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# LOVE AND POETRY - THAT DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIP

Illustration by Jennie Webber

Poetry and love, love and poetry - although both fairly impressive disciplines in their own right, the two combined can be both laborious and mind blowing within the same stroke. The love poem in particular is an art form that when mastered can cause emotions to fall, often tapping into a channel that the innocent reader didn't even realise they possessed. In contrast, an un-mastered love poem can be a somewhat painful thing to experience, inducing a series of shudders and cringes that are often enough to put people off reading poetry altogether. In fact, it's very possible that the love poem has a lot to answer for when it comes to poetry's slightly wet reputation. Having said that, it's also the subject that has produced some of the most famous and touching poems throughout history. The majority of people that have a remote interest in poetry will be able to spout some line from a famous love poem, whether from Shakespeare, Wordsworth or a more contemporary poet.

When it comes to love, it's difficult not to fall into the trappings of cliché. Often, these well-trodden areas exist for a reason and while it's tempting to try and avoid them altogether, it could ultimately end up producing a collection of poems that have little connection to love as we know it. It became apparent while collating the poems for this issue that romantic love (in all its heterosexual and homosexual forms) is the love that we want to write about the most. It's the subject that infiltrates much of the modern media with pop songs, Hollywood films, bestselling books, consumer magazines and advertising littered with the stuff. It's no surprise that when we think of the word *love* - that's what springs to mind. Much of the time though, we seem to be more in love with the idea of love than the actual reality of it, and it soon became apparent that this subtle difference is what separates the 'good' love poem from the 'bad'. Although not all the poems in this issue look upon love favourably, most of them share that feeling of sincerity - devoid of stereotype and threadbare phrases. That's not to say that every poem in this issue addresses romantic love. Emma Jones' poem *To Love* looks at the love between complete strangers, whilst Ceri Thomas's poem *The Wish* ponders the hopeless powerlessness of love after death. Whatever the word means to you, hopefully you'll find something within the following poems that resonates with your perception of it.



