



WINTER CONFESSIONS

A CREATIVE PROJECT

EXPERIENCES OF WINTER

2020/2021

a Bedfellows x Wellbeing collaboration
at the New College of the Humanities

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

CONTRIBUTORS:

Christopher Brady with
"There's Something
About"

Victoria Cormstock-
Kershaw with
"Flshmonger"

Valentina Lubmimirski
with "London, Oil on
Canvas", and
"My Love Knows Not"

Anonymous with "The
Time Before the End of
the World"

Anonymous with "Tout
s'illumine"

Anonymous with "The
Thin Line of Freedom"

Eirin Balle Tunland
with "Exhales of the
Sea"

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

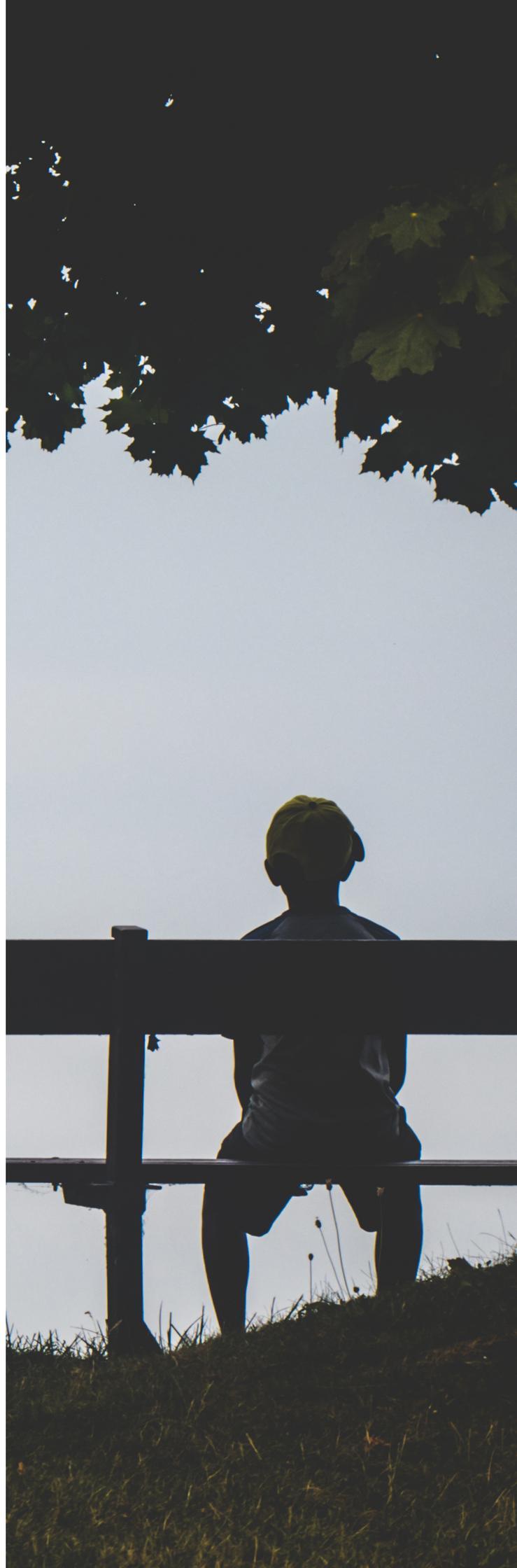
After a while, words seem to lose their meaning. Perhaps the tenth or the fifteenth time we heard "unprecedented times", it abandoned its dictionary meaning and became a tedious reminder of what covid has made clear : we don't know what the future holds.

But when we put pen to paper, we create something we can hold on to and something that makes sense to us. We can create meaning, no matter how unprecedented the times.

This creative project was born from a desire to make students' voices heard, and to build a sense of community through a shared creative outlet.

Thank you to all contributors

Eirin Balle Tungland
co-leader of Bedfellows society
co-welfare officer of the NCHSU



I'm Nobody! Who are you?

Are you—Nobody—Too?

Then there's a pair of us!

Don't tell! they'd advertise—you know!

How dreary—to be—Somebody!

How public—like a Frog—

To tell one's name—the livelong June—

To an admiring Bog!

WINTER CONFESSIONS

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT

CHRISTOPHER BRADY

There's something about
the dead of night
that turns my mind
from blue to black
like a bruise — not that.

I'm not a doctor
but there might be a problem.





