

The Nuthatch, Themed Issue: September 2023:

Changes Of The Season



September is a time of change. We move from summer into autumn, leaves begin to colour and fall to the ground. Sunsets light the sky like wildfires. The smell in the air changes, and as humans, we start to prepare for the winter ahead.

But September can also be a time of hope and new beginnings. New terms and adventures. A time to make a fresh start or to start again.

Each of the poems in this issue touches on the themes of reflection, change, and new beginnings.

From the mystical to the mildly macabre - and plenty in between - our chosen wordsmiths explore the meaning of seasonal changes, both external and from within.

So, grab a tipple or a big steamy mug of tea, kick back, and get lost in The Changes of The Season.

Thanks for reading,

Dan & Ally. X

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Winds of Change

September is upon us
change is in the air,
it's flowing in light
blue waves. On
a windy Whitley Bay
Day.

Clouds are playing
in the sky,
the leaves have
begun to fall, I
always wonder why?

It's a magic yet
scary feeling when
you hear the
Winds of Change, the
winds of September
blowing in again.

~Emmy Blagdon

Emmy Blagdon is an illustrator, artist, poet, and creator. She sees the world, and people, in a wonderful way. She has an affinity with nature. She is just 10 years old.

When It's September

Then rufous will array hibiscus, and the trees
Of peepal, oak and sassafras will strew the ground
With whirling, swaying, crackling leaves, while Autumn's breeze,
Will sigh and murmur in each ear its joyous sound.
"O' Earth and flowers, young and old, September's come, behold!
behold!"

Then frisky boys and girls will build their kingdoms on
The forks of banyan and observe the world with glee,
Then Nuthatches will warble at the crack of dawn
And make the snapping sounds of nuts upon a tree,
And heaven will spread rays of gold, singing 'September's come,
behold!'

The plowboys will be jubilant as hopeful rain
Will fill the fields of cabbage, spinach, maize, and rice,
And creek-bound wives will giggle as the Sun won't reign
Upon them with its scorching sunbeams from the skies;
Their bashful lips from ghonghat's fold, will say, 'September's
come, behold!'

The milk pails of the dairy farms will be more than
As Sahiwals and Holsteins will make better yield
More life in streams will kiss the fates of fishermen
And wood frogs will start searching for their winter's shield,
But prior to that from their fold, they'll croak, 'September's come,
behold!'

My father will repose beneath the sun's grey bow
And ask my busy mother for a cup of tea,
The potted Yellow Elders will their brightness show
Just like the golden oriole which will glide free,

And coconut trees standing bold, will cry, 'September's come,
behold!'

Then sweet Autumnal wind will blow and fill my days
With relish from the savouring of ripe ash gourd—
I'll sit upon the small couch by the door and gaze
At musically falling rain and be restored
From all the senses bleak and cold and chime, 'September's come,
behold!'

New curry plants will turn our lawn into a croft
Tomatoes will spread everywhere with reddish hue,
The white-streaked Chameli will spread its fragrance soft
So will the curry plant and the alyssum, too.

All will be pied, like Springtime old, we'll say, 'September's come,
behold!'

~Shamik Banerjee

Shamik Banerjee is a poet and poetry reviewer from the Northeastern belt of India. He loves taking long strolls and spending time with his family. His deep affection for solitude and poetry provides him happiness.

Early Morning

Earth moved from the woodland floor,
Echo of the badgers from the night before,
I can see them now opening leafy drawers.
Snipe in silver wellies,
A Kestrel in dungarees,
It is not just history, and talks,
To re-imagine on long walks.
Winter tree branches,
Like graphite pencil sketches,
Drawn on the mauve paper sky at first light,
A tiny bird unidentifiable, up so high,
Slowly waking the sun eye,
From under his earth covers.

~Alice Harrison

Alice Harrison (@poet_Alice) lives with her Ghost Mantis, Sigourney Weaver. She's deeply inspired by nature and loves walking; Alice feels it helps her spiritually, mentally, and physically. She resides in the city, but her two favourite places on earth are the Fens and North Wales.

September

The sky's windows are halfway open
in September – the washing line
of cloud as delicate as a tightrope
in the blue bowl above our heads.
Something quietly shifts. Trees
slip on autumnal suits, play
peek-a-boo with summertime flowers.
Animals act as quartermasters
for the season to come. Birds
prepare for wintry flight, pretend
they are caught in a snow globe,
and every wing beat must push
hard against the invisible glass.
Something else shifts: nature slips
into the technological. You notice
praying mantises of 5G masts,
electric bikes as still as sleeping foxes,
the bat dances of wayward drones.
Pupils dilate, everything slows,
while you dance in a ballroom of silence,
and your partner is the season
showing you the steps you've missed
are the ones you'll never forget.

