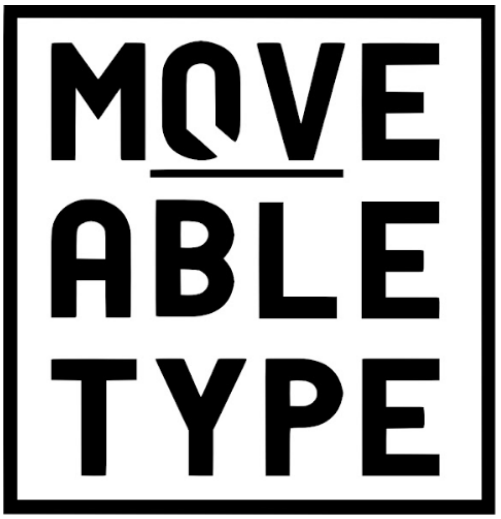

‘Unfeeling: Introduction’
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Unfeeling

Sarah Chambré, Daniel Lewis, William Burns, Damian Walsh, Miriam Helmers, and Sarah Edwards.

The theme of 'unfeeling' promised an urgent exploration of what it is to be human after the enforced separation, dislocation, and artificially recreated forms of social interaction that were prevalent during the pandemic and continue to be so. It is almost that we have discovered how to be posthuman. Unfeeling, we suggest, dislocates the internal subjective experience and the external expression thereof in a culturally legible manner. This perhaps underlines the contingent and culturally motivated way in which we experience, read, and express 'feelings' intersubjectively. 'Feeling otherwise' is an important and empowering marker of difference and agency which threads through our articles, creative writing, and reviews (Yao 12). This standpoint can operate to interrogate and interpret (white) cultural and political hegemony with its insistence on the social legibility and necessity for 'appropriate' emotions and responses. In this issue, our writers explore how *unfeeling* can engender a defence mechanism; it offers to promote healing by setting aside hurt feelings and refusing to continue to incorporate or experience them; it creates a refusal to be complicit with this socio normative control.

Many of the authors in this issue respond to Xine Yao's *Disaffected: The Cultural Politics of Unfeeling in Nineteenth-Century America* (2021). Yao's pertinent monograph illuminates how 'universal feeling is a ruse when only some feelings are privileged as true' (210) and draws attention to which feelings have historically been prioritised and at whose expense. It explores 'an ongoing so-called antisocial turn in affect studies' by examining a range of texts and authors that resist sentimentalism's generic conventions (10). Yao 'lingers with' literary constructions, exploring the link between feelings and their culturally mediated expression and legibility (28). She argues that the perceived lack of a recognisable emotional expression could represent both a defence mechanism and a strong resistance to hierarchies of patriarchal heteronormativity. Refusals to conform with white feeling and its expression enables 'insurgent potential (for) …feeling otherwise' which becomes a precursor to 'imagining otherwise' (12). As this introduction demonstrates, many of the articles, book reviews, creative submissions, and visual artworks in this issue respond either to *Disaffected*, or to the pandemic, or both.

'Linger in misrecognized feeling' is the central call of Paula Barba Guerrero's review of Yao's *Disaffected*. True to this aim, Barba Guerrero perceptively stays with the 'counter-cultural emotions' at the heart of Yao's study, which Barba Guerrero argues serves not only as an invaluable primer on the cult of American sentimentalism but as an example of an alternative affective politics. Yao's book 'carefully disseminates disaffection', and Barba Guerrero is particularly drawn to the potential of Yao's study to translate into political praxis, arguing that unfeeling potentially 'assembles communities, creates attachment, mobilises agency, and elicits care'. Noting productive correspondences between Yao and Audre Lorde, Sara Ahmed and Lauren Berlant, Barba Guerrero finds in *Disaffected* 'an inspiring call for solidarity, affective accountability, and coalition'.