WINTER CONFESSIONS

FISHMONGER

VICTORIA CORMSTOCK-KERSHAW

How silly, I think, sat at the bottom of this river.
The water will swirl up between the strands
I dyed for you,
cut, shaved and curled to your pleasing.
I forgot to empty the ashtray, to clear out the glovebox, to polish the leather.
How silly.

Mud rises at my feet, and I think of the pasta bake
in the oven. I was going to clean the glass next week,
I promise—the windshield cracks and the backseats creak,
bags of groceries float upwards amongst the winter muck behind me.

I hope the casserole will not burn— it's that warm time of year
when the fire flickers and falters, one must keep
a keen eye on its embers as it cooks. Banff ice thins,
like I shed weight for you, and it's cold in her depths.
The handbrake you so carefully had serviced
did not work after all. Make sure to write them a stern email.

Halibut does not birth in Canada, the fishmonger said;
this is the finest flesh north of the holy land. I watch it rise
wrapped in plastic through the rear-view mirror above my head,
floating hands unmongered upon the icy wheel.
How silly. At least she got to swim one last time.





WINTER CONFESSIONS

LONDON SUNSET, OIL ON CANVAS

VALENTINA LUBOMIRSKI

The rooftops outline all of London's sky
With rows of chimneys, brick, mortar and glass
Today, the grey above cleared, and surprised
The folk who stopped their way to take a glance

And soon, the blue was bold with mauve and pink
And clouds of lavender waltzed here and there
And coral swiftly scumbled into peach,
And pigments of all types caressed the air.

I never had imagined such palette,
That watercolours would forbear maintain
But soon, the darkness came to silhouette,
And London, once again, was blues and greys

But from my memory, it won't escape
The day the London sky came out to play.





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MY LOVE KNOWS NOT

VALENTINA LUBOMIRSKI

My love knows not how often I speak lies.

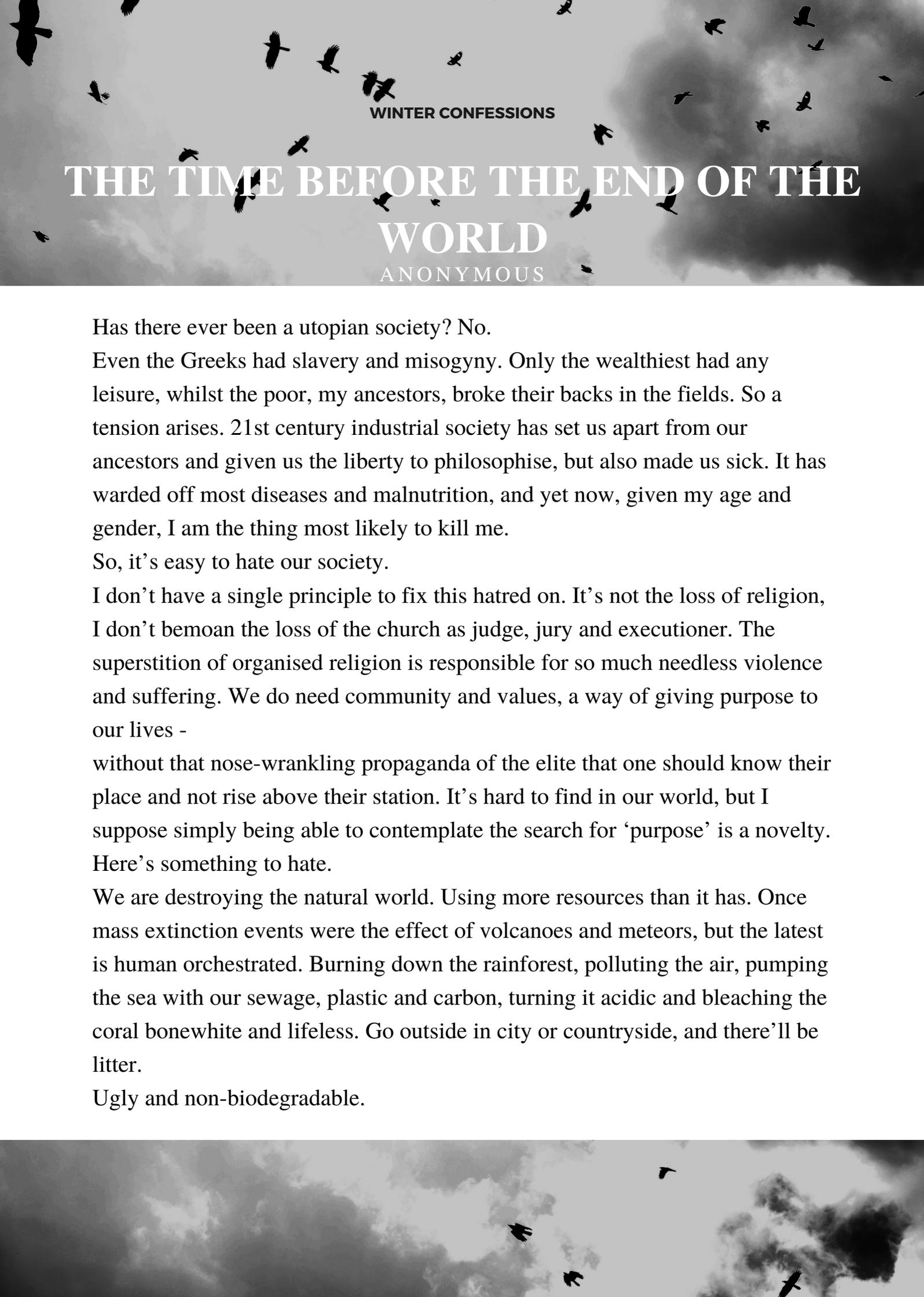
When he is far, I cling on every word
he says- I doubt, I fear, I do not trust,
for I know one can easily imply

