

Aporia.

Issue Three

July 2026

Ten voices. Six countries. Six ways of telling the truth — this is what
it sounds like when the world writes honestly.

aporialit.com · [@Aporia.Lit](https://twitter.com/Aporia.Lit)

CONTENTS

- 01 **The Myth of Apollo and Hyacinthus** · *Helena Marques*
- 02 **The Departed Chapter** · *Abdul Wasey Khan*
- 03 **red one third** · *Viviane Chen*
- 04 **Two Cents and Sentiments on Anger** · *Sybil Guia Singson*
- 05 **■■■■■ (Promises)** · *Eknoorjeet Kaur*
- 06 **Ordinary Devotions** · *Aaranya Rakhunde*
- 07 **The Shade Grey** · *Shrinikka B*
- 08 **The Perfect Wife** · *Saanvi Mishra*
- 09 **The Tortured Poets' Club** · *Aahana Singh*
- 10 **Two Hearts in Moonlight** · *Sumit Chauhan*

FROM THE EDITOR

On the depth of what arrives, and how far it travels

When we began *Aporia*, we made a quiet promise: to read everything that arrived with real attention, and to say yes whenever something told the truth. We did not yet know how far that promise would carry us. Issue Three arrives with work from six countries — India, Brazil, Pakistan, China, the Philippines, and the United States — and in two languages, English and Hindi. Six genres sit side by side in these pages: a haiku beside a Greek myth retold, a Hindi poem beside a piece of flash fiction, personal essays beside creative non-fiction.

But the map is not what moves us most. The depth is.

Consider the range in these pieces. From China, Viviane Chen writes of inherited silence — a grandmother who “laughed with her mouth shut.” From India, in Hindi, Eknoorjeet Kaur opens on the ache of a promise unkept: “■■■ ■■■■■, ■■■■■■ ■■ ■■■■■” — in her own translation, they never came, the ones who had made promises. Aaranya Rakhunde finds grief in a kitchen habit: “two plates out of habit. one set slightly to the left.” And Aahana Singh throws the door open to anyone who has ever felt too much, welcoming them to “the club of the tortured poets.”

These are not pieces written to be liked. They are pieces someone needed to write — and we are honoured they trusted us to hold them. Some of these writers had never submitted anywhere before. Every one of them did something only they could do.

If you are reading this and wondering whether your own voice belongs here: it does. Aporia exists for exactly the writer who is not sure yet — the one with a poem in a drawer, a story half-finished, a language that crosses borders. Send us the thing you cannot not write. We are still reading everything. We are still saying yes.

SHORT FICTION

The Myth of Apollo and Hyacinthus

Helena Marques

Colégio Olimpo, Brasília · Brazil

Flowers are not known for telling stories. More often, it is the Muses who bear the responsibility of proclaiming heroes and the quarrels of the gods—so beautiful and serene atop Mount Olympus, so lofty and distant—that poor flowers never dare enchant mortals with tales of their own, nor compare themselves to such divine beings.

And yet, amidst the murmurs of the Greeks, among the silks and satins of emperors, hidden within Spartan soil, the hyacinth flowers allow themselves to tell a story. A forgotten story, forever cradled by the warmth of the sun and refreshed by the gentle breeze of morning.

Inhale. Exhale.

How ironic it was: the wind itself had to remember how to breathe. It had shown no such restraint days before on Mount Olympus, and now it had to pay the price.

A price that smelled of fresh olives, youthful sweat, and princely confidence. A price whose dark, bronze skin gleamed beneath the morning sun, whose raven hair shimmered like the waters of the Styx, and whose face—carved to perfection like one of Pygmalion's statues—was drawn tight in concentration.

"Again."

Hyacinthus played once more.

To look upon the young man was a final blessing to the soul; to listen to him was another matter entirely. Zephyrus found it impossible to endure the lesson as the punishment it was meant to be.

"Better," Zephyrus said. "Much better."

Only days ago, he had thought Zeus would chain him to a mountain and have an eagle devour his liver each day. He had done as much to Prometheus for giving fire to mortals. Why should he not do the same when the God of the West Wind had granted the Persians the gift of windcatchers?

