

A MARGIN ANNOTATIONS
PUBLICATION

*In The
Maggins*



Founder's Note

Welcome to the first issue of *Margin Annotations*. We are pleased to have you here! *Margin Annotations* has one simple goal — providing poets with a space where they can express their unique experiences and perspectives. Poetry has the ability to connect people across a multitude of differences, whether that be distance, circumstance, or background. It is my hope that each and every one of these pages is able to foster these connections.

In The Margins has brought together many talented poets and explores a wide range of themes, including (but not limited to) love, grief, identity, healing, and all of the complexities that come alongside the human experience. While each poet approaches these subjects in their own, personal way, their work as a whole transforms raw emotions and how we apply those feelings into art.

I would like to thank every contributor featured in this issue. Thank you for trusting me and *Margin Annotations* with your work. I thank you all for your patience throughout the publication process, as well as the talent and vulnerability featured in every poem. It is an honor to feature your writing in the first issue of this publication — and you made this possible!

To the reader: we appreciate your time spent with these poems. I hope you find something that resonates with you.

Thank you for being here at the beginning.

Kylie Desmond

Table of Contents

Christian Ortega

Dear Sebastian	5
Stardust	7

Stephanie S. Watkins

English Garden(er)	8
Hot House	10

S.R. Azazel

SILVER-TONGUE HURTS	11
PULL ME CLOSE	12

Amelia Neddeau

Finite Farewells	13
------------------------	----

Sean Bergin

view from above	14
long time listener (first time caller)	15

H.J. Hennen

shimmered bliss	17
the maestra	18

Ayan Zakaria

Gentle Weather	19
Afterlight	20
Private Ruins	21

Table of Contents

A. R. Stager

- Here in Middle Age I Have Taken to Bathing ... 22
- The Morning Walk 23

Mara Adamitz Scrupe

- a maker's guide to the heavens 25

Sapphira Costa

- Drowning 28
- Exhibit 1: The Hall of Instructions 31

Dear Sebastian

by Christian Ortega

I picture you with wavy dark hair,
As opposed to my rowdy dark curls,
And maybe a smile brighter than mine,
With blue eyes that gleam like pearls.
See mine are the color brown,
A color I also love to wear,
But you would choose the
Brighter colors, to make
Others stop and stare.

I know that you'd love singing,
As opposed to being a writer,
If our voices were compared,
I'm sure yours would be much lighter.
I don't think you'd have a problem
Standing before a crowd,
Although you don't write poems,
Of your work I'd still be proud.

I think you'd still be kind,
Always helping out your friends,
A fantastic sense of humor,
The amount of jokes would never end.
I think you'd still get stressed,
Of that there is no doubt,
But I think you'd have the moxie,
To always find your way out.

Although we've never met,
I feel I know you well.
And though I'll never see you,
On this I will not dwell.
For a part of you is with me,
Buried deep within,
Oh my dear Sebastian,
My name that could have been.

Stardust

by Christian Ortega

As a star shoots
across the sky
I watch.

As the star burns
light engulfs
my wish.

And as my wish
burns into the ether,
and dissipates,

I am left with
Hopes, Dreams,
And Stardust.

Christian Ortega is a creative writing student at California State University, Long Beach. Despite being a bookworm since birth, he originally hated anything having to do with writing, until he was inspired by the poet Malcolm London in his sophomore year of high school. His favorite pieces to write are poems that explore the human condition, and horror short stories that delve into the darker parts of the human psyche. He is still a bookworm to this day.

English Garden(er)

by Stephanie S. Watkins

Intertwining my fingers
In yours
When night fell
On the heights
As the fog rolled in
Strands of midnight hair
Blowing across my cheek

Hold my gaze, don't anticipate
the coming morning
Stand beside me on the
moors, star stricken nights
Are ours

I belonged to you—
An almost lover
Waiting on blankets of star dust
For you to belong to me
Kept like a spirit on the periphery

Though—!

She comes, always
in the breaking of wake
Full bloom, bright eyes
painted lips
Birdsong accompanying her steps
Making her way closer to you

Daybreak touching the
Silver tipped trees,
swaying
Your devotion out to sea

You tied me down

With wisteria vines
Poppies tangle around my heart
Fountains of yearning
coursing through my veins
When the sun beats out
what darkness held

I will to die
in your English garden
Petals falling on my face
Ashes to ashes
My English garden(er)

Hot House

by Stephanie S. Watkins

My fingers ran softly
across the rigid scar on
Your hand
Intertwining
your fingers in mine

A stolen moment
while the party raged on
outside

We sat alone
on the couch, together
Inside

Cool air seeping in
through the cracked windows

We were like
two hot house flowers
daring to bloom

Stephanie S. Watkins is based in central Florida. She studied Creative Writing in college and has been published in various magazines and journals. She is currently working on her first novel.