a hint of truth, so sweetly generalised,
it validates the veiled lie you told.

Then how am I to credit his report,
When knowing I should read between the lines?

He'll call me on
the phone, from overseas
He'll ask me,
henpecked, how I've been or where
"Not with another man, I hope", he'll tease

Then proceed with his side of words to share
But wary, I'll know not if to believe
Thus simply answer, with a lie, at ease.



WINTER CONFESSIONS

THE TIME BEFORE THE END OF THE WORLD

ANONYMOUS

Has there ever been a utopian society? No.

Even the Greeks had slavery and misogyny. Only the wealthiest had any leisure, whilst the poor, my ancestors, broke their backs in the fields. So a tension arises. 21st century industrial society has set us apart from our ancestors and given us the liberty to philosophise, but also made us sick. It has warded off most diseases and malnutrition, and yet now, given my age and gender, I am the thing most likely to kill me.

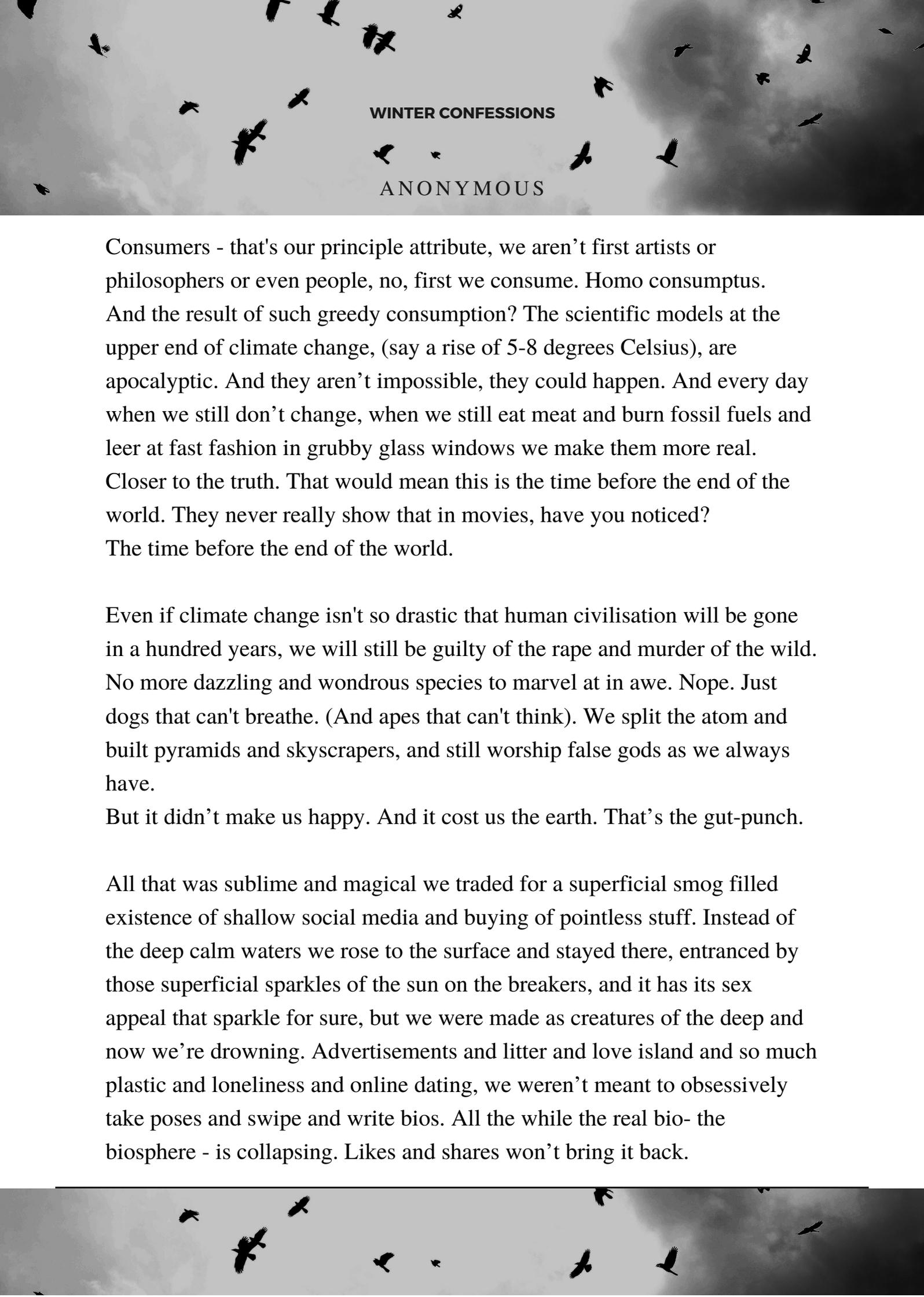
So, it's easy to hate our society.