# ALLOW YOURSELF THIS ONE DAY

Poem by Max Wallis  
Illustration by Peter Locke

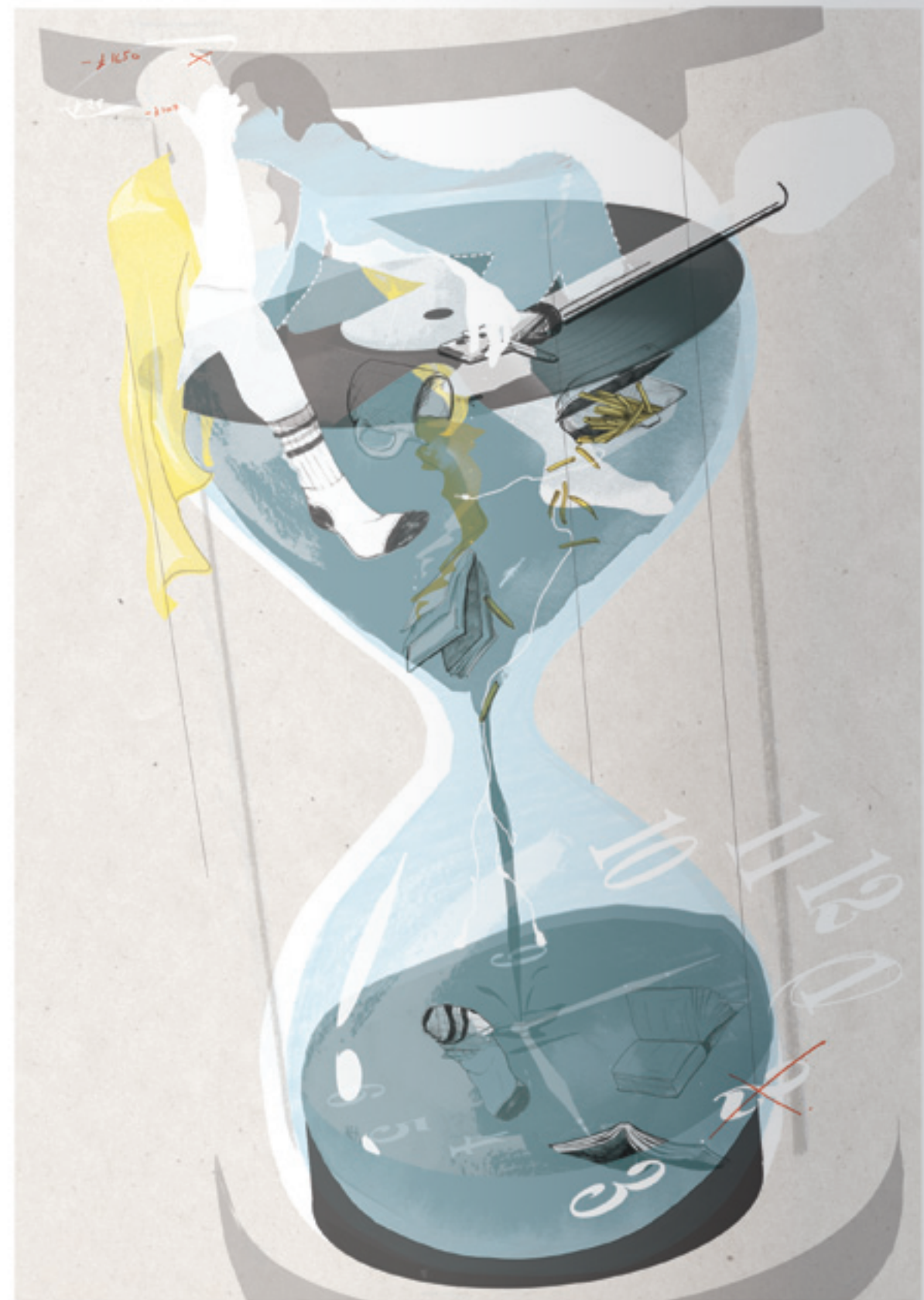
-

hangover from love. To sit in your sad cocoon  
bed-lain on lemon bon bon sheets and sick with ache,  
cuddling your bones. Let the day roll into night.  
Do not fret about the red numbers in your account,  
about deadlines and business worries; pick up three  
books and do not read them. Wallow in coffee,  
or simply nothing, as you tap-tap through Twitter feeds  
and text messages and nonsense mad thoughts.  
Let yourself reek with the unwash of sleep-sweats  
and salt tears. Eat the mirror on your wall.  
Play the unhappy songs that in bed you kissed,  
had sex, made love to, that time, when sex became  
heart-bare: skintouched, and those eyes.

Tomorrow you can sit in the warmth of a bath  
clean your nails, pluck your brow, shave the fluff;  
eat, drink, clean your room of your last meals  
and bed-locked naked picnics. Tomorrow you can sail  
in fresh linen and clothes, listen to happy songs  
with no meaning but pop-tones, through a new day;  
today is today, this day, my love.

-

*Allow Yourself This One Day* addresses the day following  
a break up, and the importance of the wallowing period.