Where Barba Guerrero emphasises the politically productive applications of unfeeling, Cleo Miki's 'To Feel or Not to Feel: Dissociative Feminism and the Modalities of Unfeeling in 21st Century Literary Fiction' takes care not to overlook the roots of unfeeling in the real pain of marginalised individuals. Engaging with recent discussions of the

'dissociative feminist' archetype which has become familiar from sources as diverse as Phoebe Waller-Bridge's *Fleabag* and TikTok discourse, Miki focuses on Otessa Moshfegh's *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* (2018) and Raven Leilani's *Luster* (2020) to complicate these popular discussions. Drawing on Leslie Jamison's identification of a 'post-wounded' affect at the heart of contemporary femininity, Miki argues that unfeeling registers in these novels not simply as a deliberate aesthetic pose but primarily as a method of personal survival. Where the productive dissociation of Moshfegh's unnamed narrator via her year of medicated slumber is made possible by her position of privilege (in terms of both class and race), Miki finds in Leilani's *Luster* a more complex portrayal of disaffection that is sensitive to the critical differences between the modes of unfeeling available to its white and black characters. Thinking with Jamison's suggestion that 'Female pain is prior to its representation', Miki tests the applicability of Yao's politically informed conception of unfeeling, arguing that the dissociative feminists of Moshfegh and Leilani's novels are not 'perpetuating an act of political resistance, but applying an affective treatment to real pain'.

In 'To feel or not to Feel', Miki differentiates between the privilege of choosing to remain apart (as T.S. Eliot is perhaps shown to do in this issue) or to withdraw like Moshfegh's heroine who chooses to refuse feeling and numb herself as a form of therapeutic therapy. Actors marginalised by race or gender are obliged to perform feelings acceptable to the dominant narrative – there is a dual consciousness. But this can be distinguished between acts of resistance and refusal to conform to the norm of white sentimental hegemony and the masking of pain. In the article on *Luster*, Edie, the protagonist's 'post-wounded' performance presents as 'a subdued affective tone' which does not represent resistance but is enforced by 'inequitable social norms'.

In Griffin's review a very different kind of logic is at work in the life of Moshfegh's unnamed protagonist, an all-too-willing victim of America's medicalisation of drug use, who's methodical, chemically induced approximation of unfeeling serves to insulate her from her political reality. Viewing the book from this perspective, alongside Raymond Williams' suggestive concept of 'structures of feeling', Griffin offers an interesting and highly convincing analysis of this novel's (and perhaps, even, *the* novel's) ultimate value for political analysis.

The creative writing in this issue also explores unfeeling in relation to medicine, therapy, and the body. Tara Propper's short but pithy poem "My Body Was Never Made" calls up concerns about fertility and maternity; expectations of the female body; and what it means to make, whether art or life. Speaking from the perspective of someone inhabiting a body supposedly not made "for baby carrying", someone searching instead for "bone-/colored brahms" while looking at the spectacle of "pink pulp [...] as a voyeur", the poem re-examines a state of being often associated with a lack of feeling, finding within it an entirely different quality of experience. "Chronotopes of Power" by Mike Piero takes a more routine, though not unexceptional, form of self-examination–an online therapy session–as a springboard for a story about emotional betrayal, in more than one sense. In prose that sits somewhere between the intimate and the academic, Piero gives a blow-by-blow account of a young man's attempt to have a sincere (if ill-advised) conversation with his rigorously professional therapist about what impact Zoom might be having on their interactions, before he has his worst fears about the categorisation and medicalisation of his thoughts and feelings cruelly confirmed.

Approaching 'structures of feeling' from a different perspective, Emily Cluett's 'Vegetal Affect: Disruptive Unfeeling in the Face of Gender Oppression in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*' engages with the relationship between emotion and autonomy, though here in

terms of personal agency rather than critical method. The aesthetic is no less in play, however, as Cluett shows, curating the various transformations of the novel's protagonist, from objectified housewife, to fetishized art-object, to abject patient. Across all three of these metamorphoses, the refusal to express affects—of contrition, pleasure, even sentience—becomes a powerful mode of resistance against patriarchal expectations. By the end of the novel, this passive practice results in a unique mode of vegetal affect, that, as Cluett persuasively argues, offers radical possibilities as a poetics and politics, encouraging us to consider what *new* affects could be arrived at by dropping out not merely from society but from the human altogether.

