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chickens of our poetry

Editors' notes

alliyah: Chickens will surprise you. And I think you'll be surprised by some of the chickens in Zine 6. They refuse to "just" be chickens - but ask you to imagine beyond and keep writing the story! In this edition we have the same terrific range of art and poetry and genre as our previous issues - with some unexpected directions along the way. Our cover at first glance is a series of long-necked reaching chicken heads, but on closer inspection is a reference to the Greek mythological beast Hydra. Our zine closes with a fresh and warm take on "Buddha in a Henhouse." If there's a limit to the chicken-genre, I'm not sure we've found it yet! And each art piece and poem engages the reader by asking them to imagine "what's next?" - what's the chicken's next move, where will it go, what will it become? I hope you enjoy this creative collection made possible by our talented contributors and consider bringing your own piece to join in our next story. Thank you for reading - thank you for being willing to be surprised! Your support means the world to us.

Rook: As I begin a new adventure (starting on a new degree in a new town with a new job, a new car, and even a new name), I find myself thinking about the cycles of change and rebirth present in the everyday. The sun rises, hangs overhead, and sets. An egg becomes a chick becomes a pullet becomes a hen. A seed to a sapling to a tree to lumber to wood pulp to paper to the zine you hold in your hands. We are all in a process of becoming. Sometimes changes are as dramatic as a chick breaking out of a shell. But usually they're gradual. Every doodle and every poem gives you that much more experience with the medium. I may get a piece of paper at the end of my degree, but the true improvements will happen over the course of a few years. But still, blink and you'll miss the chick becoming a hen. To everyone traveling on their artistic journey, I hope you're enjoying the ride. We think every step is worth celebrating. When the sun rises again, we hope to crow alongside you. To our contributors: thank you for sharing this step with us.

The egg is perfect.
Then out the chick staggers like a drunk
caring nothing for perfection.
“Egg-sactly,” Buddha says,
and we groan.

Old feathers make way for new ones.
These cannot be the same chickens;
they’re sweeping the temple.

Spring comes.
The whole universe is singing an eggsong.
Buddha says, “My work here is done.”

We don’t want him to leave us,
but he points up; he points down;
he says he will always be nesting on top of us:
the sky, Buddha’s warm blue bottom.

COOP

chickens of our poetry

Edition #6



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When finished, please pass on or recycle!

Content Warning: Some poems portray animal death.

Cover art: “Scout Hydra”
by Rordam James
[krordam on Tumblr](#)
Digital

On Buddha’s lap,
there’s no such thing as winter:
even the rooster purrs like a cat.

He seems at home in our nest boxes.
“You sleep on altars,” Buddha tells us with pleasure,
though we have neither stupa nor scripture.

One night, a snake. A dream?
We find it in the morning, coiled in Buddha’s bowl.
Now it is our pet.

“Compassion is the new pecking order,” Buddha says.
We didn’t know he could frown.
Cannibalizing the prodigal hen
was an error in judgment:
we see that now.

Buddha says, “Way back when,
I learned how to sit from a hen.”
Zazen is like something we knew
but had forgotten.

We pluck our own breastfeathers.
We sit on our eggs with new pride.
Somewhere inside ourselves, we fly.

What we create
in the mess of our innards:
so smooth and white and round.

they stay in the sky.

Just so, something in us begins to rise.

Know this: a turtle surfacing in an ocean
is more likely to put his head through a small ring
than to win birth as a chicken.

Egg songs, warbles, gobbles and growls.
We thought we'd heard it all.
Then, today, the Dhammapada.

The first chicken thinks Buddha says
the truth is noble.

The second chicken catches four truths:
suffering is noble; happiness is noble;
Buddha is noble; chickens are noble.

The third chicken insists we already knew this.
She says, "If we weren't among the noblest,
surely, they wouldn't haven given us a name as proud and
reckless
as gallus gallus domesticus?"

It is in the roundness of Buddha's silence
that our hearts hatch,
grow feathers,
and flutter into the trees.

The coop's shadow, long even at noon,
blankets him as he naps.

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Buddha in the Henhouse

Amber Burke
Amber Burke Yoga on Facebook

Autumn confers its yearly tonsures.
The molting hens:
monks with wattles.

A large egg?
No: the belly of the Buddha.
And so we discover him in the straw.

He could explain his sudden appearance
and the origin of the universe,
but doing so would not free us of suffering.

We've already heard of transcendence, thank you very much.
Wasn't there a chicken who flew for an entire minute once?
We show him how we can hop and flap.
Buddha laughs.

"You, my feathered and luminous ones,
will, in your next lives, become moons and suns."
We look up:
the sun, on her golden roost,
the moon, in her dark nest.
Yes.