~Christian Ward

Christian Ward is a UK-based writer with recent work in '*Scapegoat Review*', '*Wild Court*', '*The Selkie*', '*Rappahannock Review*', and '*South Florida Poetry Journal*'. New work is forthcoming in '*Dream Catcher*'. He won 1st prize in the 2023 '*Cathalbui Poetry Competition*' and was longlisted for the 2023 '*Aurora Prize for Writing*.'

Autumn Lovers

A familiar breeze trundled in from the East,
She was gentle but crisp and firm.
She would make camp here for the months ahead
But only until the tide would turn.

She brought with her a velvet lover,
A September sun diffusing a radiant glow in the sky.
Who would overlook the misty mornings and brown sugar-cruised
avenues,
Whilst warming migrating birds in flight?

Together, they watched lush green disappear
And fade to amber and gold.
Both produced rich smiles filled with brisk breath
As dots of people huddled together below.

The breeze had gently stripped August of its dress
And caressed its now bare branches with a shudder of change.
But it was beautiful paired with a saffron spotlight that broke
through the pavement cracks
And reminisced with the season about wisdom and age.

In the coming weeks
Thundering clouds would awaken and batter the streets with rain.
But sunshine and breeze would make their way back around
And into September's gaze again.

As the Eastern breeze rolled ever further in,
The sun took a step back and hung low.
Two autumn lovers to stick around for a while
Until it was time to go.

~Jess Furey

Jess is a poet and creative writer from Liverpool. Right now, she's at the start of her writing journey. She's working on getting my foot in the door of the professional writing world. Nature and the seasons are among her biggest influences in writing (alongside history and mythology).

Half Turn of The Wheel

The wheel of the year creaks like a frost-rimed eye
blinking away its glittering sleep
'til Aster, Beltane, and Litha
alight like migrating birds—singing season songs.
Thrift blooms and the cliff tops blush
while bashful lambs scrawl starry-eyed love graffiti
on wooden fences, with them the pulse of time quickens
and days grow tall and gold like wheat—
yielding plenty.
It's all downhill from here, the wheel spins on—
in the blink of an eye, Lughnasa and Mabon come,
effervescent moments sear to memory,
what summer promises were kept or sorely broken?

A pale pink sky riots at the day's end,
the cliff tops become a treasure horde
as gorse brings kissing season—for some.

Sun-bleached heads rejoice in autumn
as the sea leans in with her swelling bosom.

~Joseph Nutman

Joseph Nutman (real name) is 42, identifies as left-wing working class, and hails from North Hertfordshire. He finds his voice in the tension between nature, the psyche, and society, seasoning his work with an overactive imagination and humour.

Words

Building blocks of the mind tower
stand sky-scraper tall,
toppling when misread;
aerial cables choke
upon undigested meanings:
globules of punctuation stick fast
like sharpened fish bones
leaving imprints as tattooed lovers.

Novels culminate in collections:
vast armies of words,
bedecked in military green—
ready to besiege willing minds,
exploding semantic battlefields
as handheld grenades
(eons apart from rinsing reality).

Words are power:
hanging memories like coat hangers;
nuances of truth slip by—
Freudian, deliberate or obsolete:
all holding unleashed artillery fire
in cross-armed defiance.

Words rotate on crushed notes,
deleted emails, unsent texts,
unspoken dialogues—

all float
unhinged...
in cloudless skies,
evaporating painlessly...

Time-aged love letters lie indented,
heavily inked, seminal blots;
some in secretive drawers,
treasured trinkets, held locket—
hiding metaphorical hearts
that barely beat,
blunted soundlessly.

Poetry uses only the best,
“la crème de la crème” of syntax;
selections are fierce,
hotly contended like speed dates:
where life mate goals
conclude in greying complacency.

Adjectives rotate like patisserie options:
each unique, tantalising
yet only one is prized:
pastry puff folds are lowered,
cradling crenellated cream
within a decadent box,
tied with gregarious ribbons
like a girl’s pigtailed on Easter Sunday:
the chosen one. She shines.

And each word’s the same,
for poets select judicially—
weighing choices like traditional sweets:
placed on a scale (noun),
tempting taste (sensory),
warming taste buds (verb)
limbering decadently (adverb)
like the unpicking of a poem (simile).

~Emma Wells

Emma is a mother and English teacher. She has poetry published in various literary journals and magazines. Emma won 'Wingless Dreamers'' Bird Poetry Contest of 2022.