"Really?"

"Yes."

Hyacinthus smiled at once.

Zephyrus would invent a thousand more breeze-driven contraptions, summon as many tempests as it took, if only he could preserve that smile forever. But when he saw where the young man's eyes had turned, he realized he would do it a thousand times over if he could only make that smile belong to him.

"I, for one, thought it was enchanting."

Zephyrus closed his eyes for a brief moment.

That voice.

Of course it had to be.

Why did that captivating voice always have to interfere? Those skillful fingers, that effortless brilliance, that radiance so impossible to rival.

"No." He sighed.

"No what?"

"Don't interrupt."

"I would never interrupt a lesson."

Apollo sat beside Hyacinthus without so much as an invitation. Zephyrus hated that effortless confidence. Grinding his teeth, he watched golden hair sway as the sun god settled beside the prince, perfectly complementing his fair skin and bright eyes, framing full lips and a face of flawless, divine symmetry.

Hyacinthus tried to hide his smile.

"Zephyrus must think I'm hopeless at this."

"I don't!" he blurted, only to feel ridiculous for the outburst.

In truth, the boy was dreadful. The god's punishment had been to teach the worst lyre player in all of Greece. But they were making progress. He could feel it.

Just as he could feel Apollo's gaze lingering on him, mocking him as it did in every lesson.

"I could spend the whole afternoon listening to anything you played," the sun god said to Hyacinthus.

For all the empty flattery Apollo was so fond of, these words were genuine. He would gladly trade hours of mortal worship for mere seconds with the boy. It was as though all the endless time immortality had granted him might vanish without warning, and he was desperate to cling to every fleeting scrap of life upon the earth.

"Maybe I'll never learn." Hyacinthus muttered, lowering the lyre.

"You will." Zephyrus said.

"You will." Apollo echoed.

"As long as someone stops interrupting." The words came out sharper than intended, and from the depths of his heart, the god of the west wind wished the sun would simply go away.

"Impossible."

"Why?"

Apollo looked at Hyacinthus for a moment. His smile softened.

"Because whenever he's near... I forget what I was doing."

For a moment, there was silence.

Hyacinthus looked away, blushing.

The Wind sighed, and the breeze managed to lessen the crimson flush upon the young man's cheeks.

"Let us take a break," Apollo suggested, rising from the grass. "I believe our future great musician has learned enough for today."

He then remembered the last gift his brother Hermes had given him. This time, he had not allowed himself to be deceived by his brother's persuasion, the same persuasion that had once convinced him to trade an entire herd of cattle for a lyre. No, he was far more mature now. He had traded with the Messenger God the very concept of a harp for a disc. A golden, shining disc, as radiant as the king of stars himself.

"It shines like your vanity," Hermes had said as he handed him the object. "And its intensity resembles your love."

"You wound me, brother," Apollo had replied. "If you claim that my love for myself and my admirers is so brilliant, then you take me for a selfish god."

"I am not speaking of your self-love," Hermes said, concealing a mischievous smile behind his wings. "I speak of another kind of love. The kind that dwells in the home of the olive trees."

Now Apollo understood.

He looked at his golden-adorned metal disc, and then at Hyacinthus. His skin gleamed beneath the sunlight, reflecting its brilliance just as his eyes did. His dark skin seemed soft and lustrous. Like olives. Like olive branches.

Apollo smiled, amused by the accuracy of his brother's remark.

"What are we supposed to do with that?" the boy asked, interrupting his reverie. "It's very beautiful, but what is it for?"

"I think it was made to be thrown," Apollo guessed. He had little notion of the disc's purpose, but its beauty and brilliance alone were enough to capture his interest. "Would you like to throw it with us?"

he asked Zephyrus.

The West Wind, meanwhile, was making his way toward the shade of a fig tree, visibly irritated by the interruption of the lesson.

"It is a foolish game," he replied. "And I am tired. I shall rest."

Apollo and Hyacinthus began a childish game, in which one would throw the golden object toward the other, who would catch it and repeat the process. Hyacinthus, lacking the posture and endurance of a god, constantly tumbled into the grass, provoking bursts of laughter. Every so often, Apollo would throw himself to the ground as well, pretending to fall, delighting in the laughter it earned him.