Silver-Tongue Hurts

by S.R. Azazel

The music caresses memories, holding their lost hand.
Cupping rosy cheeks, lavender perfume infused.
Bringing them forward their joy, infectious.
I whisper softly, poison drips from my lips.
My silver-tongue hurts. I already knew her answer.

Stay please, I missed you.

Pull Me Close

by S.R. Azazel

Death slinks into my thoughts more often this time of year.

Its perfume encourages trembled breath.

A voice soft as felt piano strings.

Melting all figures of creatures & monsters...

'pull me close'

slipped between their lips.

A lovers covenant

S.R. Azazel is an acclaimed reclusive poet, writer, and storyteller whose work delves into the emotional landscapes of love, heartbreak, healing, and the complexities of the human mind. He has built a loyal and thoughtful following online. Having his poetry formally published, being featured in multiple literary publications & magazines. An author of multiple poetry collections being 'To The One I Labeled As Divinity', 'I Wrote These On A Towel Under The Sun' & 'Creatures'. All available worldwide
For All updates: <https://bio.site/srazazel>

Finite Farewells

by **Amelia Neddeau**

Calculating and demonstrating my escape velocity
Compelling, rebelling, propelling
Far away from this monstrosity
Containing animosity
Restraining impetuosity
This propensity for intensity
And fortified bone density
Has me bracing for galactic racing
To cease digressing and conclude confessing
Commence proclaiming and proud professing
Exponentially distant in an instant
This act of abscondence my fondest remonstrance
Farewell to calculated suppressing
Good riddance to pseudo-altruistic acquiescing
Removing window dressing
To bask in undisguised blessing

Amelia Neddeau is a Southern California based poet with work featured in Poetic Reveries, Voices of Poetry Anthology, One Poem Only Podcast, and Gal's Guide Anthology. A dynamic performer, she partners with local nonprofit Poetry with Purpose to raise funds for child advocacy through monthly open mic night.

View From Above

by Sean Bergin

March 6, 1930

June 17, 1943

Dates engraved beside me
this bench overlooking the city
a speck wondering

“Why this stage of life?” and

“to who and what do these dates matter?”

November 22, 2012

a date engraved in my skull
for whatever reason

on a new bench

a few dates ahead

a few dates behind

by some miracle

it'll be the right time again

Long Time Listener (First Time Caller)

by Sean Bergin

holding onto that which has no words
that keeps balance
prevents loss of composure
there's really many words, all akin to trust:
faith, dialogue, love

glue

the

wind is an altar

and

I try to pray as much as possible
so that when the sun peaks through for
just a moment

only silence can be heard

maybe a muted string in the distance

a hungry dog left outside far too long

awaiting his next meal

spanish music disfigured by

collapsing AM radio waves

click and howl to the tune of offshore winds

whistles from a lone castaway's cracked lips

hold music is best enjoyed in any other context

a desert living in fear of

that cloud on the horizon

like me in my well-fit shoes

praying for holes to give them some character

hear me, sweet denial of silence

hear me and dance with the wind

Sean Bergin is a third year student at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, studying Art and Design with a concentration in Videography/Photography. Through both video/photo and written word, he communicates observations of his direct interior and exterior environments. These observations are laid onto narrative, resulting in an atmosphere aligned with Sean's personal aesthetic and values. With this he highlights the beauty in feeling sensations, anywhere from life's mundane joys to the pain of loss.

Shimmered Bliss

by H.J. Hennen

I was a good and decent one
loving, caring, solving with kindness
put mine off to the next, then the next

as my bones slowly splintered
a heart carved up and hollowed out
scars open and gaped in vulnerability

the line forms at my door
bring your empty chalice
all and each of those hungry ghosts

where's my elixir, my cure-all?
they're all whole in shimmering perfection
I stay broken as ever

my skin tells of the aftermath
a tattered shroud, singed and hanging
ignorance of my pain to feign your bliss

The Maestra

by H.J. Hennen

you are sunday morning
a few ticks past 8am
birdsong floats in on the autumn breeze

still soft and sleepy brown eyes
coffee faint on your lower lip
brows raised, peeking just over the paper

feet and painted toenails poke out from those red bottoms
crossed deftly at the ankle
a skilled maestra in the art of comfort

i've forgotten everywhere before you
never, ever again on a sunday, or any day
will i not find my home in you

HJ Hennen writes and resides in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She runs HJH Creative Solutions, providing content writing, editing, and web design services for small businesses, non-profits, startups, self-employed contractors, and other creatives. Hennen has published work that appears in Summur Magazine and Persephone Literary Magazine.