She recently won Dipity Literary Magazine's 2024 'Best of the Net Nominations for Fiction' with her short story, 'The Voice of a Wildling'. Her debut novel, 'Shelley's Sisterhood', will be published in late 2023.

Music to My Ears

Don't you dare wake me—
this is not my month.
Care not for summer's mourning
or the birthday of my mother,
both
equally depressing.

Won't you please shake me—
can't tell what's real anymore.
Haven't eaten in days
and can hardly taste the pangs
over
oak-aged whiskey.

Can't you hear the sirens—
coming for another sunburnt chancer
like aloe vera or chamomile cream
that cost more than my watch
but
less than my dignity?

Don't you dare wake me!
I'm not finished resting,
recuperating from all the growing.
After the leaves fall, cold rain
arrives,
then you'll find me walking.

~Faith Falters

Faith Hails from the dying embers of the British Empire and the 90s. Her dualist experience growing up, together with her love of music (yes, even Country) informs writing which is as philosophical as it is scathing about the

human condition. Faith is an anarchist with romantic sensibilities and empathy for vampires. She currently lives in London—but her soul is restless.

Poem To A Fox

Fox, do you see with your amber eye,
we share this luminous moon, made velvet by
grey gossamers of cloud.
The night hangs heavy with haw and elderberry,
rosehip, blackberry, silent jewels in the dark.
What could I add? An exploding heart,
made beautiful by being there.

~Jennifer Chante

Jenni is an autistic writer, living near the beautiful backwaters of the North Essex coast with her husband. The natural world is endlessly fascinating to Jenni, and it inspires pretty much everything she writes.

She's just completed her dissertation for an MA in 'Wild Writing' at the University of Essex and has previously had her creative work published by 'Green Ink Poetry'. An excerpt of her writing is also published in the current issue of Resurgence and Ecologist magazine.

Acceptance

It is possible, I suppose, to sit still and ponder
In gently shifting light and not be afraid?

Not be afraid that childhood terrors might re-emerge
And bend the mind to scan for shadows in dark corners.

Not be afraid that the weight of deep regret
The heavy shame of long past misdemeanours
Will snag the heart and make its beat forever skewed.

Not be afraid of the paper cut pain
Of a thousand slights and misunderstandings.

Not be afraid that who I am is not enough?
Well, enough.

It is September and a time for new thinking.
The light is shifting for a reason
I hold my face up to be brightened, clarified
Flaws and weaknesses exposed,
Yes.

I breathe the harvest light inside and keep it close
To warm and heal and quicken and glance out from my eyes
In a sudden shining of acceptance.

~Jan Swann

Jan Swann is a Welsh poet living in Bristol. Although she's been writing for many years, she's only recently embraced poetry as a performance scene. Her writing focuses on the themes of love, loss, and mental health. Jan won the inaugural 'Bristol Infringed Poetry Competition' in July and was recently featured in BBC Upload.

Just Keep Swimming

Nothing is staying the same,
summer passes in Polaroids
and panic attacks.

Breath uncaught like
lemon yellow Brimstones
before the sun sets.

Cheeks heather blushed
like the moor in September,
coffee bean heart percolating.

Nothing is staying the same,
make maps by moonlight
and ride the crashing waves.

~a.h.

Ally Hammock was born and raised in the Barnard Castle region—she moved away at 18. After spreading her wings, Ally returned to the wilds of the Northeast when her daughter was born.

A series of traumatic events saw Ally migrate towards the written word as a vessel for healing, growth, and exploration. She started writing poetry in 2021 and has never looked back. Her work shows a deep connection to nature and paints vivid pictures of the Northeastern landscapes that surround her.

Childhood

As a child, Summer held me like a spell.
Pollen suspended above my head;
Dust from another world, frozen in time.
Above, there were boundless blues,
Broken only by candy-floss clouds,
Forming shapes before me,
Painting a fairytale.
The weeds felt like undiscovered shores,
The trees were the highest mountain peaks,
And I would climb and run and jump,
To new lands,
Far, far,
From the reaches of reality.
But endless days gave way to scentless fields.
The songs of birds became the passionless hum of insects.
My childhood magic, rested like dew drops,
On the petals of dying flowers.
In faded gardens, I'd dig my hands into the earth,
Clutching blades of grass in my grip,
Yearning to hold time itself.
But, as I'd return home each evening,
Soil under my nails and tears on my cheeks,
The sun, exhausted from upholding childish dreams,
Hung,
Lower in the sky,
And Autumn would come.

