

# THE EDEN READER

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *The Eden Reader*, a collection of specially written texts by internationally invited contributors on a range of topics inspired by *Eden* - an art project by Canadian artist Mary Catherine Newcomb.

*Eden* is created by moulding strange creatures from living squash, aubergines and peppers, whilst they grow on the plant. These figures invite us into an imaginative world, where small magical creatures adorned with brass crowns grow under canopies of big leaves, eliciting thoughts around nature and nurture, infancy and childhood. Highly accessible and easy to enjoy, the figures are also undoubtedly complex too. What are we to make of them? What might they represent? How are we supposed to respond?

*Eden* was due to be shown in Ipswich (a market town in the East of England) as part of the international biennial SPILL Festival of Performance, planned for October 2020. That March, the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic meant a decision was taken to push the festival back by 12 months. However, growing *Eden* was already underway.

Across Ipswich and the surrounding area, over 150 plants had been germinated from seed, at the start of 2020 by a range of invited growers. From the spring onwards we intended to invite the public to care for and nurture some of these plants themselves, so that by the autumn they would have been moulded into a range of figures, ready for presentation at the festival. As a result, we decided to use the 2020 growing period as a practice run and start

me. I take what I need and pass the rest to my delicious children. I am like the clay, invisible and yet alive. I am humble, well sometimes, for the most part I am humble. I feed the nation with my children. We are versatile and able to adapt. We are summer, winter and autumn.

The trouble with human beings is their inability to recognize that life exists with or without them.

The mortality of man is like that of a grass. The difference is that grass has the ability to grow back. Man is fragile, even in his thoughts. Yet man moves across the earth, dominating, plucking and cutting nature's breasts. They stripped the Amazon of her dress and shaved the hairs that grew on her body. She fought back but lost to the fiery darts of man's selfishness.

They say they want to change the world and rid it of pollution. Yet they forget that the land is covered with the blood of their own. The land is filled with the DNA of many fallen men. At night the spirits of the victims of greed cry out, speaking with a loud thunder they seek justice. The blood of their existence runs into the tissues of the substance that feeds the living. It is like a cannibal.

For the land is not pure in its essence but its process purifies the gifts of men.

**Chinasa Vivian Ezugha** is an artist and researcher  
[vcezugha.wix.com/work-in-progress](http://vcezugha.wix.com/work-in-progress)



# YIELD

Helena Hunter

sallow seed  
paling yellow  
old gold enclosed  
in ocular lids

hushed husk  
fallow shielding  
a babble of  
tacit tongues

interred in lands  
of silted subsoil  
tilled sentences  
loam and marl

until a clod sobbing  
mewling ferment  
spurs syllables  
to prick and prod

verdant wording  
of root and stem  
fleeing containment  
to contain again

**Helena Hunter** is a writer and artist  
[helenahunter.net](http://helenahunter.net)

Giving birth is so painful but the emotional pain of not being able to see my beautiful child is worse! Not being able to be her mum, hold her, be there for her is so hard! I have raised my other daughters all their life and have just become a nanny. I adore this little boy.

I just want the chance to be a mum to my daughter and to reunite us as a family!

My story is not over yet though!

I still have a lot in me and lots I want to do!

- Louise

### Big Yellow Flower, Little Blue Flower

She was a very young flower; she was carrying her seed.  
She couldn't wait to find out what flower would it be?  
Would he be a blue? Or would she be a pink?

Her little seedling came, and he was a blue.  
She shared water and love and he started to bloom.  
But the weather changed.

Her little flower blew away in the wind, her nutrients became so worn and thin.  
She could see her blue from a distance.

Little blue had landed, in a place where he could grow.  
She had to accept, his roots were no longer in her home.  
This stunted her own growth.

But big flower didn't give up, she prayed to the sun  
To give her strength, to tell her she was not done.  
She used the rainy days to soak up what she could.

As little blue grew beautiful, so did his big flower.  
The bigger they grew, the closer they got, the higher that they towered  
Over every living thing and through all kinds of weather.

Nothing could stop them being together.

- Rachel

The darkness delivers no rest. Will they remove my baby?  
Can lawyers mould my words to their will?  
A crest of the lion and unicorn rests above the judge's head.  
Look, even they turn their heads away.

The man in a wig says my child needs a true mother, a forever home.  
In truth, I am his mother. My arms are his home.  
The eyes of the witnesses roll like waves.  
They watch and talk about me as if they were there.  
Words flow over my head and I am cut off.

A mother's voice is hissed through the teeth of men.  
I am called to the stand.  
His lawyer hurls questions at me like stones from a sling  
And I need tissues because my sleeve is not enough.

Believe me, I have the heart of a Queen.

- Cherie

**BEAM** (Be A Mother) is a weekly support group for women whose children live outside their full time care. It offers a safe place for mums that is non-judgemental, caring and confidential  
beam.support







## Pickled squash

50g water

50g sugar

100g cider vinegar

Reserved length of squash (from above)

Put the water, sugar and vinegar into a pan and bring to the boil. Using a veg peeler, shave long slices off the reserved length of squash and drop into the pan, take it off the heat immediately and leave to cool.

