

APRIL
2022

Only Ever One Summer

JAMIE
WOODS

thirty sketched poems
inspired by the artwork of
anjum wasim dar
gaynor kane
& john phandal law



Only Ever One Summer

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Publication Notes

These poems are experiments, first drafts, written purely with the objective to write and see where I'd go. Think of this as a sketch book, a demo tape, not a manifesto or greatest hits.

They were originally published by Paul Brookes on The Wombwell Rainbow, and Jamie Woods on Twitter and Instagram in April 2022, as part of Paul's National Poetry Month 2022 Ekphrastic Challenge.

Are they the best poems I've written? No.

Have I edited them since they first appeared? Yes, some of them. I forgot a few commas.

Am I proud of them? Yes.

I've collated them because

a: they've been 'published' so probably won't find a home elsewhere,

b: I like them enough to preserve them, just in case one of the tech billionaire owners of our lives decides to just delete everything from their servers.

c: to show my Mum and Dad.

The artwork that inspired each piece accompanies them inset, and was made by Anjum Wasim Dar, Gaynor Kane or John Phandal Law, and has been reproduced here with their kind permission.

Design and layout: Jamie Woods

Cover Photos: Gaynor Kane

Font: Chivo and Chivo Bold

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Original artwork: © Anjum Wasim Dar © Gaynor Kane © John Phandal Law respectively.

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www.TheWombwellRainbow.com www.JamieWoods77.com

#NaPoWriMo

Notes

0105
2022

on Paul's Ekphrastic Challenge & #NaPoWriMo

I've never really been good at routine.

For his April Ekphrastic Challenge, poet Paul Brookes from The Wombwell Rainbow collated 90 images, and encouraged people to respond to them each day. I've always loved ekphrasis – writing in response to artwork – so I naïvely / impulsively signed up on March 29th.

When I first started writing ten, twelve years ago, the idea of taking part in a 'National Poetry Writing Month' (#NaPoWriMo) challenge offended my very ramshackle and scattergun self-aware 'artistic' and 'literary' pretensions and sensibility. I'd rather write nothing for months, years, than engage in words-on-demand. Then again, the idea of writing poetry would have also been an equally alien concept back then.

But things change – for me, an acute life-threatening illness, and the life-altering after-effects that have followed it – and new perspectives appear, not just to my day-to-day existence. I started writing again. I started writing poems.

Previously approaching something like this, I'd see nothing but discipline and rules, and rebel. But I'm older now. This challenge actually gave me freedom. Writing and publishing within 24 hours encouraged experimentation, exploration, play and joy. And that's why we write, isn't it? Because we enjoy words and what they can do?

Each day in April I'd focus on one particular painting or photo and see where it took me, and *my god*, the places it took me... I surfed waves, explored the bible, had allergic reactions, and saw sex in things that I probably shouldn't. Notes became verses became sketches of poems and after a little while I'd be happy with what I'd done in a limited amount of time (day job, evening job, fatigue, and parenting all naturally get in the way).

I'd never have written these poems without such a wonderfully precise, organised and rich inspirational playground, for which I am grateful to Paul and the artists.

Jamie Woods, 1st May, 2022

The Factory

after Masks

001

Clone Debbie Harry

factory test-tubes burnt nuclear,
atomic colours, mute-naïf,
make her a star.

Plaything, puppet, screaming
magenta soured nothings
silent echoes lost
in the horizon blue wonder.

Cowling in jealousy he lines her eyes,
captures her effervescence,
day-glo rage contained.

The smirking devil behind her –
always a man –
pulls the strings tighter, tight,
one more time.



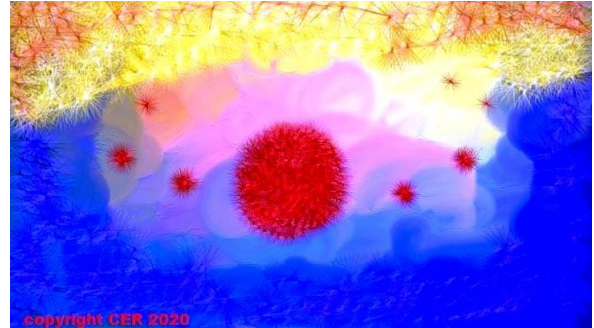
Words: Jamie Woods
Artwork: Masks by Anjum Wasim Dar

Corona Dandelions

after Corona Shocks

002

Cochineal dandelion clocks
blow firmly, evenly,
one strong breath to clear the stem.
Airborne in time,
they crown above combusting fields
waiting to cinder.
Spiking through oxygen
tufts grasp to find new hosts
to germinate, infest, infect.



