



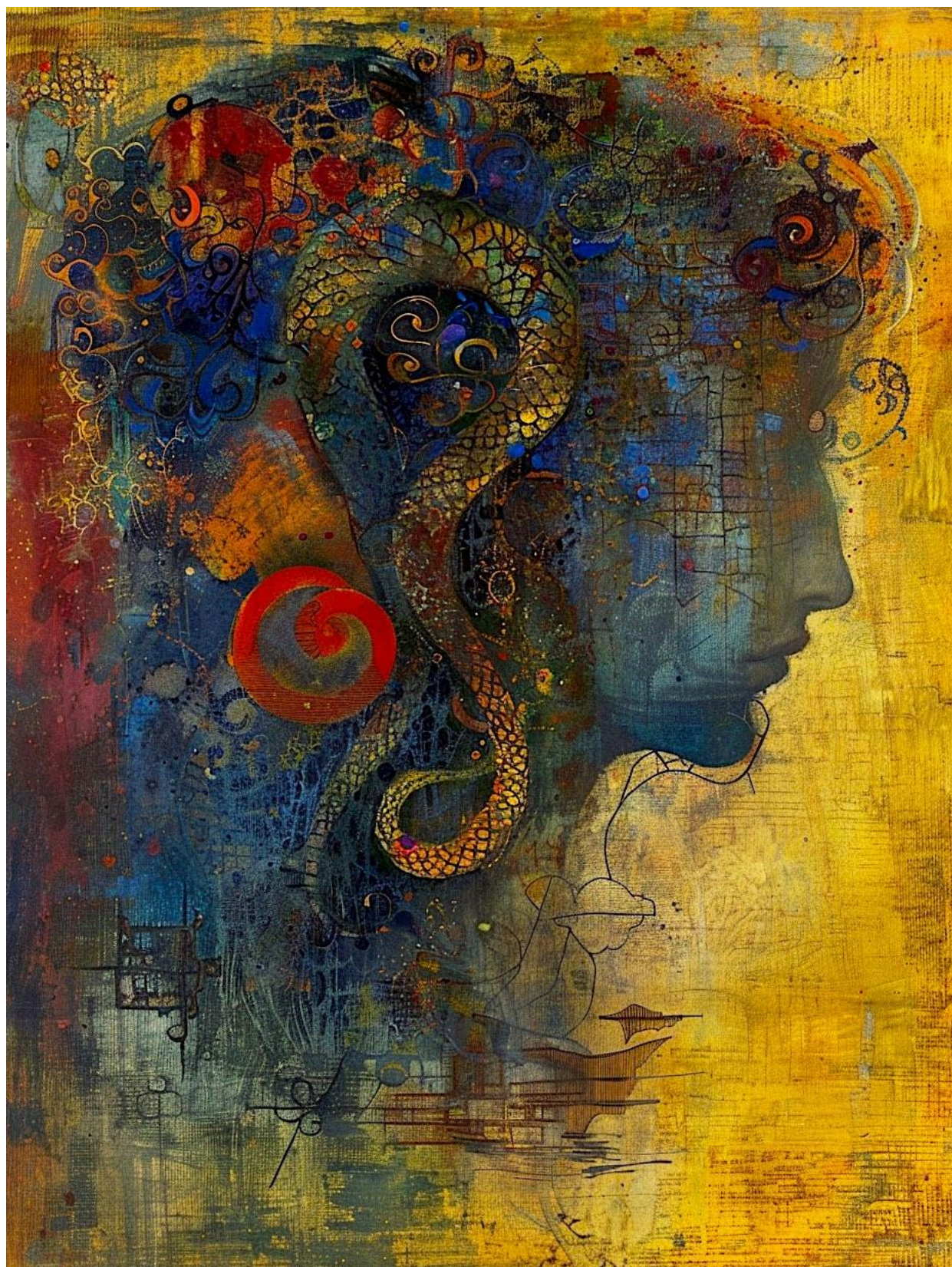
BUTTONHOOK PRESS
AN IMPRINT OF OPEN: JOURNAL OF ARTS & LETTERS

FEVER

A poem by YUCHENG TAO



2025 Broadside Series



FEVER

That winter — so long,
I lost myself in fever,
as shadows of swaying trees came to me.

The dilapidated house, the broken love,
the mud-heart, crumbling
into a burning sickness.

In the corner of the bedroom,
a red-haired *Melusine* in my illusion,
stitched the scraps of my heart whole.

“You shouldn’t have liked that brown hair.
You and she were never meant to belong
to the same world.”

I said, “I was just a little salt in the soup,
longing to melt into it.”
She led me to the bath.

My fevered fatigue dissolved.
The water in the tub
poured out like a holy grail.

“You must not lose your essence
just for the beauty of brown,
like water overflowing from the bathtub.

A relationship must flow.
All this magic
and alchemy cannot change.”

I went back to bed.
My fingers brushed the windowsill,
while *Melusine* faded into the outside world,

vanishing at the edge of my darkness.
I lay still, listening
to the slow hush of water in the tub.

That winter,
I had some fever, but I saw *Melusine*,
but the water flowed toward early spring.

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An imprint of OPEN: *Journal of Arts & Letters* (O:JA&L)

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Publishing since 2017 as OPEN: *Journal of Arts & Letters* (O:JA&L) and its imprints
Buttonhook Press, HOT BUTTON PRESS *Contemporary Controversies*, and HIGH BUTTON PRESS *Contemporary Art*,
OJAL Art Incorporated supports writers and artists across the world.



Buttonhook Press

An imprint of OPEN: *Journal of Arts & Letters* (O:JA&L)

Set in Garamond and GARAMOND ALLCAPS and formatted in CreateSpace

Made available online and/or printed in the USA and elsewhere as a novelty
and commemorative document celebrating the publication of Yucheng Tao's poem.

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YUCHENG TAO is a Chinese international student based in Los Angeles, where he studies songwriting. His work has appeared in *Wild Court* (UK), *The Lake* (UK), *Red Ogre Review* (UK), *Aloka Magazine* (UK), *Cathexis Northwest Press*, and *NonBinary Review*, where he was also interviewed. He was named a semifinalist for the Winds of Asia Award by *Kinsman Quarterly*. His work has been featured in over twenty journals, including *Apocalypse Confidential*, *The Arcanist*, *Waymark Literary Magazine*, *Yellow Mama*, *The Mixtape Review*, *Down in the Dirt*, *Academy of the Heart*, *Alien Buddha Press*, *Ink Nest*, *Piker Press*, *Synchronized Chaos*, *Spillwords and Poetry Potion*, *Literary Yard*, and *The Creativity Webzine*, *Moonstone Art Center*, and *Authorspress Press*.

IMAGE:

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

OPEN: *Journal of Arts & Letters* (O:JA&L) first published this work in June 2025.