To serve, pour the hot soup into a warmed bowl. Make a circle out of the squash pickle and place in the centre, put a blob of the pumpkin seed paste in the middle and crack some black pepper over the lot.

**Mike Keen** is a chef and writer

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## EDEN, A RITUAL

Helen Milne

Anticipation blooms, the liminal time as the sun slips down, excitement rising from my belly as I change into white robes, adorn myself with amulets. Lighting the central altar candle, it begins.

Familiar chanting voices tell my brain that I know this time, this place, time out of time, place out of place, my Eden within me, and without. I gather my tools as druid, as witch, and prepare to greet the earth, give thanks for the joyous abundance. Access comes through those beloved. Archetypes some say, or gods, guides: how I see the earth. Filters, but alive nonetheless. Danu, my first, my goddess, creatrix, mother to gods. Cernunnos, he answered my need, brings the fire, transmuting toxic-masculinity into god-hood, into good. Brighid, goddess of forge-fire and healing waters, she of passion and creativity. Everything I give to them, I give to the earth, my Eden, and here is where we talk, now is where I show my thanks. Time to cast the circle.

Sacred smoke fills the room, cleanses the space, ready to receive, and call out, into the world, into the Otherworld, without and within. I enter from the west, home to the setting sun, realm of the dead, druids' door. Bare feet pad on boards, ready to call the elements. I walk to the north, realm of the earth, face outward, hands raised, deep breath, ground. Calling out across worlds, 'Great bear of the starry skies of the north, element of earth, I call to you and bid you hail and welcome. Strong mountains, deep rooted trees, glistening crystals, realm of strength, practicality, I bid you hail and welcome.' I walk sun-wise to the south. 'Great stag of the forest, element of fire, I call to you. Golden rays of the sun that bring abundance

and joy, raging wildfire, flickering candle, fire in the head, creative forge-fire, light of awen, I bid you hail and welcome.' To the east. 'Great hawk of the dawn, element of air, of the east, I call to you. Screaming winds, gentle breeze, eagle-eyed perspective, realm of the mind, communication, thought, intellect. I call to you and bid you hail and welcome.' To the west. 'Salmon of wisdom, leaping from the waters of life, element of water, realm of the west, I call to you. Home to emotions, intuition, raging torrents, life giving rain, I bid you hail and welcome.' Turning in, facing centre, palms facing the floor. 'The realm of soul, spirit, ether, the all contained within and without. May there be peace across the whole world.' Bare feet on boards. 'May there be peace in the north... may there be peace in the east.' It ripples out from me, across the earth. 'May there be peace in the south ... may there be peace in the west.' Arm raised, finger pointed, carving through space, encasing me. The circle is cast, the Druids Prayer recited. The awen resonates through my body, calling for connection, divine inspiration. Now to the altar.

Here is my Eden, my paradise, my earth and my love of it. Sacred flames lit, offerings made, smoke rises. Here is my love, my thanks, my devotion, my acknowledgement, where I see with inner eyes, where I feel the beauty of our earth, its powerful magic, where I witness its many cycles. Standing witness to such beauty, trying to hear its call, in the core of my being.

Eden is potential, the potential of the earth and all its beings, us included; the potential of our unity, like the ace of pentacles - all potential, what could be in the outer world, the beauty of existence and harmony, but also what could be in the inner landscape. And so it's time to go there, inner-Eden, the Otherworld. Time to go within.

Sand beneath my feet, the well-worn path to the wood's edge. Into

the sacred grove, my sanctuary, where all life and potential resides. Listen to the earth. Connect. Breathe, focus. I feel the stars, the moon, the airs above me, draw it down, into my being. I listen to the life of the soil below me, it teems, such abundance, roots run deep. I draw up such goodness, and the beauty of all life draws in, spirals tight in the centre of my being. Exhale, it sparkles within me, filled with the life of the earth. And so Eden is within me. Layer upon layer of reality, magic, enfold me. But it's time to go. Deep thanks, love, respect, I leave the grove for now, return to my body but with a gift within. Eyes flutter open, fall on flame, sacred figure, my spiritual home. I feel the shift within me, but it's time to come back. What has been brought in must be thanked and released.

Feeling soft in my body and robe. Intoxicated by the elements. Such love, but the spiral must be unwound, the circle opened. Kneeling at the centre, my centre, I speak the Druid's Prayer for Peace... 'May I radiate peace'. Breath meets candle, smoke furls in the dark, but peace lingers in my heart - the blessings of Eden.

Further thoughts from the altar. Eden is in crisis, far from its potential, without and within us all. If we are to protect and respect our beautiful home, our proto-Eden, we must meet it, in all parts of our life, out in the woods, in the parks, on the streets. Bare feet to the soil, dirt under fingernails, foraged food, daily herbs. And we must meet it in the Otherworld, the other realm. We must open our eyes, inner and outer, to the sheer abundance of this broken world and its potential, of what it could be, with some love, with some honour, with some offerings. Open your eyes, open your heart, radiate peace. Peace to all beings /|\

**Helen Milne** is a Druid - Witch based in Suffolk.

Instagram: [a\\_u\\_g\\_u\\_r\\_y](#)