I don't have a single principle to fix this hatred on. It's not the loss of religion, I don't bemoan the loss of the church as judge, jury and executioner. The superstition of organised religion is responsible for so much needless violence and suffering. We do need community and values, a way of giving purpose to our lives -

without that nose-wrangling propaganda of the elite that one should know their place and not rise above their station. It's hard to find in our world, but I suppose simply being able to contemplate the search for 'purpose' is a novelty. Here's something to hate.

We are destroying the natural world. Using more resources than it has. Once mass extinction events were the effect of volcanoes and meteors, but the latest is human orchestrated. Burning down the rainforest, polluting the air, pumping the sea with our sewage, plastic and carbon, turning it acidic and bleaching the coral bonewhite and lifeless. Go outside in city or countryside, and there'll be litter.

Ugly and non-biodegradable.



WINTER CONFESSIONS

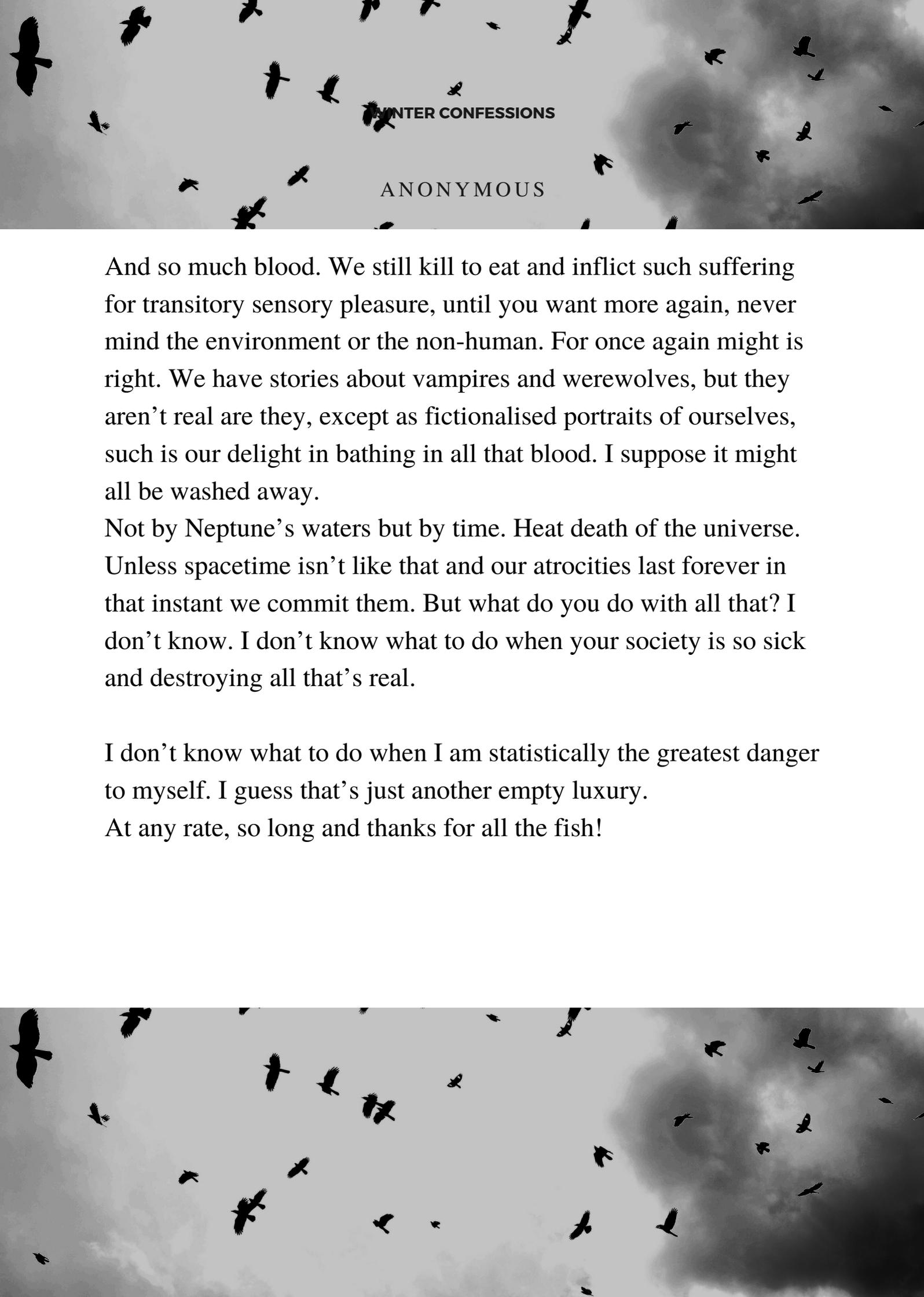
ANONYMOUS

Consumers - that's our principle attribute, we aren't first artists or philosophers or even people, no, first we consume. Homo consumptus. And the result of such greedy consumption? The scientific models at the upper end of climate change, (say a rise of 5-8 degrees Celsius), are apocalyptic. And they aren't impossible, they could happen. And every day when we still don't change, when we still eat meat and burn fossil fuels and leer at fast fashion in grubby glass windows we make them more real. Closer to the truth. That would mean this is the time before the end of the world. They never really show that in movies, have you noticed? The time before the end of the world.