# TO LOVE

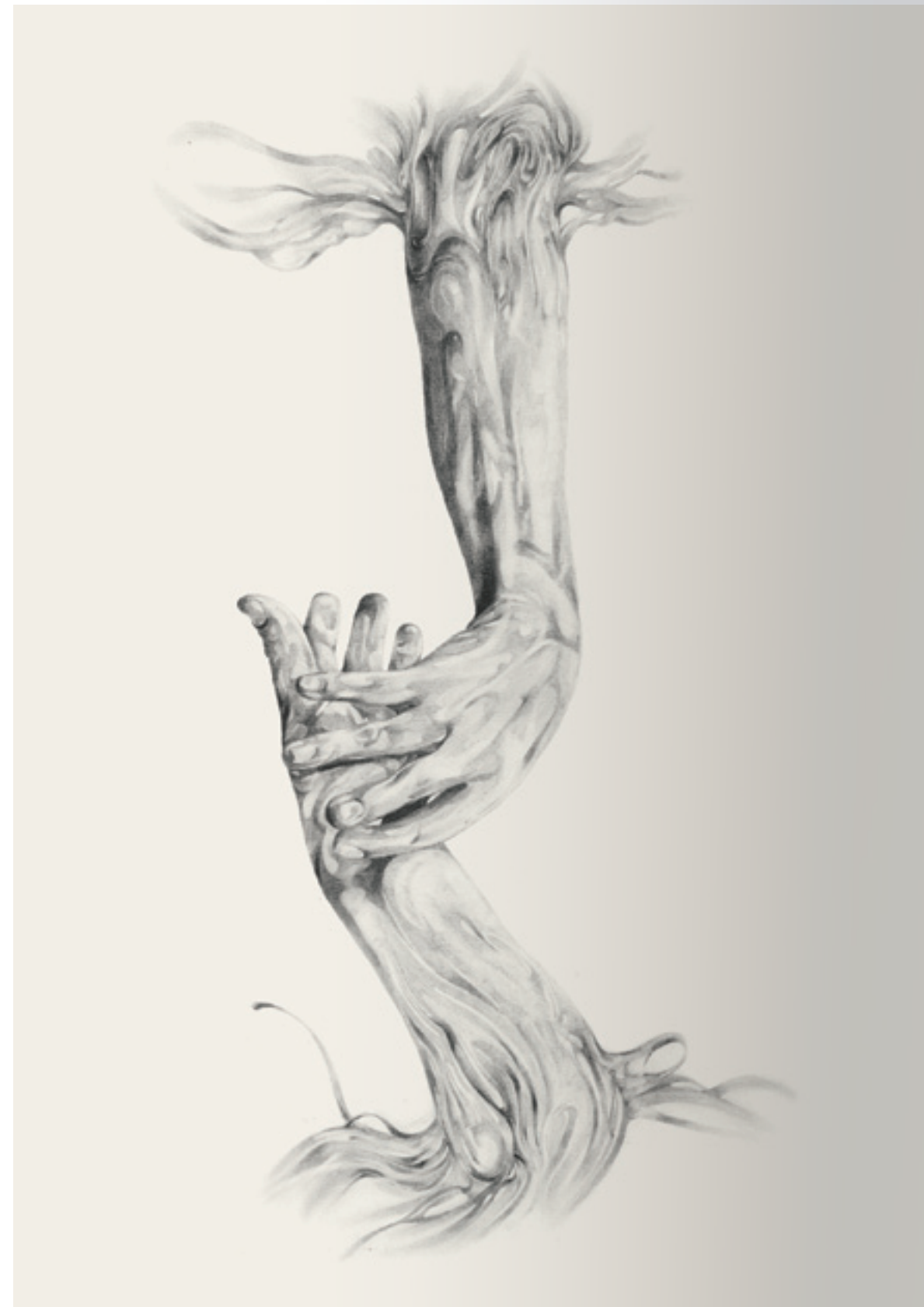
Poem by Emma Jones  
Illustration by Kate Copeland

-

I saw you once at the site of an earthquake.  
A woman lay in the rubble,  
Her panic filling the air thick as brick dust  
And strangers' hands, arms, heaved to free her  
Strangers' brows furrowed, rolled with fresh sweat  
Strangers' lips blossomed with whispered hope  
And there you were.  
In the pulse of blood through thickened veins  
In the drop of sweat that darkened dust,  
You. There you were.  
I saw you on the slave ship  
In the soothing hush of mothers' shush  
The warm and murmured lullabies  
I saw you in the death camps  
You were the last morsel, torn in half  
Proffered with knotted, knuckled hands  
In these darkest of places  
I have to remember:  
You. You still survive  
In the clutched embraces  
And the tears of grief,  
You sit, so quietly,  
Underneath.

-

*To Love* was partly inspired by a newspaper article about the London 7/7 bombings which spoke of the simple heroism and love from strangers to other strangers. The poem is a reminder that even amidst devastating circumstances, human beings are still capable of acts of unselfish goodness and love.