Between Barbed Wire and Mountains

003

after Occupied

Between the barbed wire
and the imposing mountains
stand the occupied.

Line-drawings
of the invisible
people sketched as ghost forest.

No crosshatching,
penciled to feed
someone's vanity, or god, or hatred.

A trick, eye drawn to focus
on the twisted wire or the awning backdrop
and ignore the lost, the trapped.



The Lotus and The Clover

after Hidden Crime

004

Daubed on the wall
The Lotus and The Clover.
Fertility, enlightenment,
eternity, and fortune.
As knights ride Trojan
to enforce the good word
he hangs. Alone,
unprotected by faith.



Words: Jamie Woods

Artwork: Hidden Crime by Anjum Wasim Dar

Last One Standing

after Secret Flower

005

Cherry Blossom

Magnolia

Eastern Redbud

Crepe Myrtle

heroes and loves

all fall.

Crushed pink underfoot

turn to orange, turn to mulch,

too many funerals

until just one remains.



Words: Jamie Woods

Artwork: Secret Flower by Anjum Wasim Dar

Freudian Pollination

after Untitled

006

The deep purple blooms, open,
inviting, bees swarm to pollinate,
the iris pulls at my pupils,
widening, stretching.

Iris sibirica,

Rorschach, Freud:

I can't unsee it.

My mind rolls
past the flower bed, into the gutter
with a decomposing rose,
still wrapped in cellophane,
that a man bought for a quid
and gave to a woman in a club
in the hope of maybe having sex.



Words: Jamie Woods
Artwork: Untitled by John Phandal Law

Distracted

after Untitled

007

I'm easily distracted,
and I'm genuinely sorry.

You can put in all this detail
and choose the finest vellum
it won't matter to me
what you do in monochrome.

You know how kids will sometimes
choose the box instead of the toy?

If you show me something bright and bold,
orange, in motion, I fly away with it:
drunken stumbling on the breeze,
leaves, the ground, just a backdrop to wonder.



Words: Jamie Woods
Artwork: Untitled by John Phandal Law

Towering

after Devenish Round Tower

008

Rise to heights
for a view of
placid water
flaccid grass
nothing arousing.

What did you see
from your proud protuberance
when your vision
still mattered
and your impact was felt?



Words: Jamie Woods

Artwork: Devenish Round Tower, County Fermanagh by Gaynor Kane

Terracotta

after Untitled

009



terracotta warriors standing proud chimney outlets

tank engines combustion engines

fallen titans burning coal

to orange dust steam over clay

redundant now guarding nothing

repurposed sold in garden centres

flowerpots for decoration not industry

Words: Jamie Woods

Artwork: Untitled by John Phandal Law

Don't stop

after Double Rainbow over the Palm House

010

Buried behind the glass
spectral searchlights
point the way
to two pots of gold.
I tell you I don't believe in magic
but here I am
spade in hand
forever digging.



Words: Jamie Woods

Artwork: Double Rainbow over the Palm House, Botanic Park, Belfast by Gaynor Kane

Hexed

after Dundee, Graffiti

011

This building hides secrets
covered by Dundee graffiti
finches baked in sunlight
5G radiates hemp smoke
– *N.C. loved me*
hieroglyphs runes
– *we rule the school*
camouflage hexed algorithms
witches spray spell tags
on all wireless transmissions.



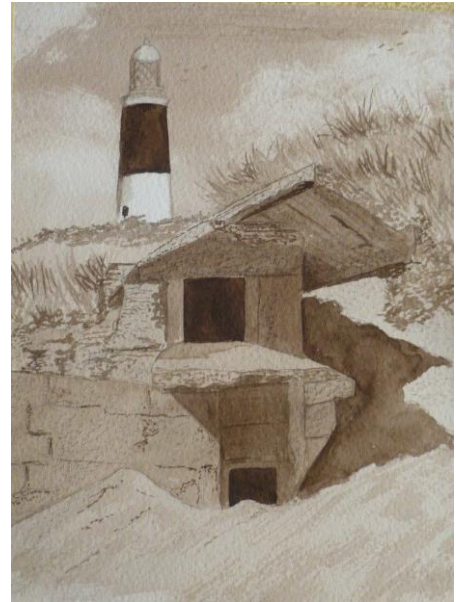
Words: Jamie Woods
Artwork: Dundee, Graffiti by Gaynor Kane

A Warning

after Untitled

012

heavenly lighthouse
hooped in contrast
omniscient and divine
like a god
so easily mistaken
for sanctuary and protection
standing spinning warnings
while waves and high winds
crash and destroy at will



Words: Jamie Woods
Artwork: Untitled by John Phandal Law

I.N.R.I.

after Girl beneath statue of Christ

013

On cold floors we sang cross-legged

– the wise man built his house

builds his house

– upon the rock

out of stone out of fear on a hill

– and the rain came tumbling down

Sitting among clocks and petals

in nature rests innocence

all sun rays and buttercups

a ladybird lands on her hand

tickles her arm as she watches on

in awe and scientific discovery.