Zephyrus watched with disgust.

He grabbed a handful of figs and let their juice stain his chin as he ate, observing the pair as though his soul itself was rotting. The hatred he felt at every laugh consumed his body. He scrubbed the red fruit juice from his hands with fierce intensity, as though wiping away blood.

Hyacinthus looked so happy. So light and serene, even amid the absurdity of such a game.

Yet surely he had been far happier during their lessons. Surely he ought to have preferred the company of the gentle breeze rather than exposure to the sun's burning and unpredictable heat. Winds were fresher. It was far more pleasant to remain at Zephyrus' side, surrendering oneself to the coolness of the air and the soft melody of the lyre.

He thought of all the pleasures Hyacinthus was missing. He fled from the sun into the trees' shade and devoured fig after fig, taking savage

bites and hurling them to the ground.

And then, no longer able to bear it, he sighed.

He released all that frustration, all that sense of injustice, in that brief breath poisoned by wrath, tossing the last fig from the tree onto the grass.

The fruit struck the earth and burst apart, spilling its fresh red juice.

The sound it made was loud.

But not nearly as loud as the sound of Hyacinthus' skull splitting in two.

Apollo did not yet understand. He could not comprehend why the disc was suddenly covered in blood. Later, he would ask Hyacinthus how such a thing had happened.

"Hyacinthus," he groaned, kneeling beside the young man's fallen body. Soon his feet were stained by the blood flowing freely from his head.

"Hyacinthus. Hyacinthus."

The name was repeated until it became little more than a whisper.

He looked toward the fig tree, now empty, and felt the urge to strangle Zephyrus. But he could not do that yet. First he had to shield the young man from seeing him in such a state of fury.

And then, taking him into his arms, Apollo screamed.

For the first time in millennia, he did not use the voice that had so enchanted mortals to compose beautiful and poetic melodies.

He screamed.

The agony in his voice scraped his throat raw, flooding the surrounding lands, making the earth tremble and the sky tear apart, as though it too had been struck by the golden disc.

"It will be alright."

His tears dampened the full lips that would never smile again.

"You will play the lyre again. And I will help you. You will play so beautifully..."

His fingers caressed the cold face.

"My hands," whispered Hyacinthus.

His head, resting against the god's chest, stained the white tunic until its whiteness became entirely red.

"I can no longer feel them. I will never play again."

"Do not say that! You will play so beautifully that you will ascend Olympus with me. And we shall play forever. With the Muses. Ah, you will adore them..."

"Apollo."

His voice was a distant whisper, weak as the setting sun.

"Are you sad?"

"Why would I be sad? I am with you. And I can hardly wait for you to stand so we may play again."

Hyacinthus smiled.

"That is good. You are the sun. You must not be sad."

Apollo cried out his name again and again, desperately trying to bring the boy back to life.

But no matter how much he shook his body, nor how fervently he prayed and begged, those eyes would never open again. That body would never gleam like olives beneath the sunlight.

It became, forever, a pale, cold, lifeless thing.

Never again would he furrow his beautiful brow in concentration. Never again would he feel the wind in his hair, just as he would never again feel the warmth of the sun.

The next day, the sun rose weak and sorrowful, lacking the strength to climb the sky. From dawn onward, Sparta was deprived of wind, and the heat tormented mortals.

Hyacinthus, however, did not feel sweat cling to his brow.

With the last of Apollo's strength, his dead body was transformed into purple petals upheld by green stems and living leaves. There he could remain and listen to Apollo play the lyre for all eternity.

The flowers, named after the young man, regained their vigor whenever sunlight touched their leaves. Apollo came to tend and sing to them, as he would for thousands of years to come. For one hour each day, the sun would burn more fiercely upon that hill, while the

wind refused to appear. Lyres and harps would be played, and not a single breeze would be felt.

Only after the sun's departure would Hyacinthus' flowers feel the wind attempt to reach them, seeking them as though for a kiss, yet never touching even a single bloom.