Even if climate change isn't so drastic that human civilisation will be gone in a hundred years, we will still be guilty of the rape and murder of the wild. No more dazzling and wondrous species to marvel at in awe. Nope. Just dogs that can't breathe. (And apes that can't think). We split the atom and built pyramids and skyscrapers, and still worship false gods as we always have.

But it didn't make us happy. And it cost us the earth. That's the gut-punch.

All that was sublime and magical we traded for a superficial smog filled existence of shallow social media and buying of pointless stuff. Instead of the deep calm waters we rose to the surface and stayed there, entranced by those superficial sparkles of the sun on the breakers, and it has its sex appeal that sparkle for sure, but we were made as creatures of the deep and now we're drowning. Advertisements and litter and love island and so much plastic and loneliness and online dating, we weren't meant to obsessively take poses and swipe and write bios. All the while the real bio- the biosphere - is collapsing. Likes and shares won't bring it back.



WINTER CONFESSIONS

ANONYMOUS

And so much blood. We still kill to eat and inflict such suffering for transitory sensory pleasure, until you want more again, never mind the environment or the non-human. For once again might is right. We have stories about vampires and werewolves, but they aren't real are they, except as fictionalised portraits of ourselves, such is our delight in bathing in all that blood. I suppose it might all be washed away.

Not by Neptune's waters but by time. Heat death of the universe. Unless spacetime isn't like that and our atrocities last forever in that instant we commit them. But what do you do with all that? I don't know. I don't know what to do when your society is so sick and destroying all that's real.

I don't know what to do when I am statistically the greatest danger to myself. I guess that's just another empty luxury.
At any rate, so long and thanks for all the fish!