Words: Jamie Woods

Artwork: Girl beneath statue of Christ by Gaynor Kane

Half-Life

after Untitled

014

Pollution and pollen
a lifetime, a half-life ago.
Blurred stains of nostalgia linger
like the smell of your dead grandad's
favourite cigarettes.
Ahead, unknown, yet to be tested.
Front, left,
a sulphuric,
sepia-drenched uncertainty,
an inbetween state
a fractured wreckage.



Words: Jamie Woods
Artwork: Untitled by John Phandal Law

all-nighter

after Glow Sticks

015

bursting neon incandescence

fueled by alcopop aftershocks

all-night

skin up

smoke up

wait for the drop

wait for the boom

think i'm

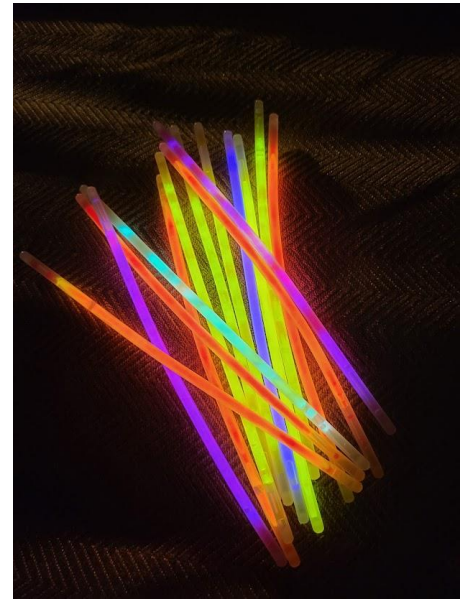
a dancer

all bez

no talent

everyone loves everyone in the room

i love every single person in this room



Words: Jamie Woods

Artwork: Glow Sticks by Gaynor Kane

On Mount Horeb

after Flames

016



stare long enough into the crackle and hiss / take in the fumes
and frown your eyes / be open susceptible acceptable
accessible / throw your life into the relentless / party / take
off your shoes and pick up your brand new twisted staff /
meditate baby asphyxiate baby hallucinate baby / burning
brambles burning bushes / bush fire brush fire shrub fire /
forest fire pyrrhic pyre / firepile / you can see everything
dancing intoxicating manifesting / in the onslaught of the
flames / now breath in deep go back to your people and make
believe you've met your god

Words: Jamie Woods
Artwork: Flames by Anjum Wasim Dar

treading water

after Fathoms

017

a beach a cove liberty
sanctuary glanced jealously
from this cave snatched
daylight stolen false hope
swirls with the gulls circling
searching for prey
for scraps for sustenance
the tide pulls away dredging
sand a single whelk
in a bay of mussels
stay safe
under seaweed-lined crags
undercover treading water
until the inevitable darkness
we can run unscared



Words: Jamie Woods
Artwork: Fathoms by Anjum Wasim Dar

Windbreaks

after Untitled

018



if the sickened wind blew iller or harder
the arching stems could reach snapping point
and that's why we have splints and poles and windbreaks
and that's why we have medicines and vaccines and plasters
at the lake the long grass regrows each year
and that's how we know we might just survive

Words: Jamie Woods
Artwork: Untitled by John Phandal Law

Don't Trust Men

after International Women's Day Parade, Belfast

019

The earth's temperature rises each year.

Governments fight and kill.

Billionaires now go to space
and don't even notice the cost.

Trickle-down economics won't help
if you're born head held under water.

Drowning is as inevitable as the question:

every day,

every single day

is international men's day, Steve.



Light Trail Photography

after Liverpool Lights

020

Since I was admitted
everything is now
blurred and disjointed,
a prolonged exposure
to a lived-in headache
of light trail photography.