~Stephanie Macmillan

Stephanie recently left the city of Glasgow and moved back to her roots in Ayrshire. Things are certainly quieter, slower, and simpler now, giving Stephanie the chance to reconnect with the world around her. Alongside her newfound sense of home, Stephanie has felt this change of season to be

especially poignant due to a number of other personal changes and wanted to create a piece which would evoke the feeling of loss you experience as you grow into your new (and nearly always improved) self.

Six to Seven

I measured your height last September,
Before the new school year began
And once again this autumn's call.
Ten whole centimetres you had grown—
Blossoming from seedling to sapling.
You were so happy, insisted I marked it on the wall,
In black ink so everyone could see.
Then I told you other ways you had grown
During this gentle passing of seasons,
Like riding your bike without stabilisers,
Swimming five metres without armbands,
Growing your adult front teeth,
Reading a book in your head,
The two times, three and four times tables,
Reaching the sink taps without a stool,
A perfect cartwheel,
A near perfect handstand,
Buttering your own toast,
And going to parties without me staying - just in case!
So much in those twelve months
But all you could see was the little line
Marked in black ink
On the wall
That bore your name.

~Sarah Cain

Sarah is a mum of four currently residing in beautiful North Yorkshire. A former scientist, she now works as a teaching assistant in a local primary school. In her spare time, she loves listening to music, cooking, and writing poetry. She's passionate about nature and the environment but is now hoping to explore how she can communicate her love of science through poetry.

September Changes

Spirit level of a month, two-faced:
Virgo, unlikely mother of harvest
seeding, berry rich, fruit-rich
and Libra, like Justice,
blindly holding the scales
heedless of human wants and needs
everything hanging in the balance.
The cusp of starts and endings
another pinch point in the year
equinox pocketing its watch
as long evenings slip indigo then
ink-black into crisp cool night-time
ever stretching dusk till dawn
morning mists and even frost
mean not just leaves left dangling
in some sort of summer closure.
A warm jumper of a month,
a raincoat, wellies, for puddles
of leaf-fall and the water pooling
under fattened grey clouds
before winter's scour settles in
birds lining up on the wires
summer's forgotten worries returning
and the unmistakable feeling
of chickens coming home to roost.

~Emily Tee

Emily writes mainly prose-type poetry and some flash fiction. Originally from Northern Ireland, she's lived in England for many years, currently in the Midlands. She writes about what she sees out walking, a mix of observations about nature and society. A self-taught writer, she has featured in a number of publications since 2022.

An Uprooting

His chest is a broad valley
abundant in redwoods, oaks,
and his bones are the roots of dales
that draw deep from the rich well
of his words.

A vein is an eddying stream. Muscles,
stout as firm trunks. Beneath boughs
of ribs beats the forest green,
the heart's pulse of his seasons.

I plant myself in the crook,
burrow into the warmth
of familiar earth.
I am crouched. Still,
a small mammal with no wish
to rouse the leaves that tremble
in his wind's breath.

Safe in our dell of spring I pause,
poised and wary of the quarter's shift
that will soon uproot him.

~E M Davis

EM Davis (she/her) is a poet and musician who resides by the North East coast. Her poetry centres on postnatal depression, OCD, love, desire, and the definition of the self. Her work is published in 'Ballad Of' magazine, and she'll have a number of poems featured in 'The Bristol Mutter' as well as the 'Kaleidoscopic Minds Anthology'. Online, she's found @ifgoldrusts

Blackberries

You held a palm of onyx globes to show me
Tiny worlds of bursting taste
At least as many adorned your face
Charcoal lips
A darkness in your grin

I plucked at one
Too soft
Yet it would not give
But bled crimson down my hand
Pooling red in my nail beds
Lining the grid of my skin

My long shadow chased your long shadow home
With the shadow of a staff we'd found
Our shadow hands unstained.

~Kate Larsen-Daw

Kate Larsen-Daw, (she/her) @littleteakate, is a craft-maker and writer living by the sea in the Highlands of Scotland. Her writing explores nature, mental health, and sense of self.

Flows Between Palms

September cradles blackberries
in one hand, apples
in the other.

Slowly the scales *tip*.

Amid the crumbling,
an uninterrupted stream of
sugar, flour and butter,

flows between palms.

~Christoper Martin

Christopher is a poet and Buddhist living by the Mouth of the Tyne on the Northeast coast. His work is widely published, and his debut collection is due in 2024 with @theblackcatpoetrypress. A former singer-songwriter, his sole focus at the moment is poetry. When he's not writing or meditating (or dancing), Christoper likes exploring his mysterious world through the eye of a camera.

Thank you for reading. Until next time...

And, a big thank you to all our epic poets

Dan and Ally. xxx

Website: <https://www.thenuthatchmag.com/>

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