For throughout all eternity, they would turn away from the wind's guilty pleas and forever face the light of the sun.

Helena Marques is a writer from Colégio Olimpo in Brasília, Brazil. “The Myth of Apollo and Hyacinthus” is Helena’s first piece for Aporia.

The Departed Chapter

Abdul Wasey Khan

Abbottabad Public School · Pakistan

I can't forget you, not because I don't have a strong memory, but because my heart only considers those who desire to live in it. The hymn of your gaze makes my heart dance swiftly. Your sight is like a river carrying me through the heavy tides. But... for I am a rowboat stranded in that river, rolled up in its nets, too elusive to escape.

In front of you, my sight was neglected, like a terror of sparrows whose wings had been caught. But your eyes held a thunder that was ineffable for words to describe, yet they were too coy to burst.

The eccentricities were too much in your memories, yet they seemed flawless. How much I had lost from my eyes was all restored from yours. The eyes which until now had been the source of adorenance have become the source of fulfillment. Because for me, my heart beats in your eyes.

The reminiscence of your fragrance still refreshes me to this day. These memories shall hold me until my end. This departed chapter of her shall forever remain the soul of my lifeless body.

POETRY

red one third

Viviane Chen

University of Pennsylvania, Shanghai · China

PERSONAL ESSAY

Two Cents and Sentiments on Anger

Sybil Guia Singson

Ateneo de Manila Senior High School · Philippines

Sentimental value is a term that often eludes precise definition, yet it resonates deeply within the human experience. It exists at the center of emotion, memory, and self, demonstrating how attachment forms through our encounters with objects that carry traces of our personal history into the present. We preserve them because they remind us of specific moments, people, and versions of ourselves that we don't want to lose.

In Joachim Trier's film of the same name, the story follows Nora and Agnes, two sisters confronting their mother's death and the return of their estranged father Gustav, a filmmaker trying to reconnect with the family he once abandoned. Beautifully shot in and around Oslo, the scenes are filmed in a subdued Scandinavian light as the opening shots repeatedly return to a crack spreading through the house's foundation. This subtlety slowly becomes a symbol of all the accumulated tension in the family finally made visible as the Norwegian family home becomes both an archive and mausoleum.

Gustav makes a desperate, bleak attempt to bridge the years of distance between himself and Nora, his eldest daughter and a stage actress, by offering her a role in his comeback film. Nora initially rejects the offer, and in one of the film's most emotionally devastating exchanges, Gustav tells her, "I recognize myself in you. But you're so goddamn angry. It's

hard to love someone who's so full of rage."

I've heard versions of these words before, often said casually or as a joke. I've been told, "Mukha kang galit" (You look angry), when I'm really only thinking. I've been told that my eyebrows are always drawn together, even when nothing is wrong. "Lagi ka na lang galit" (You're always angry), people say when I care too much. I see a similarity between myself and Nora. In the film, Nora's anger is often what people notice first. She can be sharp and quick to react when she feels misunderstood or when something deeply matters to her. Others sometimes reduce her to that anger, overlooking the emotions and concerns underneath it.

Try as I might to hide it, I've spent years wondering how much of that perception is a misreading and how much is true. Ever since I was little, I have always been a pensive soul that gets trapped in the same cycle, trying to understand this complicated world and what it means to live well inside it. I think too much. I feel too much. I carry things longer than I should. And when I find myself caught in the world's machinery and reminded of its cruelties, indifference, and unfairness, only a handful of emotions remain. Loneliness is one of them. Anger is the other.

It seems to me that anger begins in helplessness — in the intolerable distance between what one needs and what the world is willing, or able, to provide. It's a force that organizes life around unmet demand, constantly changing form but never really disappearing. Is anger, then, a form of energy, one that is endlessly transforming? Or is it the cry of a need that refuses satisfaction, a protest against helplessness that has no other language?

Perhaps they have always been more connected than I wanted to admit. Perhaps anger is what loneliness becomes when it has nowhere else to go. And maybe that's it. Maybe the people around me saw it long before I did. Maybe I am full of rage. Maybe I am so goddamn angry.