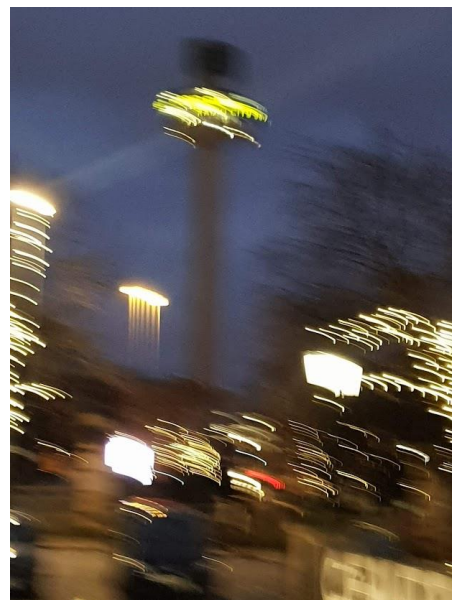
No traffic or motion:

tedious strip-lights and fire exit signs.

They gave me a book about my illness

but how can I read?

None of the letters even
look like letters anymore:
upstrokes, downstrokes
smudged and fractured,
confused, contused, lost.



Words: Jamie Woods
Artwork: Liverpool Lights by Gaynor Kane

Retirement

after Untitled

021

In my thirties

I started planning for retirement
stuffing loose change into ISAs and pensions,
so that when I get old
we'll live our days out
in a little white cottage.

Swaying together, greying, peacefully
watching waves balance the shore
restoring stolen sands,

washing up seaweed and crabs.

In my forties it changed overnight,
from "*when* I get old" to "*if*".

Now I'm considering splashing the lot
on a fortnight in Florida with the kids.



Words: Jamie Woods
Artwork: Untitled by John Phandal Law

Only Ever One Summer

after Abstract Garden

022



pockmarked apples pastel blossom reaching petals
good tear-stains water-coloured happy luminous crying
negative space as missing moments summers spent
under the same safe branches blended and thumb-smudged
into one lucid memory

Words: Jamie Woods

Artwork: Mixed Media Abstract Garden by Gaynor Kane

Crystal Ball

after Mussenden Temple

023

She shows me her crystal ball
making upside-down images
of things right in front of it
and I feel so lost and confused
I can't even...

She says "isn't refraction amazing"
and tries to explain how it works
and I just burn up

/ acid reflux / primal reflex / fight or flight
/ panic attack / hammer / luddite /
/ no crystal ball / just broken glass / and suppress

She says "but I love it"

I tell her "it's the ball or me".

She shrugs indifferently and says "it's OK"

"I didn't see a future for us anyway".



Words: Jamie Woods
Artwork: Mussenden Temple by Gaynor Kane

Pencil Etymology

after Pencil City

024

a city of *fine paint brushes*
trees as *brush* mountains defined
– *Siri, what is tail in Latin?*
all designed by Sir Richard Rogers
and other men with phallic cars
and bulging wallets
a city of pencils designed to
project their manliness
protect their manhood
the pen is a sword
the pen is a sword
the pen is a sword
rub it all out
and Tipp-Ex the patriarchy



Words: Jamie Woods
Artwork: Pencil City by Anjum Wasim Dar

Seasickness

after Untitled

025

just
still
floating
alone on
inkless seas
no sail no anchor
no forward motion
incessant rocking
constant rocking
of the waves
and tides
to send
me off



Words: Jamie Woods
Artwork: Untitled by John Phandal Law

rose red rose dead

after Half the Year

026



roses

beautiful | terminal

spontaneous | life support

red petals | browning

a little death for a little death

endorphin rush | a sharp scratch

vivid and fierce | from barbed stems

more satisfying | holding back tears

longer lasting than most relationships

Words: Jamie Woods

Artwork: Half the Year by Anjum Wasim Dar

Indelible Transience

after Salthill, Galway, Fairground

027

They kissed for the first time
at the touring funfair,
candyfloss and petrichor,
petrol and cinnamon.

Paid two tokens each for a go on
the Ferris wheel, didn't look at the view:
lost and dissolving wrapped inside
in the forever of the moment.

On the speedway the man in charge
clears his throat and taps the sign

PLEASE KEEP ARMS & LEGS IN AT ALL TIMES

embarrassed but besotted
they leave the ride hand-in-hand
neither wanting to be
the first to let go.



Words: Jamie Woods

Artwork: Salthill, Galway, Fairground by Gaynor Kane

Hay Fever

after Untitled

028

As we drive past pantone colour charts
full of sheep or polytunnels
I'll ask city-boy questions
and my wife smiles and tells me things
like *that's not hay, it's straw*
and *that's not straw, it's hay.*
And she knows that I'll never
remember the difference between
one set of yellowing gravestones
and another, like she has to remind me
to take my non-drowsy Loratidine
or I'll ruin another nice day out
with husked sneezing, sugar beet eyes
and a scrambling vetched headache.