Gentle Weather

by Ayan Zakaria

I was designed
to withstand storms.

No one warned me
about the damage
of gentle rain.

Afterlight

by Ayan Zakaria

Even ghosts
cast shadows
at sunset.

That is how you know
they are not finished.

Private Ruins

by Ayan Zakaria

I learned to smile
so those I love
would never know
what I buried
without a funeral.

Ayan Zakaria studies computer science at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. His minimalist poetry explores control, vulnerability, and the tension between intimacy and distance, often through images of gravity, silence, and light. Outside of writing, he designs and 3D-prints small objects and props, drawn to the precision of making things by hand. He is also at work on speculative fiction.

Here in Middle Age I Have Taken to Bathing

by A. R. Stager

The draw seems to be seasonal.
It sneaks up on me every early Autumn.
Leaves crinkle in their trees. My skin leans in
like it insists on sloughing off with them.

Summer drives across the Kansas plain
sent shoots and stalks. The would-be fruitage
rots if left too long. The clawfoot tub,
a combine and a threshing floor of sorts.

By January half are two-bath days.
My cracked heels cure upon the curving rim.
Betwixt I pace in terry cloth and scuffs
and stop to beat against an empty page.

The ink is viscous by the Equinox.
I slosh some water in the well and flush
it out. It drains clockwise, escapes
beneath the graying tile. The air that's left

is cold and dry. I dress and pack
a canvas tote, amble outside.
A sunup summons from the eastern sky.
I turn the key and drive.

The Morning Walk

by A. R. Stager

Out beyond the gate stops a girl
two-and-a-half feet tall with her mom,
or maybe her nanny, I begin to think.

She bears in her arms a stuffed cub,
the woman does, like it's one
among her young charges.

They watch men with hedge clippers
primping the schoolyard
ahead of the Autumn return of pupils.

Suddenly, from somewhere within
their stroller and scooter caravan
appears a two-and-a-half foot skeleton

and now the girl is—wait!—picking
my wife's prized zinnias?! Oh. She is
weeding the flower bed and stuffing

stalk and stem, leaf and stamen into
each crater of the skeleton's face.
Nanny moves the jaw to help it chew.

The girl eyes a groove
in the top of the skull, prunes
and grooms a profuse Mohawk.

It's five minutes since I stopped
to watch them curate
the common marvels of our block.

Nanny breathes no hint of haste.
The girl, bike helmet back in place,
decides how she will ride. Nanny

cradles mohair, bone, thistle, and purslane,
arranged in patient arms, and they are off.
The sidewalk leads the way.

A. R. Stager is from Akron, Ohio, and has lived in South Carolina, Korea, Switzerland, and Colorado. He has a PhD in divinity and a DMin in the sacred art of writing. He has published poetry in *Ekstasis*, *Fare Forward*, *Rejection Letters*, *Dust Poetry*, and elsewhere. He is a fly fishing guide, a counseling psychology student, and a pastor residing in Denver with his family.

A Maker's Guide to The Heavens

by Mara Adamitz Scrupe

& the hornets roared in the chimney
but nothing was lost in the offing
as the chairs spoke provenance
 for all they're worth *one way*
or another the bentwoods drawled
back direct from a New Orleans
 French Quarter Kitchen
in the afternoon of the coldest day
on record (firebox hardly up
 to the task
– oven door left wide open – still

we had our Gentleman Jack
for our bourbon-coated comfort
 sweet for solace of a sort)
as the walnut roseback set
 had its say
 from a four-room bungalow
not far south of Canada where ours
was the chill for cuddling
close (any chair worth its weight knows the solid
 core of salvation the enigma
of redemption) & let me tell you
there's no mystery to the manual

of intelligence to my hands'

employment – the allegiance
 of the assembly line
to the secondhand shop around the corner
– & I don't have a clue
what happened to the ladderbacks
I sold to Brooklyn after the fire
or the 72 bass accordion sworn
 by mother to daughter
& what about any ancient ass's
 imprint on a settle's pith
the blood & bone & marrow
(grace gravitas

grave) & still the hornets roar
on for all they're worth & the woods say
 something human-scaled
about this island in the world
– its way of being tall & green
& nonetheless stripped bare –
(once angry brutes
in an awkward age lashed back
 as floods befell the highest
 elevation) but I only wish
 for the barest reciprocity
so I'll say something here
 for sympathy's sake
 in lingua patched & designed

for the fitting: waved lines
 in stitchwork
a welder's guide for pushing
 the bead deepest
into steel (two liquified hard parts
fluxed to one) or the modeler's knack
 for pouring plaster
my simplest act
of thankfulness: as the bravest
 harden the seasons (as the maker
is the mold)
how else to argue eternity
 & the heavens accede

