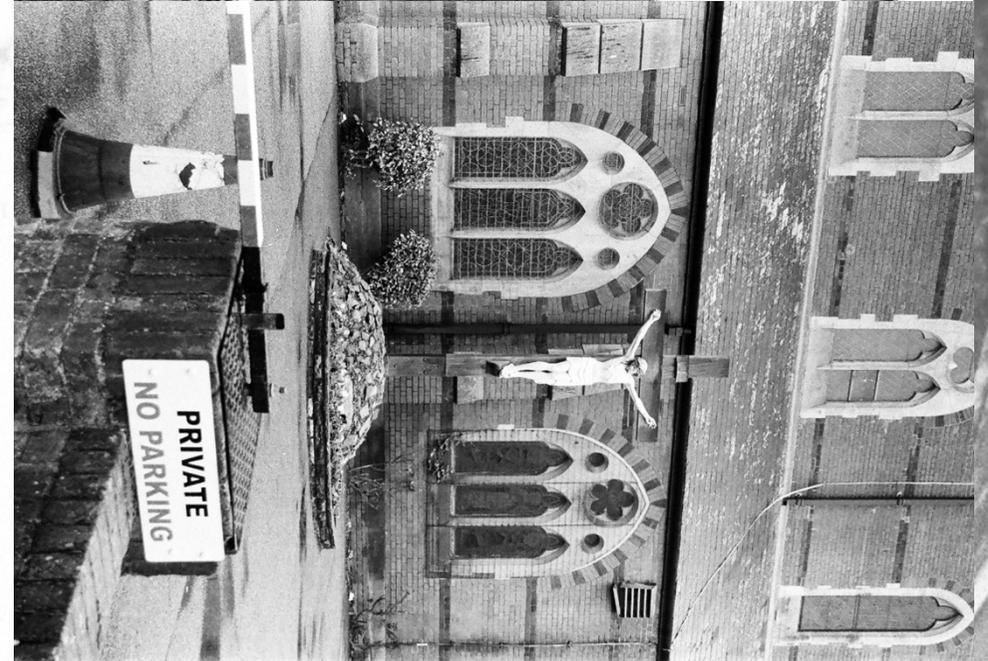
Eleanor tries to gauge the state of her sister. Polar opposites those choices seemed to be.

Their posters would've been jarring to see next to one another. On the bottom shelf of Joan's oak nightstand was an opaque bottle of melatonin gummies. Mamma Mia! Eleanor says.

The red of Joan's shirt bunches at her shoulders as she pulls the covers up to her chin. The laptop sits in-between the two, large blue and white letters displayed on an island background.

Eleanor lets her head sink into the memory foam pillow as wedding mayhem ensues. She wishes to sink into the mattress in hopes of staying there forever, content with the idea of being an insect pinned inside a glass box, not minding if she is observed so long as she can watch back. Skin flush against fabric; the room is dim when Eleanor wakes. Rain drips down the window silently, casting tears on the wall opposite. The raindrops act like a prism for the first flush of morning, scattering its velvety blue light.

The air is frosted and heavy, but she stumbles to turn the knob on the box fan anyway. As she lays back in bed, thoughts stride in through their high kicks and ebb out on their lunges. Actors dance to the soundtrack of Mamma Mia! against the walls of her brain, a bright blue background blurring their bodies. Strings of letters and misspelled words snake around her mind as a heaviness glues her eyes shut against the pebbled light.





SNOW LIONS SLEEP

Glow in the Dark my eyes shut
my mind pictured a lioness
My feet numb from the meditation stool
Traceless I let the image go
AS my temple readjusted light came
through the windows so I could
see again
Like Realising the pages and pages of
thoughts
won't solve this mystery, dissolving
icicles melting
as Lions Roar against lights of mirrors & flames
A Temple of melting
SNOW yawning the icicles away
AS his daydreams blaze

Queering the Hob

Marina Scott

'A queer life might be how we get in touch with things at the very point at which they, or we, are worn down; those moments when we break or break down, when we shatter under the weight of history'

- Sara Ahmed

but imagine my mother,
still at the table, watching
as I light a cigarette
clean off the kitchen hob.

I'm pushing the knob down,
working for the *cl-cl-cl-cl-cl*,
flame blue and quiet on air,
smell immediate -

my hands remember
centuries of labour,
centuries of old wives' tales,
the pot of porridge

and its indefinite simmering.
some people domesticise hobs,
like when Americans
live with tigers or gorillas.