The post-human also implicitly features in Jones's discussion of Cathy Park Hong's *Minor Feelings,* 'curating a clinical cyborgian logic' of perfect Asian bodies and expressionless faces. For Jones, Hong's text represents a seminal expression of unfeeling insofar as its essays relate how a 'clinical cyborgian logic' at work in modern America abets the dehumanisation of its Asian-American population; an enforced homogeneity challenged by the intimacy, plasticity, and intertextuality of Hong's style. A more detailed discussion of the relationship between post humanism and the possibility of feeling otherwise is provided by Dylan Phelan's article 'I Feel, Therefore I Am: Trauma, Memory and Posthuman Liberation in *Blade Runner* (1982) and *WestWorld* (2016)'.

Phelan's article explores the potential for resistance in seemingly unfeeling subjects in Sci-Fi's imagining of the posthuman in *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Westworld* (2016), two bodies of film which depict human actors who consider the 'replicant' or 'host' humanoid robots in *Blade Runner* and *WestWorld* to be incapable of emotional responses to the traumatic events they experience. However, events soon prove that these replicants and hosts possess a subjectivity that destabilises this view. Phelan's article combines a close reading of cinematic elements such as script and soundtrack with an analysis of theories of posthumanism and trauma. As we follow the development of trauma theory and connect it to the posthuman world within and without the cinema, we are challenged to determine whether the posthuman subjects in *Blade Runner* and *WestWorld* are in fact granted a liminal subjectivity that destabilises an expected human-machine anthropocentrism, or whether the cinematic treatment of their subjectivity only reaffirms that binary.

In a sense this repositions the socially constructed prior of 'feeling' by exploring the nature of trauma and memory in existential creation, motivating resistance against misrecognition by the human actors. By positing different theories of trauma and memory, this article intriguingly questions and blurs the line between humans and posthumans and complicates ideas of oppositional sympathy to the plight of the android female. Resistance arising in collective trauma and transient memory mimics the human experience, but Phelan suggests that these actors differentiate their actions from the normative constructions of conventional normative hierarchy and, while blurring the boundaries with human subject, their exceptionalism is diminished 'allow[ing] the construction of identities which are not based on anthropocentric binaries'.

Phelan's discussion of the role of the supposed 'automaton' plays a foil to Freya Onions' poetry duet *We may have changed since your last visit*. Onions links two separate poems, 'Nostalgia' and 'An encounter with no intensity,' through the human-robot interaction of technological communication. A robot seeks the response of a non-robot by asking to 'Please verify' and 'Please select all images with stairs.' An app dares to say that it 'misses' you. 'Nostalgia' captures the avoidance of these robotic pleas – the non-response of the human in front of automated communication that cannot understand what the human feels. The human in 'An encounter with no intensity' is ironically the one seeking a response

now from the robotic interface of email. Metaphorically or literally on a rooftop, threatening to jump off, the human is in a hyperbolically heightened emotional state that contrasts almost comically with the non-responsiveness on the other end of the email interaction. Far from a polite or non-committal request to 'please verify' there is now threat and an urgent appeal that is being ignored. The avoidance of feeling leads to an overarching sense of disillusionment from the dizzying perspective of the rooftop. Again, the avoidance of feeling is the manifestation of 'unfeeling' in this struggle with nonresponsive technology. Even if there are humans on the receiving end, the refusal to interact implies a refusal of the responsibility for the 'other' and his or her feelings.

If the automaton *per se* might deserve the label of 'unfeeling' machine, Phelan's treatment of the 'othering' of humanoid robots in *Blade Runner* and *WestWorld* finds an echo in the poems 'Siblings in America' by Jessica Mintzes and 'FAQs pt 4' by Frederick White. In 'Siblings in America' the lines 'Understanding comes easily / once you know our history' are undermined by layers of questioning and confusion in the following stanzas. There is no real understanding of the siblings or of what 'centuries of diaspora / do to the skin.' The incapacity to understand what the 'other' is feeling comes in part from an assumption that only some feelings are privileged to be true. The writer explains, 'You looked at me through / American history.' The poem reveals the irony of the repeated 'Understanding comes easily / once you know our history,' since the actual history of the siblings, whose skin colour is 'not a one-size-fits-all,' ultimately leads to a necessary but ultimately obstructed paradigm shift.