Words: Jamie Woods
Artwork: Untitled by John Phandal Law

Wetsuit

after Surfer, Portrush, County Antrim

029

Inside the wetsuit a fire builds:
overcast greys and blue-collared waves
won't dampen this glowing life-force.
Building-site sand sticks to the soles,
windchill factors
can't blow out the longing.
The sea waits dutifully,
ready to be worked, ready to be loved.
Feet into saltwater,
the cold turns to warmth,
turns to heat, turns to flame,
becomes peace, burns with joy:
alive.



Words: Jamie Woods
Artwork: Surfer, Portrush, County Antrim by Gaynor Kane

Just Press Play

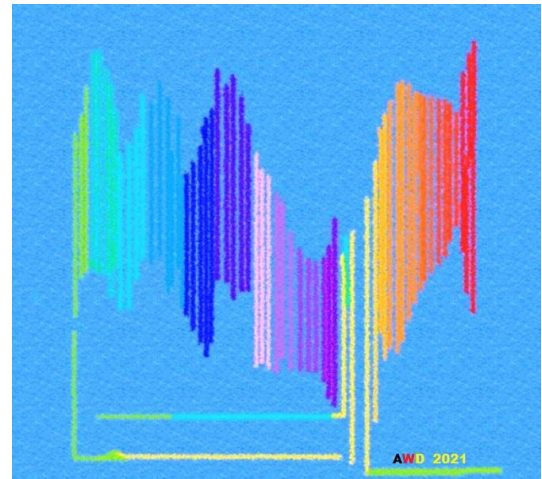
after Rainbow

030

Look at a record
under a magnifying glass
you'll see tiny bumps and dark ridges
an uncanny valley of inaudible sound.

Hold a CD up to the light
and angle it, just so, and
shining over microscopic pits of data
soars a noiseless rainbow.

Just drop the needle, press play:
let the kick drum heartbeats
and string theory soundwaves
tie you up in joyous stereo technicolor.



Words: Jamie Woods
Artwork: Rainbow by Anjum Wasim Dar

Only Ever One Summer

Acknowledgements



This booklet is dedicated to all my friends (old and new) who clicked the heart button on my Twitter and Instagram posts, in particular Claire, Oanis and Heather who managed to complete the set and liked every single one. It might seem silly, but social media gratification really helps the motivation when doing daft things like this.

Huge thanks go to:

- Paul Brookes for organizing, creating, and curating the challenge,
- Anjum, Gaynor and John for the truly inspirational artwork,
- my fellow poets who took part, it was a joy to read your poems every morning.

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Love to Leukaemia Care UK for the support they give myself and other blood cancer patients. This booklet was free – why not give them a donation if you like it?

<https://www.leukaemiacare.org.uk/donate/>

Much, much love to my family.

And finally, an immense thank you to Beth, for everything, forever.

Only Ever One Summer

About the Contributors

'77

Jamie Woods is a writer from Swansea. He has had poetry in *Poetry Wales*, short fiction in *Evergreen Review* and *The Lonely Crowd*, and his poem 'Ring the Bell' was commended in the Hippocrates International Prize for Poetry and Medicine 2021. In 2019 he was diagnosed with Acute Promyelocytic Leukaemia, and since reaching remission has been involved in supporting and advocating for fellow blood cancer patients.

Website: www.jamiewoods77.com

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Gaynor Kane lives in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where she is a part-time creative, involved in the local arts scene. She writes poetry and is an amateur artist and photographer. In all her creative activities she is looking to capture moments that might otherwise be missed.

Website: www.gaynorkane.com

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John Phandal Law is 68. Lives in Mexborough. Retired teacher. Artist; musician; poet. Recently include in 'Viral Verses' poetry volume. Married. 2 kids; 3 grandkids.

Anjum Wasim Dar loves nature, landscapes and abstract imagery, works with pencils, crayons and the Software ArtRage 2.0 and MyPaint. As a writer and poet, awarded Poet of Merit Bronze Medal 2000, USA International Society of Poets. With her artistic skills she plans and conducts environment awareness workshops for children, and her company CER (Creative Education Resources) participated in World Environment Day and Earth Day Programs 2011-2013.

Art Portfolio: <https://www.artwanted.com/anjuartwriter/gallery/>

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