I'm thinking about how
there's a working on-demand flame
in my home. nineteenth-century
circus performers would gawp,

the girl who invented fire
would cry in the face of her legacy,
in the face of heat in a world
on the edge of the fryer.

I make a thin-stalked mushroom
from toothpick and marshmallow,
blacken it, slowly,
charring the shape away.

KAT'S

Experimental SPICED

APPLE

- 3 green apples
- 2 tsp ground mixed spice
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 250g flour
- 250g sugar

- 3 tsp baking powder
- 4 eggs
- 150ml oil
- 100ml oat milk

1. Get yourself a goth who can bake to order you about in the kitchen.
2. Preheat oven to 150 while the goth chooses the music...
3. Peel and chop the apples, then toss them in all the yummy spices!!
4. Mix the flour, sugar, oil, oat milk, baking powder and eggs in a bowl.
5. Fold the apples into the mixture.
6. Grease your cake tin and add in the cake mixture.
7. Briefly admire before placing in the oven for 1 hour (or however long it takes for a knife to come out clean)
8. Let cake sit for as long as you wish or eat straight away.



cake

A brief review from author of the piece...

Very good experimental baking. It was very yummy, especially with cream or custard. The goth isn't essential to the recipe, but it enhanced the experience for sure. More spice may be needed.

Ritual Eating:

Stone Henge and the Winter Solstice

Joan Tetheredge

On Thursday the twenty-sixth of October this year, our Tottenham home gathered for a feast. Hours of careful preparation and organised collaboration devoured in record time by mouths hungry and hung-over. The meal marked no particular occasion, a last minute addendum to Wednesday's birthday celebrations, an intimate reprise of the night before. Piled on sofas or perched upon cushions on the floor, we devoured cuts of chicken, crispy potatoes, honey-roasted parsnips (my housemate's specialty) and bright, boiled red cabbage (a personal favourite that was largely untouched by anyone but myself). It was large, varied and appealed to all tastes and diets. Why that night though? If we had waited only three more days we could have had this roast on Sunday, which would have been more traditional. Additionally, it was on that particular Sunday that the clocks would go back, and the day would last twenty-five hours. But that Thursday we were hungry, we were tired, and we saw a chance to eat as a collective, marking the first of many communal, ritual feasts in our Tottenham household that winter.

We were unconsciously continuing a culinary tradition that dates back millennia. A particular example of past ritual feasting that has garnered my fascination is Durrington Walls. A neolithic settlement only miles away from Stonehenge, Durrington Walls predates the megalith by some decades. The site contained only one burial ground; it was purely a place in which people slept and ate. It was Stonehenge itself that housed the dead, with over sixty excavated graves. The Henge was a place dedicated to memory, to mourning, a great monument built by many hands. It is a structure that aligns itself with the solstice, as if it were capturing the light and holding it, storing the briefest glimmers of winter sun for a warmer season. When the sun set between the two stones of the tallest trilithon there was no doubt that midwinter had come. Durrington Walls was kept separate. Work and rest, life and death kept far apart. And what is life if not the repeated process of consumption? The settlement had both more varied remnants and larger proportions of food than what we expect of a British settlement of this period. The bodies that built Stonehenge did not just eat here: they feasted, and especially in the winter, with evidence towards the seasonal mass-culling of pigs in the bleaker months. But why?

Having lived all of my twenty-one years in England, the suggestion of a feast in the colder months needed no justification, it was simply tradition. I had a vague understanding of the Sunday Roast's origins, its links to the Lord's day and the structure of the working week that refined itself through the nineteenth century, but my understanding of ritual feasting in winter was always simplistic. It's cold. It's dark. We eat, and we eat well. But the feasting at Durrington Walls had a clear purpose; to motivate its inhabitants to continue work on the Henge. Of course a hearty meal is a prerequisite of hard physical labour, but anyone can eat on their own. There was clearly enough food to go around, as much of the animal bones uncovered in excavation of the site displayed not every rib or leg was picked clean. Analysis of shards of different vessels displays that different foodstuffs were valued differently, with different items and combinations conveying different symbolism. The importance was not simply eating well, but variously. Collective feasting within the Walls was an exercise in boosting mental fortitude, bringing the community together as one, giving them the strength to erect a monument that would stand for millennia to come.