In the dug out ancestors' tongue sometimes I don't understand
a word, but I see trust and disappearing secrets. – Małgorzata Południak
& still the Sisyrinchium

Mara Adamitz Scrupe is a poet and essayist, visual artist, and documentary filmmaker. She has authored seven award-winning poetry collections, her work has been published in international literary journals, and she has won or been shortlisted for divers visual art and literary prizes, fellowships, and awards. Her environmental installations, sculptures, and artist books exploring the confluence of social, land, and environmental narratives and histories are held in permanent museum collections and showcased at art parks worldwide, and her documentary films about rural places and people have won significant national awards. A native of Minnesota, she lives with her husband on their farm in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. She serves as Dean and Professor Emerita, University of the Arts Philadelphia, USA.

Drowning

by Sapphira Costa

I feel as though I'm drowning
under the weight
of every expectation
I was never able to carry cleanly.

And there is no lifeguard,
no bright whistle splitting the air,
no sudden hand through the water
reaching down for mine.

Only this:

the slow blue pressure,
the silence thickening,
my own mind fogging over
like glass breathed on too many times.

Water enters me gently at first.
Then all at once.

My lungs forget their language.
My chest becomes a locked room
filling from the floor up.

I can't breathe.
Worse, I can't think.

And there are moments
I would trade the breath itself
just to be spared
one more hour alone
with the noise in my head.

So I sink.

Past panic.
Past prayer.
Past the place where the body
still believes in rescue.

And still,
some part of me keeps counting:
how far below the surface,
how much darker it gets,
how long a person can disappear
before the water learns their name.

I keep waiting
to hit bottom.

But grief does not end cleanly.
It only deepens.
It only pulls.
It only teaches the body
how to keep falling
without ever arriving.

But even here,
some animal thing
still opens its mouth for air,
still aches toward the surface
it swears it does not want,
still refuses, somehow,
to become the sea.

Exhibit 1: The Hall of Instructions

by Sapphira Costa

This room smells of burnt sugar
and wet concrete.

The guide offers you a chair
shaped like a chastity belt,
polished from use.

On the far wall,
a screen plays every rule at once:

Be thin.

Be curved.

Be untouched.

Be convincing.

Be hungry,

but never seen eating.

Be effortless.

Be expensive,

but grateful.

Be sexual.

Be obedient.

Be desired,

but not desiring.

Be sorry.

*Be gracious.
Be quiet.
Be exceptional.
Be easy to miss.
Be not too much
of any one thing.
Be everything at once.
Be hers, if she is beautiful.
Be his, if he is watching.
Be yours,
but only where no one can prove it.*

You ask if the exhibit
is interactive.

The guide says:

It already is.

Your reflection flickers
across the screen,
captioned without permission.

A girl stands behind you
with her hands full of mouths.

None of them are hers.
All of them are speaking.

She asks if you want
to trade yours in.

She says it is easier
to become the echo
before the room can accuse you
of having a voice.

You nod.
You nod.
You nod.

A door opens.

It is shaped like applause
and leads into silence.

Saf Costa is a first-year student at UMass studying Biochemistry & Molecular Biology and Neuroscience. Her writing is deeply rooted in emotion, womanhood, faith, and survival, often exploring the tender and brutal edges of being human. Drawn to both science and poetry, she is interested in the ways language can make pain, longing, and resilience visible. She hopes to continue writing work that is intimate and honest.

Masthead

Founder

Kylie Desmond

Editor-in-Chief

Kylie Desmond

Layout & Design

Kylie Desmond

About The Issue

Margin Annotations' inaugural issue, *In The Margins*, gathers poets from diverse backgrounds and stages of their journeys and unifies them with a space to express their unique perspectives. These pages explore themes such as love, memory, grief, resilience, and healing. Although each poem is distinctive, together, they have formed a collection that is reflective of how poetry helps us understand the human experience.

Thank you to every contributor who made this possible.

"Even ghosts
cast shadows
at sunset."
— Ayan Zakaria