'FAQs pt 4' also uses heavy irony and near-comedy as an interlocutor's apparent open-mindedness is shown to be fundamentally racist. The poem takes the form of a dialogue, separated physically on the page: even the layout shows the sheer distance in understanding and perception between the two speakers. The voice of each speaker is uncannily truthfully rendered through word-choice and beat. With witty and scathing repartee, the second speaker brilliantly mirrors and distorts the sound and sense of the first speaker's words, as in this exchange:

by the way are you full blooded

last time I checked
I was full of blood
at least the same amount as everyone else

While the first speaker may feel unwittingly superior in their white privilege, the second speaker reveals the false security of that feeling by leading the dialogue to its ironic conclusion. If 'Siblings in America' explores the almost desperate futility of being categorised as the 'unfeeling' other, 'FAQs pt 4' shows the humour of the ignorance that itself is 'unfeeling' in its false security.

Irony and subversion are absent from 'Mackenzie at the Bow' by Erin Lee Mock. The gentle sometimes rhyming rhythm that matches the movement of the boat at the end, 'unfeeling' is shown as distinct from ignorance, repression, or apathy. It is more akin to acceptance as the writer reflects on the girl 'bearing scars and a tattoo / marking her suicide attempt.' The scar is simply there: she is not ashamed and 'wore it without fuss.' The steady four-line stanzas show the matter-of-fact response to something of otherwise high emotional impact. It is an 'unfeeling' that allows one to be open to *how* they are affected by events and external input. The writer counters this 'unfeeling' with feeling too much and finding 'ways to forget'; yet, ultimately, everything is to remind the writer that they are 'not dead.' That negative interpretation of 'still alive' then shifts in the last stanza to the openness to the

present and to the prosaic reality of the boat's movement with Mackenzie at the bow. The verb shifts throughout the poem play past reflection against present moment living and point to the value of an 'unfeeling' that does not let the past consume the present.

Elsewhere, other authors in this issue contemplate how refusing the relationship between the past and the present may lead to political compromise, engineering a "forgetting" enabled by unfeeling. Taking on Rebecca West's landmark travelogue *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (1941), Nicola Dimitriou uncovers how West's literary project is compromised by her divided aims: to reveal to the Western powers the rich historical importance of the Balkans, a region often dismissed as backwards or irrelevant, while at the same time convincing those same powers to defend its supposedly innately ill-tempered people from imperial interests in the East. Detailing the impact of then-popular eugenics on West's thought, Dimitriou shows how the writer imbues her discussion of politics influenced by genes with a quasi-scientific objectivity, both to legitimise her claims and to impress on her readers back home the urgency of intervening in a vulnerable corner of the world. Turning to another British writer who saw the dangers of unfettered feeling, Joshua Lok's essay focuses on the novelist Muriel Spark and her seminal mid-career address "The Desegregation of Art". Lok draws out the far-reaching implications and contemporary resonances of Spark's argument; her advocacy for an art that might appeal to readers' heads instead of their hearts, honing their critical intelligence rather inducing the sentimentality and empathy that, Lok suggests after Spark, has allowed regressive political regimes to take hold.

Anna De Vivo accesses unfeeling through Edouard Glissant's concept of opacity in their review of Moses Sumney's *Grae* (2019), which provides a useful key to the album's unfeeling resistance to the social and political contexts in which it finds itself. Elsewhere, this interest in political regimes continues through this issue's preoccupation with the capitalist imperative which has weaved its way through these pieces. This capitalist reality undergirds the reality of having the privilege to refuse. Otessa Moshfegh's novel *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* (2018), reviewed by Nicholas Griffin, 'shocks' by its performed withdrawal enabled by wealth and access to prescribed drugs, but avoids a wider theme of unfeeling.