We notice that, when Buddha walks,
sunflowers sprout from his steps.
When he tosses up our fallen feathers,



Bantam roo peep

Rordam James
@krordam on Tumblr
Oil



Chicken

Ellen Hensel
Photography

Some Chicken Soup For The Soul

Erin Joel Moore
@rinnysance on Twitter

We love to tell stories
to hold dominion over the lives
that lost us.
We pretend to live in their heads
and dream of the darkness
to placate our hearts.
Please! Little chickie, don't do this.
We don't live long enough to understand
others fully, and ourselves.
Heal the real way.
With love, good movies. And soup.

"Where?"

kay bradner



Tic

Sandra S. McRae
@SandraSMcRae on Twitter

The hen
had a baby
small, oval
smooth and beautiful
and the farmer stole it.

She brooded in her grief.

The next day
it happened again
and every day
after that.

That is why
the chicken
walks haltingly
pecks constantly
at invisible hands
sweeping towards her

muttering to herself
as she looks looks looks
for her babies.

Chicken Soup

Raine Fallfish

Parsley
Wafts through the air
Mingling with the chicken
Past the couch where we sit laughing
And full

Blinded by Feathers

Archer Lacombe
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Digital



Urban Nest

Jacelyn
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Photography

Cluck Cluck Flap Flap and Off You Fly!

Samiksha Ransom

@SamikshaRansom on Twitter

bird with feathered wings, why do you not fly?
why live among egg-thieves and slaughterers?
the coop is not your home - grandma will eat you
you stupid feathered-bird! the portal's wide open -
look! those rabbits are jumping the fence on four legs
right now! wings have more advantages, bird, you gotta see.
and ya'll should have names, i mean, what's the harm in it?
listen - maybe pioneer a Free Birds association?
or something else less lame - like absolutely nothing at all.
come on, flap and cluck and do your usual but
also break a rule. hear my grandma say
that's one lionhearted chicken outside my coop.



Chicken on Slide

kay bradner
Drypoint and watercolor

Chicken Girl

Anna Kolczynska

Three lesbians and a bisexual walk into a bar.
No, really – I’m serious –
We just wanted some craft beer.
Brewery hopping, my girlfriend’s aunts had announced,
Was our activity of the day.
I wore a brown suede dress and a mustard yellow sweater –
Both of which stood out against my over-dyed red hair
That shone in the late April sun.

It was a busy weekend, but my attention was not drawn to
people watching –
An activity in which I love to partake –
But the observation of chickens instead.
“You match the chicken,” someone piped up in the crowd
As the chicken and I chased each other around.
“Would you like me to take a picture of you two?”

I stopped to pose as the chicken ran at my feet.
We couldn’t get a good shot,
So I captured the photograph in my head
As onlookers watched a girl and her new chicken friend
Playing in the grass.

At the next brewery –
Which was sadly chickenless –
The same person spotted me,

The Day I Cleaned the Hen House

bill rettig

Charge their fortress,
Carry only a pitchfork.
Steal their stores of the ammonia mix.
Deposit it in a manure spreader.

Layer after layer of buried poison
explodes
as the prongs of my pitchfork
dig into nature’s land mines.
It feels like I have hot eggs
backing up in my throat.
Are chickens really scratching inside my nose?
If I die...

I rush out.
South of the shed, I retch.
I’m woozy.
I need a gas mask.



"Aghhhhh!"

kay bradner
Drypoint and watercolor

For they had had the same weekend plans.
His smile widened in recognition as he shouted:
"Chicken Girl!"
Across the little concrete courtyard.
I smiled and waved, accepting the name with pride
Before returning to my IPA.

It's been awhile since that first encounter
And I've been to many places with chickens since -
Still observing, sometimes even playing
With the various junglefowls that come my way.
It's just another aspect of my adventures now.

I've been called a lot in my life:
Resilient like a phoenix,
Gentle like a dove,
Observant like a hawk
And pretty as a peacock, even -
But the truth is
I'll always see myself as Chicken Girl.

An Idiomatic Chicken Tale

Oliver McKeithan

Don't count your chickens before they hatch,
you may bite off more than you can chew.
But if you do count, make sure you have
a bird in the hand rather than two in the bush.

When counting don't put all of your eggs in one basket,
or you will be running around like a chicken with its head
cut off.

Try not to let any hatched chickens escape because
they may try to cross the road.

Try to remember to count slowly because
slow and steady wins the race.
Someone else could count but for now
the ball is in your court.

If you decide to count you can't do
it at the drop of a hat.
Fortunately, having to count will only
occur once in a blue moon.

If you don't really want to count
remember, there are other fish in the sea.
You can always ask them to do it
and rain on their parade.

Whoever counts can't slough off
they will have to go the whole nine yards.
If an error is made, don't blame the process
because a poor workman blames his tools.

Someone who doesn't understand what you
are doing may figure you are off your rocker
and not playing with a full deck. But I say
people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.

Always keep in mind that you have to break a few
eggs to make an omelet!