# JOE DUNTHORNE

Hailing from Swansea, Joe Dunthorne shot to mainstream literary fame after his debut novel, *Submarine*, was adapted into one of the hit films of the year by British director, Richard Ayoade. With his second novel launching recently to great critical acclaim and his first poetry pamphlet published last year as part of the Faber New Poets scheme, Joe Dunthorne looks set to become a national literary treasure. Popshot caught up with him to talk about influences, adaptations and the London Underground tube carriage that acts as his office.

Name, age, hometown, years writing poetry?

Joe Dunthorne, 29, from Swansea, 14 years.

If there is a definitive point, what first drew you towards writing poetry?

I think it was reading 'Zoom' by Simon Armitage. It's one of the few poems I've learned pretty much word for word.

You're both a poet and an author. Do you feel a stronger affinity with one or the other?

It depends on the day. When I have a novel to finish, I think about poetry. When I ought to work on my poems, I end up having ideas for short stories. When I try and fire out a short story, it starts turning in to a novel...and so the circle of procrastination is complete.

Last year you became one of just eight poets to be a part of the Faber New Poets programme. How was that experience and has it helped you as a poet?

The Faber New Poets scheme has been amazing. It came at the perfect time for me because I felt ready to publish something, but I wasn't quite ready for a full collection. The mentoring - in my case, from Nick Laird - and the support from Faber have been so useful. It's really put me under pressure. It's usefully intimidating to be in the company of so many other brilliant poets.

You're probably best known for your book *Submarine* which was recently turned into a film. When did you start writing it and what inspired the book?

I started it when I was 22, as an undergraduate at the University of East Anglia. The first chapter of *Submarine* was my last piece of creative writing coursework. It was inspired, as so many first novels are, by my own upbringing, but it's not an autobiography - it was Oliver's voice that really lead the book. It was the first time I'd written something and experienced that writers' cliché of "the character writing himself".

Were you nervous about having the book turned into a film and what was it like working with Richard Ayoade on it?

I was nervous, definitely, but it quickly became clear from spending time with Richard Ayoade that it was in good hands. The man is a walking IMDB. He has seen everything, and can cross-reference scenes, give you quotes, trivia - the whole deal. He's also a really great scriptwriter so, although lots of the novel had to be altered, cut or streamlined for the script, I felt comfortable with that, knowing that those decisions were in the film's best interests.

What are your strongest influences both as a poet and as an author? Who or what makes you want to write?

Other (mostly American) writers make me want to write. In terms of fiction - Don De Lillo, Cormac McCarthy, Wells Tower, Ali Smith, David Mitchell, Dave Eggers, Donald Barthelme, Kurt Vonnegut, Miranda July, David Foster Wallace and Raymond Chandler.

In terms of poetry - Frederick Seidel, David Berman and Don Paterson.



# WHEN I SAY I HAVE COME TO LOVE YOU

Poem by Gregory Heath  
Illustration by Tobias Hall

-

When I say I have come to love you  
I do not mean that I have become  
accustomed to your morning moods  
or the way you reduce my friends  
to nervous wrecks at parties.

When I say I have come to love you  
I am not talking of time having passed,  
of feelings that grew imperceptibly as flowers,  
bursting one day into tender shocking blooms.

When I say I have come to love you  
it is not because you please me.  
You are reckless, you are spoilt,  
and you are careless with my heart.

God help me.  
When I say I have come to love you  
I mean that is what I am here for.

-

*When I Say I Have Come to Love You* is about  
the sense of powerlessness and insecurity which  
can come with truly loving somebody whether  
you would choose it or not. It looks at a particular  
relationship which has much friction but is fated to  
remain.



# THE WISH

Poem by Ceri Thomas  
Illustration by Jules Julien

-

This is the palest face I've seen.  
Resting her head on the bobbled pillow;  
the sheets drawn formally to chin.

And as I watch her sleep  
I'm willing her to live.  
That futile wish; like the fragile  
breath that comes in tremulous waves.

And though I float with hope  
in limbo I know she will never  
be saved.  
Time, once a line, has wrapped  
itself around me.  
All motion reduced to a crawl.  
And life, in all its scarred beauty,  
continues after all.

-

*The Wish* was written about the author's  
grandmother and looks at the hopeful  
powerlessness of those left behind.