That first collective meal, that first winter feast in that Tottenham household, was taken just as I began a new job. I did not fully appreciate at the time the value that meal had in bolstering my strength against the cold and trying months ahead. The importance of breaking up the monotony of meagre meals consumed alone in one's own chambers. The importance of making the evening an event, a reward. A reward for me and all the beloved people who piled into our narrow living room that evening, each with their own challenges upcoming, and the collective challenge of facing the cold. Feasts at Durrington Walls had the prime objective of motivating the inhabitants to continue work on the megalith that is Stonehenge. In the same sense our feasts push us through the winter, propelling us through the *gēola*; uniting us against the dark.

A Night Like This

Jack Jarvis

It was cold, bitterly cold, when they arrived at the old stone house by the sea.

Handfuls of bitter grey snow hit their faces as they left the warmth of the car. The wind from the sea was painful, knifing their cheeks.

Freezing midwinter seemed a strange time of year to come to the seaside, but the family needed to get away, so here they were.

The father first knocked, then impatiently pushed open the weather beaten oak door. The rusted iron hinges groaned a reluctant greeting as they entered. Inside, the house felt dark and cold. Father, mother and son stepped cautiously over the worn flagstones. The short hall opened out to a large, wood-beamed room, where a fire crackled warmly and welcome in the huge hearth.

A small, wiry, grey haired woman was there to greet them. She introduced herself as the live-in housekeeper, Mrs Cley, and she quickly settled them into plump red chairs set around the fireside, taking hats and coats, scarves and gloves.

She closed the heavy, faded velvet curtains against the dark sky, muting the scour and chuckle of the icy grey waves on the shingle beach below the old house.

The three visitors sat and warmed themselves as Mrs Cley bustled about.

Standing alone, between fragile land and savage sea, Felbrigg House was the only remnant of the ancient lost village of Haxham. Or so said Mrs Cley, coming in from the scullery bearing a tray of good, hot sweet tea and warm toasted muffins, melting with butter.

The boy felt restless as the grown-ups chatted, and even the appearance of freshly baked biscuits couldn't keep him from getting up to explore the room.

Stuffed birds perched beadily under dusty glass domes. There were fusty old leather-bound books, collections of shells, driftwood, stones and bones. A large, dark clock hunched in the corner, its worn face cracked. The time had stopped at ten minutes to twelve. Day or night -- who knew? It didn't look like time would ever start again here.

He found a tattered album and leafed through engravings on yellowing pages.

Bored, he turned towards the tall windows, and stood listening to the cackle and hiss of the hungry grey waves, greedily sucking on the pebbles below. Endlessly wanting more, ever more.

The eternal summons. Entranced, the boy reached out to pull back the heavy velvet drape so he could peer out at the dark sea.

But, to his surprise, a bony hand suddenly shot out from beside him, and swiftly pulled the curtains closed.

"Bes' not be looking at the sea on a night like this, my lad," said Mrs Cley, carefully re-arranging the drapes and guiding the boy back towards the warm cosy fireside.

"There's some say you be seeing things you should not be - or things that *could* not be. Some say ghos's do be out there, ghos's of people who lived in the village that got drown'd way back, hunder's of years ago on a Solstice night. All swallow'd up by the sea."

"On a low tide, when the wind blows in, folks do say even now you can still hear the echo of the seaworn church bells, tolling deep under the waves."

"Well. Well. And the sea wants yet more, so they say."

The waves sighed agreement. Yes. Yesss.

Mrs Cley murmured on, her accent so thick and her voice so weathered the boy could barely understand what she was saying.

Distracted, he wandered over to the curious stones and shells. One of the stones had a hole through it, pierced by countless waves, and the boy picked it up to take a closer look.

The old woman drifted over to him again. "Ahh, that there's a hag stone. The folks do say it can give you the fairy sight if'n you look through it. Mebbes see spirits, on long nights like this -- if you believe such things."

She paused sadly.

"Me own lad ... he liked to look out at the sea on the night. He went out walking on the beach. Then I never did see him again."

Later, up in his cold bedroom, the boy dared to peep from the window. He was intrigued to see the shadowy figure of Mrs Cley, walking down a golden path of light that poured from the open doorway of the house.