In contrast to Griffin's discussion of Moshfegh's novel, Amal Abdi's article on *Luster* (2020) and *Such a Fun Age* (2021) presents prescribed emotional performance as separate from feeling and care but as existentially forced by the realities of economic inequality. Abdi argues that similar difficulties afflict the protagonists of *Such A Fun Age* (2020) and *Luster* (2021): two college-educated 20-something Black women who are charged with looking after the young children of privileged White women. Their resistance to persistent narratives about Black caregivers allows them personal liberties they would otherwise be denied, Abdi argues, yet their refusal to fulfil their employers' narrow expectations poses a threat to their relationships both at work and at home (if they can hold on to either), particularly in a world where both spheres are insistently collapsed into each other.

Following Yao's lead, both Abdi and Alisha Mathers review novels which they claim demonstrate some of the complexities of racialised subjects wielding unfeeling as a coping mechanism, whether in the face of the injustices of colonial expansion and exploitation, or more homegrown inequities. Mathers explores the contrasting fates of two men from Adbulrazak Gurnah's novel *Afterlives* (2020); one of whom willingly and disastrously opts to join the German armed forces in occupied German East Africa and the other who, forced to fight for the same group, adopts unfeeling for his physical and psychic survival even while running the risk of having his act of resistance misread by the powers that be. Gurnah's

cautionary folktale suggests that it is best to leave your heart behind when in a predatory environment.

In a poem strongly reminiscent of Robert Lowell's similarly valedictory "Sailing Home from Rapallo", Debakanya Haldar tracks the mixed feelings left after the death of a close relative ('loved one' would seem like a glaring euphemism). Haldar investigates numbness and the instability of our un/feeling relationships with our environments in the wake of grief, Debakanya Haldar takes an inventory of what has been left behind, "Anniversary" suggests how the material world and its capacity for regeneration and reproducibility—Haldar writes of wildflowers as well as photographs and China dishes—both compares and contrasts with our implacable feelings for those we call family.

Turning this on its head, Leonore Wilson's 'Window in the Morning' imagines the harmful reactions that individuals may have to their environments and the contexts in which they find themselves, particularly when they indulge the tendency to let their emotions mix and mingle irresponsibly. Liquid in both style and subject matter, the single paragraph of languid sentences journeys from the familiar scene of a couple waking in bed one morning to a description of the former port of Muynoq on the dried-up Aral Sea and back again. Wilson artfully questions the piece's own heady lyricism, witness to and in complicity with the blissfully ignorant lovemaking by which the couple turns away from almost Biblical scenes of environmental degradation. Unflinchingly, Wilson reminds us that, despite any ignorance we may embrace, harm is not one way, by showing us how unfeeling people can be in the wake of the destruction which they may have caused.

Nonetheless, a cautionary note of optimism is sounded by George Kowalik in his identification of 'new sincerity' in post postmodernism which accepts the entanglements and unpredictable nature of multiracial Britain that Zadie Smith presents in *White Teeth* (2000). Kowalik offers a more hopeful literary construction of unfeeling in his reading of affect in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), engaging with Rachel Greenwald's identification of a millenial 'affective turn'. He argues that whilst the novel structures itself as a commentary on modernist form and its extension in post-modern aleatory irony, it uses these literary devices to offer a productive and earnest engagement with the messy connectedness of life in a racially diverse Britain. Using the concept of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic structure, he identifies a mapped web of connections that echo Joyce's performative modernism of the Linati map in *Ulysses* (1918), a 'map of allusions and references that risks sacrificing feeling tonally and affectively'. This speaks to the aloof high modernism of T'S. Eliot's affected critical stance that Gutsell recuperates. Carrying forward this self-conscious structure into postmodernism risks a similarly unfeeling mode with its 'suspicion toward subjective emotion'. Kowalik argues that the post-postmodern treatment of the aleatory and the entangled with 'earnest sincerity' enables a transition from unfeeling – artificially constructed and performatively distanced – to feeling. This evolves from an 'acceptance of the random as a principle of contemporary life … a celebrated exploration of cultural and racial hybridity'. Indeed, he places Smith as a writer, slyly casting the (loaded) dice in a self-conscious way that acknowledges the contested legacy and terrain of modernism and yet transforming it in a form of realism that acknowledges and moves beyond racialised trauma and social tensions to avoid artificial closure and reclaim sincerity and feeling. For Kowalik, it is the acceptance of the reality of chaotic connections and chance that allows for productive green shoots. The narrative strand of FutureMouse - a 21st century genome experiment that attempts to control and map health trajectories and thereby determine the future is frustrated by the mouse's escape – becomes a lucky chance which allows an open-ended beginning not a formal narrative closure. The novel, like its rodent, is 'alive and kicking'.