WINTER CONFESSIONS

ANONYMOUS

**"Tout s'illumine, lumières rangées
Qui dans ma ville me font sentir étranger"**

The star in your eye is not shining for me anymore
You made an oxymoron out of our story
Why do you look at her as if she was the galaxy?
You left me down here on earth,
I fell down when I tried to reach the sky
Can't take a lift to paradise, can you?
Coz the only way to heaven is death
And we were so afraid to die that we never really lived
I've wasted my life by being afraid to lose it
I've lost my heart by living in a dream
But you put this bitter poison in my veins
A love filter drank like lifeblood

I dived way too far in your ocean
You promised to keep my safe
And you failed
My bark overturned
My heart overdosed
Why is the void so handsome?
Your words are holding me for ransom

I think this calls for riot
You put a flag on my mind like a patriot
You invaded my thoughts, and I am sick of you
But whenever the temperature rises
I look at you with those feverish eyes
And I let my mind slip into yours
For a second
For a minute
Let me do it for life
Or even for eternity



WINTER CONFESSIONS

ANONYMOUS

You and me in the same galaxy
Dancing in the stars until death do us part
But even the sun sometimes sets
I wanted to see how far it could get
And now I hate you with my mouth
But I love you with my eyes

Am I talking to a ghost?
Or to somebody who I lost
It was never my fault
I realized it wasn't even yours
So, reveal yourself
And unveil your soul
Coz you need your heart to take mine
We are talking by mime
But love is blind

And I'm losing my sleep
I still let my dreams slip
Away from me
As a way to be free I talk
As a way to keep you I think
But as a way to escape I write
How can all of this be right

My last cigarette is burning down
Tomorrow I will be gone

"Tout s'illumine, lumières rangées
Qui dans ma ville me font sentir étranger"





WINTER CONFESSIONS

THE THIN LINE OF FREEDOM

ANONYMOUS

A red that parallels pale fragility
Blood running down in complexity
It is not who we seek, but it is whom we find
When we live in ignorance of the chains that bind.
We walk so free
But are never alone
Always shackled to the bone
In ourselves we try to break free
But our inner state echoed fragility.
Fragility
Selfishness
Greed.
These are the vices that make us bleed
With these we only care for creed
Uncaring about the unfreed .
Our state of fragility
Where we cannot heed
Because of bloodshed
Because of greed
And we will not try to ever break free
Because of our fragility
And egocentricity.
Because we in ourselves know that we
Tread the blood stained line between free
And unfree.





WINTER CONFESSIONS

THE EXHALES OF THE SEA

EIRIN BALLE TUNGLAND

From my window, the sea sounds as if it is breathing. It exhales with every wave crashing against the shores, and as the waves are dragged back, if you concentrate hard enough, you can hear the sea inhaling, drawing its breath. It is comforting listening to the never-ending exhales and inhales - it is a constancy that no lockdown, virus, or government restrictions can end.

Scientists say that 90% of the oceans are still unexplored. Our world on land is encapsulated by these vast wet stretches of mystery, upholding all life while containing worlds within itself.

It only takes 5 minutes to transport my body from the warmth of my living room to the rocky shores, like two alternate worlds that I can easily travel between. Warm and safe surroundings of a suburban home exchanged for the wild grass, the cold sea air ripping through my nostrils, and finally the temperamental waves showing me how to breathe.

I try not to think about it. As I start my journey to the sea I pass the empty street of middle-class houses with their overgrown gardens, a dog barks and a stern voice yells “shut up!”, and I wonder if I should have worn sunglasses. The path changes from worn out asphalt to tall straws of grass, with parts of mud and soggy puddles. My shoes make a swooshing sound as I walk further down the path, and the soft wind caresses my cheeks. I’ve suppressed memories before, to the point where I hardly ever think about them.. Like the woman I saw at the self-checkout at my local grocery store, a stranger to me, her face unrecognisable. “Remember, she was your therapist for six months,” my mom nudged my arm gently, and I gave her a smile to cover up the fact that I could not recall ever having seen that face before in my life. I try not to think about it.

The tall grass rustles as I make my way down the path, and I make sure not to step on the wet rocks, those are the slippery ones, I mustn’t forget. My imprint swooshes and the grass sounds as if it is whispering something important, but my ears can only make out an unintelligible mumble. The faceless landscape lulls me in, and as I get closer to the sea the whisper becomes louder. As I climb the moss-grown shores, I use my hands to grab on to the tallest boulder, and with a single concentrated force I pull my body to the top. My heavy breaths contrast the calm of the surroundings and drown out the whispers of the solid seascape. As I’ve reached the edge of the shore, I lay down. As if barnacled upon the boulder, I breathe in the rhythm of the waves’ receding, and breathe out as they crash up against the coast. Everything I try not to think about flows through me and I let it spill out, sieve across the roughness of the rocks, and disappear with the exhales of the sea.



thank you