Anger settles somewhere beneath my ribs like a foreign body lodged too deeply and too heavily to pull out. Sometimes I lie awake, unable to loosen the grip of my own thoughts. Sometimes I can't stand myself so much that all I want to do is scream as loudly as I can, bang my fists against something, throw myself onto the floor, tear apart whatever remains inside me before the pressure becomes unbearable.

And yet anger, with all its poison and ugliness, also became the thing that kept me moving. It turns every slight, every humiliation, every reminder of how hard I have had to fight into fuel. It keeps me moving because it always demands something from me. I continue long after exhaustion has already hollowed out whatever satisfaction accomplishment was supposed to bring. It becomes proof that I deserved, after all, to survive the conditions that produced me. And if anger has carried me this far, who would I even be without it?

That, perhaps, is the real sentimental value of anger: our inability to relinquish it even once it has begun to wound us. We preserve certain emotions long past their usefulness because they once protected us. Anger survives in us partly because it once kept us alive — giving shape to helplessness, converting failures into momentum, convincing us that persistence alone might be enough to change what hurt us.

Perhaps this doubled position is our best hope of learning to live with anger. To remain inside our fury while still being able to examine it. To recognize anger not simply as destruction, but as evidence of something

once needed, once denied, once wounded. To understand it not as who we are, but as what was produced in us by what we could not yet name. And perhaps maturity consists not in discarding that anger altogether, but in recognizing it as one part of our history among many. Like the objects we keep for sentimental reasons, it may never completely lose its significance. Yet we can learn to see it for what it is — a remnant of a former self, a record of what we survived, and a reminder that the things we struggle most to relinquish are often the things that once helped us endure.

Sybil Guia Singson is a student at Ateneo de Manila Senior High School in the Philippines. She writes about emotion, selfhood, and the things people carry long after they've stopped being useful.

POETRY · HINDI

■■■■ (Promises)

Eknoorjeet Kaur

St. Joseph's Convent School, Ferozepur Cantt · Punjab, India

POETRY · SUITE

Ordinary Devotions

Aaranya Rakhunde

Narayana Vidyalayam, Chinchbhuvan · Nagpur, Maharashtra, India

Aaranya Rakhunde is a student at Narayana Vidyalayam in Nagpur, Maharashtra. She writes about devotion, domestic ritual, and the mythologies people build around the things they cannot reach.

POETRY

The Shade Grey

Shrinikka B

Yuvabharathi Public School · India

Shrinikka B is a student at Yuvabharathi Public School in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. She writes about the quiet ways people are silenced and the slow courage it takes to speak.

FLASH FICTION

The Perfect Wife

Saanvi Mishra

The Mother's International School · New Delhi, India

Saira woke up to the sound of her alarm. It was 4am. She rolled over to the other side of the bed, but Samir wasn't there. She used her hands to thrust herself upwards but winced in pain, her hand automatically going to the left side of her stomach where Samir had kicked her last night. She lifted her kurta only to see a purple bruise spreading across her skin, dark at the centre and fading into blue and yellow around the edges. But it was her fault. She knew Samir didn't like it when she talked back to him. Had she stayed quiet at dinner, none of this would have happened. At least that's what she told herself each time.

She got up, determined not to make any more mistakes today. After all, it was Samir's birthday.

She got ready and walked towards the wardrobe. She looked at all the half-sleeved kurtis and dresses pushed towards the side of the closet. Her hand drifted automatically towards a bright yellow dress — the one she wore when Samir took her out for their first anniversary. She remembered how happy she felt when he told her how beautiful she looked as he brushed a strand of her hair past her face. She often wondered what went wrong. She snapped back to reality and picked a dark hoodie with long sleeves. It was the only thing that could cover the bruises scattered all over her arms.

She went to the living room, quietly arranging the dishevelled room and picking up the empty alcohol bottles scattered across the floor. Samir

hated mess. She had learned this loud and clear when she had accidentally spilled his coffee. The three stitch marks just above her eyebrow served as a permanent reminder.

Just then her phone buzzed. Thirteen missed calls from her brother, asking where she was. She didn't reply and slipped the phone into her hoodie. Samir didn't like her speaking to her family.