Kowalik thus positions Smith's novel in relation to the contested legacy and terrain of modernism, transforming it into a form of realism that acknowledges and moves beyond racialised trauma and social tensions to avoid artificial closure and reclaim sincerity and feeling.

Kowalik's article provides an interesting point of comparison for Rowena Gutsell's discussion of T.S. Eliot. Gutsell's contribution is not, as perhaps would be expected, concerned with the supposed impersonality of the poetry, but rather on the occlusions of—and incitements to—affect that pervade the poet's aloof and high modernist literary critical style. Gutsell reads Eliot as a presentation of a 'critical principle of unfeeling', a mask which perhaps he needs to don to perform his literary philosophy of the absent critic – in the sense of a (dis)passionate author. For Gutsell, 'Eliot's smile indexes a critical *persona*, rather than presenting readers with anything remotely *personal*' (pp). She suggests that his 'cold' and often 'sneering' critical manner was crucial to his critical style; that it was essential to remove any personal presence to allow his '"precise way of thinking and feeling"'. His dispassion enabled a purity of critical feeling unsullied by prejudices and, ironically, performance. For Eliot, the personal was 'degenerate' and impeded or distorted a clearer eyed, impartial modern criticism. His role as perfect critic would mean getting closer to the text but with an 'impersonal, empirical scrutiny …[eschewing] the *other* modality of closeness: the closeness of intimacy, of recognition, of personal attachment to the object of study'.

In this way, Eliot suppresses one sort of feeling, certainly a presented, communicated modality to free himself for another more clinical form of feeling for the text. Ironically as Gutsell asserts, this 'often takes place at a theoretical distance'. Gutsell's argument turns on this paradoxical stance by Eliot of close attention at a distance. She neatly describes how Eliot's project founders on this unfeeling distance – leading him to pronounce in a broad theoretical manner which avoids precision, particularity, and avoids application. Gutsell argues that it is only when feeling is allowed –the haptic 'touch' stands for this engagement – he achieves 'a style of textual intimacy which suggests more personal feeling than his own critical mandates seem willing to accommodate'. Despite his avowal of 'unfeeling', he speaks as a theorist of poetic feeling. This ambivalence is evident throughout his work but the personal emotion and enjoyment of reading is made palpable in an autobiographical fragment of the young Eliot who experienced 'the *almost overwhelming introduction to a new world of feeling* which [Fitzgerald's *Omar*] was the occasion of giving me'. She describes how Eliot almost unwillingly 'with a grimace' reads himself. He reads 'almost *too much* personal feeling in his earliest works'. His 'principle of impersonality [his unfeeling] was something of a personal matter all along. This develops a sense that high modernism and postmodernism adopt a haughty and ironic manner opposed to sentimentalism. For Gutsell, this attitude is self-defeating, Eliot must *feel* in order to achieve closeness with the text.

Tracing the presence of modes of unfeeling across Eliot's long career as a man of letters, from his beginnings as an insurgent critic in London's staid literary scene to his own installation as 'the Pope of Russell Square', Gutsell discusses his early criticism's ability to project distance from its object and dispassion before its reader—as well as his later prose's tendency towards the affect-disclosing grimace and embarrassed verbosity. In doing so, she significantly complicates our understanding of how his critical style works, and works on us as readers today, using the concept of unfeeling to unravel the often-rigid fashion in which Eliot's account of poetic emotion has traditionally been discussed. We begin with a mask and

end with a blush. Thus, like Kowalik and Smith, Gutsell recuperates Eliot's affected critical stance and thus parallels this reclamation of sincerity and feeling.