She trudged determinedly over the stony beach and stopped on the sparkling shingle at the water's foaming edge. He saw her hold up a small object - a stone? - to her eye, and look out over the waves. Then she opened her arms wide, as if in glad greeting, and slipped from light into darkness and the icy embrace of the sea.



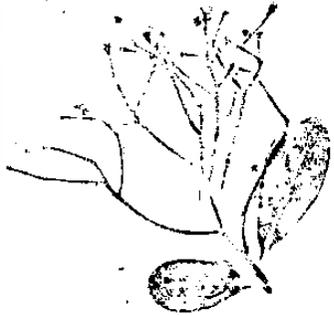
Haiku.

Winter

Omi Pharcote



I yawn and yawn, stretch
my mouthful of raw coldness,
teeth icicles still.



from the Book of Bad Mothers

JW Summerisle

i am the stranger here;

bitter brassica. tough in
leaf but

not enough to fly.

broccoli-bit lip. darkly
mudded eye. heritage

varieties at the end
of the world shall

sing. native fruits in
chorus. small birds

with golden wings. i

grow cornflowers in
my bed. rest

my child upon their
heads. amazed. goldfinch

take the place of parson
ministering seeds. singing that

har meggido is just a
hill someplace. a

mound of earth. a bed
of palms and dirt.

reverends robed in feathers
fold flowers around

my son.

the end is such an
ugly place. may

small birds
keep him

safe.

Stills from *Death of the Holly King*

Georgia Kumari Bradburn



Watch here: [Death of the Holly King](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqUrtV4VxS8)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqUrtV4VxS8>)



A Poem for Dying

Travis Shaw

She will die
Like seasons
We die too
We are born from the mud
And linger to be beautiful

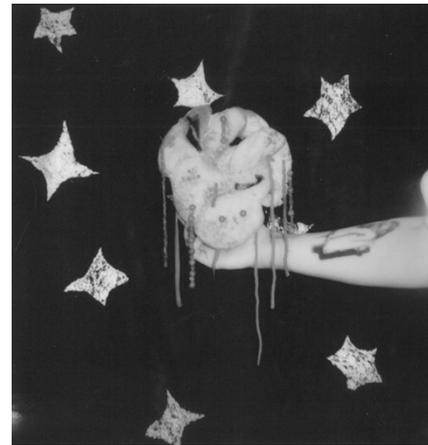
She says
We must watch what is dying
It is trying to show us how to live
Listen to that voiceless wind of woe
Howling with desperation and deepened by the night
But allow yourself to be around it
Give warmth to its passing
And let the coldness enter
Let that screaming cruelty halt against your skin
Sink into you with softness
And leave as a whispering calm

She knows this is it
Only across the ocean she resides
Still we feel it calling, calling out her name
Each day it grows louder a thought then a feeling
A chill down the spine and a memory all in one

She feels a ritual is in order
Something that happened long long ago
That splinters forth from our bones
Reminding us to remember
That time is gathered in weight
Collected under eyelids and collapsing stones
I recall now she is that mountain
A collection of space she has occupied
I merely collapse from her being

She is the beginning of a new
And the end of all old things
She has peered beneath the soil
And her mound has been made

She the queen of my dreams
I aspire to climb to what heights she has seen
But I know it will lead me to her home
And I know that the land will change me
I am ready to be cold



Christmas



Chiara Scoglio



Angel -
is my secret sigh quiet enough
to reach Your candid tips
of wings and ear,
Your sublime silence?
I need a word,
I need an instant.
You should not mind
such a forgettable waste of time.
Step down here,
fill the void,
bless me.
Angel -
I am ready now.
Oh, Angel - forgive me.
I have felt it all,
I cannot feel it anymore.
I still feel it so.
Yet, the eye
a shattered porcelain;
the hand
an entangled string;
the heart
ever forgetting its beat.
Offer me Your arm
to balance
my fragile ascent.
Sit me down by Your side
and allow Your neutral music
to lull this heavy forehead.
I am better.
I am free.
Angel -
if my delicate cry -
confused drop of tear -
has dampened Your sky,
unravel this shoulder
under Your transcendent warmth,
let Your spike
blow new life
into my lips of prayer.

The
Yule
Log

Jessica Atwood

I was trying to come up with something related
to the winter solstice
and all I could think of was YULETIDE
It came to me but I wasn't sure exactly what it was.
I think it is Christmas
but all I could really think of was
a
yule
log (hungry).





HOB