"You twist every argument to make me seem like the villain," she remembered him saying as he snatched her phone mid-conversation and threw it across the room.

But he was right. She was the one who made him angry. Had she learned to shut up and not question him, none of this would have happened. Samir wasn't always like this. There was a time he would bring her flowers on his way home from work and hold her hand while crossing the road. She firmly believed that man was still there — the man who truly loved her. And she could bring him back, if she tried hard enough.

Saira spent the rest of the day tirelessly scrubbing the entire house clean, hanging streamers and making flower arrangements. She had even managed to bake a cake — chocolate with vanilla frosting, Samir's favourite. She went back to her room to get ready. She meticulously covered the array of bruises on her face and neck with concealer.

She carefully decorated the cake with flowers and topped it with candles. That's when she heard the door handle turn.

She walked towards the living room, holding the cake in her hands with a smile plastered on her face in an attempt to mask her lingering uncertainty.

As she walked to surprise Samir, she suddenly froze. A trail of blood led from the hallway towards the backdoor of the house. A chill ran down her spine and she slowly followed the trail, her hands trembling as she desperately attempted not to drop the cake.

The back door stood ajar.

Through the narrow gap she saw Samir, dragging something covered in a large black plastic sheet across the floor. His clothes were stained with something dark and a look of absolute terror was plastered on his face as he loaded the black bag into the trunk of his car.

Suddenly a hand slipped out.

Saira's stomach churned violently as the cake dropped out of her hands. Her hand covered her mouth in an attempt to suppress a sob as tears rolled down her face. She staggered further towards the door but her legs gave out and she fell onto the floor.

The hand was covered with bruises.

Bruises she recognised.

That's when the memories came rushing back.

Samir yelling.

Her voice trembling as she apologised again and again.

The smell of alcohol on his breath.

A violent shove.

Her head hitting the side of the dining table.

Warm blood running down her face.

Samir kicking her violently even after she stopped responding.

Saira stumbled backwards, her body cold as ice as the realisation hit her.

The pain. The bruises. The exhaustion.

None of it had happened this morning.

Because this morning had never happened.

Outside, Samir shoved her hand back into the plastic bag and slammed the trunk shut.

The cake she had so meticulously baked was now squished beyond recognition.

The phrase repeated slowly in her head as Samir drove away, disappearing into darkness.

Saanvi Mishra is a student at The Mother's International School in New Delhi. She writes fiction that bears witness to the lives of women who rarely make it into public conversation.

The Tortured Poets' Club

Aahana Singh

The Ardee School, New Delhi · India

There it is again. Cheeky devil always finds a way; that slow burn, sinking feeling that makes you feel like you're being dragged by an anchor. With every step, the weight in your chest gets heavier, and the more you try to fight it, the more it retaliates as if the stone in your chest had a mind of its own.

Honestly, it gets worse the more people tell me to be happy and "just relax". If I knew how to, wouldn't I have done it already? But sometimes, it isn't always that easy. Sometimes you know the answer, but summoning the willpower to act on it is as good as igniting another long, painful war that sucks all your energy and leaves no room to focus on reality.

This is the club of the tortured poets, so if your soul feels this way a lot of the time, you fit right in, and we welcome you with open arms. You see, the more members we have, the better we feel as the instinctive validation kicks in; we're not the only heavy fools who feel this way. If you feel like your life is an endless grind, or just thinking two days ahead gives you an anxiety attack because you have no idea what the hell's in store, you're in the right place.

Don't worry. You'll feel right at home here. We always take care of our members like family. After all, who can understand a tortured soul better than another one?

Aahana Singh is a student at The Ardee School in New Delhi. She writes about the interior life — the silences, the exhaustion, and the things that keep us afloat.

POETRY · HAIKU

Two Hearts in Moonlight

Sumit Chauhan

Princeton, New Jersey · United States

Sumit Chauhan is a writer from Princeton, New Jersey. He is drawn to thresholds — doorways, dusk, the sentence just before the one that matters — and to everything a person keeps but never uses. He owns more travel tidbits than books, and more books than he could ever hope to read, and remains unbothered and mildly satisfied by both.