In this year's issue, we are delighted to have received submissions of visual artworks for the first time in the journal's history: we are inclined to suggest that the cluster of cut-and-paste collage submissions we received was not coincidental but, rather, a technique adopted in response to the complexities the theme posed. Sylee Gore's 'Nothing New', for instance, is a collage made of sharp edges, contrasting colours, and discernible images of concrete blocks, stormy skies, and sand-coloured clouds, whose familiarity is 'undercut' by their composition. Despite the unfamiliarity of these compositions, this artwork—and perhaps the collage technique too—evokes, as Gore herself explains, 'severed nerves [that somehow] retain their link to sharp sensations'. Seen in the light of her artist's statement, Gore's work illuminates 'a studied indifference [which] is undermined when phantom feelings recur'.

Meanwhile, the influence of surrealism can be found in Alex Williamson's 'Hierarchies of feeling: structures of sentiment and refusal', a collage sequence and visual essay that responds to Yao's discussion of 'tender violence'. While its texts and images are derived from a 1930s French almanack depicting explorers and artefacts from the early twentieth century, the collage obscures the colonial gaze of the original text, obscuring its original meanings and refusing to reduce cultures into carefully curated exhibits that can be easily comprehended. A sense of redaction haunts the collage, but with that comes a sense of resistance. Although some of the images evoke sites of pain, Williamson's technique refuses a structure where harm to individuals can be re-done. The individuals in the images no longer fit neatly into the picture frames of the collage, denying a voyeuristic viewing experience even as it evokes the practice: it is as if any frustration the viewer feels at their inability to see the 'big picture' is the result of a deliberate composition that aims for incomprehension to disrupt colonial simplicity.

Alongside these collages, we have three visual art submissions which handle our theme in a more figurative fashion. In a hand-drawn representation of St Sebastian in pen, Joseph Nockels responds not just to the unfeelingness which has frequently characterised depictions of the saint, preternaturally unaffected by the multiple arrows which puncture his body, but to the COVID pandemic. As Nockels notes, recent art historical interpretations have viewed these arrows as invasive pathogens but here, deflected by the work of human hands, the famous deathly emblem is turned into an image of recovery; a youth's body beginning to be filled in with detail as if coming back to life. Another response to the challenges of the last couple of years, Naveen Nambiar's painting 'An Alien Perspective', in which a womb appears like a goldfish bowl of uncanny flora and fauna, depicts some of the contradictions of our locked-down environment, a benumbed state of anxious waiting, full of surprise and danger, both consoling and disconcerting in its temporariness. Jennie Gilman offers another view of a parallel universe partly of our own making in 'A Pixel Imperfect World', summoning up the digital in at least two senses: the computerised and the handmade. With vibrant flowers and foliage which do not hide the fact they have been hand-cut out of coloured paper and pasted, Gilman gives us—with our limited human means and perspective—a glimpse of [the central humanoid figure's/an] alternative vision of life on Earth, one no less attractive for being intangible.

Our 2022 issue has thoroughly assessed the adoption of unfeeling as a mode of resistance from a range of perspectives. It has illuminated the role that unfeeling may play in narratives about race, disability, war, the climate crises, and the refugee crisis, and shown just some of the many possibilities for the expansion of Yao's manifesto, and its overspill into

other areas of literary study. This issue has revealed a hunger for explorations of literary depictions of the medicalisation of feeling /unfeeling, but it has also prompted us to ask, how unfeeling humour may be utilised, for instance, by authors of disability narratives, or what might be distinctive about queer unfeeling, as a means of self-defence, or as a subversion of heteronormative sentimentalism. Moreover, it has prompted consideration of political or literary apathy and its usefulness, as well as a consideration of how different modes of literary criticism might resist cultures of apathy or desensitisation.