



THE PRAIRIE REVIEW

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GRASSROOTS MAGAZINE OF POETRY, PROSE, ART AND CRITICISM

FEATURED POETRY & VISUAL ART PROJECT

Mark Young

"The Nine Stages of the Decomposition of a Corpse"

POETRY

Jonathan Clark Patrick

Phoebe Hurd

Allen Nguyen

Andrea Gaspar

Jessica Gavrilovski

Gabriela Ayala

Christen Foster

Madeline Wierzal

Danica I. Lepojevikij

PROSE

Ivan de Monbrison

Whitney Chiji

CRITICISM

Stephen Gladwin

"Bay of Blood"

Film Review

"Madonna: A Rebel Life"

Book Review

CRITICISM

Kinga Lipinska

Marie Laurencin: Sapphic Paris

Exhibition Review

Third Coast Percussion

Performance Review

Welcome to the 10th Issue of The Prairie Review

—grassroots laboratory for ideas, criticism, visual expression, and language. We are a small self-funded magazine, but it turns out we have a global audience!

In this May Issue, we feature an intriguing new project from Mark Young (Australia), prose of Ivan de Morbinson (France), poetry of Danica Lepojevikj (Macedonia), and Allen Nguyen (Canada / Vietnam) as well as critical writing of Stephen Gladwin, In addition to a collection of new poetry by local, American writers. And, for those who do not know, the editor is Polish.

I want to continue putting emphasis on making space for people to experiment with various creative pursuits rather than merely have the magazine as a mere outlet to publish work. For this reason, I invest time and effort into performance oriented events. A great group of people from the Poetry Meetup in Chicago contributed their talents and made our first live show an unforgettable and impactful experience. If you were there, you know it was great!

Keep making art, keep making culture —

Kinga Lipinska

Editor

Cover art: Kinga Lipinska, JM Basquiat, Ink and watercolor on paper, 2024.

**"THE PITCH BLACK NIGHT
GAVE ME TWO DEEP BLACK EYES
WITH WHICH TO SEARCH FOR LIGHT."**

GU CHENG (1956—1993, China)

***translation from the original by Sam Hamill
*watercolor portrait of Cheng by Kinga Lipinska**



JONATHAN CLARK PATRICK

No Tear Goes Wasted

Late, after dinner, the landscape lighting
washing the palm fronds, a southwest breeze cool,
inspiring the wind chimes banging, clanging,
listening to Iris DeMent, *My Life*,
The Shores of Jordan, the Poet humbled
by her Appalachian grace.
He could not point to, recall, invent
a moment where he volunteered his tears
in defense of another, no angels'
wings would carry his soul to Jordan,
not his reward nor ambition as he, graceless,
heard her singing and imagined
her dancing on the riverbank.

JONATHAN CLARK PATRICK

Nashoba Waters

The Man jonesed lures, rods and reels, fishing gear
at flea markets decades after he last
walked the coarse shorelines of Nashoba ponds,
threaded the willow tangles, cradling gear,
along brooks spilling, wrangling through boulders.
Daredevles, Syclopeses, Slammers, Sonics,
Bangtails, Rooster Tails and Switcheroos,
Jawbreakers, Creek Creatures, Bang-O-Lures
Hot Lips, Invincibles, Flash Dancers, Woodwalkers
sorted in tackle boxes side-by-side
on garage shelving along with poles in cases
and a dozen or more fly reels, spinning reels
and a box dedicated to trout flies, streamers,
Feathergirls, Quill Gordons, Blue-Wings, Caddises,
Carey Specials, Coachmans, Alexandras and Woolly Worms.
He examined the hoard on occasion,
chose a box, slid out a lure tray and inspected
the paint and barbs, looking over the swivels
and the leaders, the unopened coils of line,
wondering if there would come a rift in time
when he might again wade a trout stream
high up in the White Mountain watershed,
looking for that perfect eddy to make his first cast.

JONATHAN CLARK PATRICK

Dance Lessons

In the Community Center
second floor ballroom
the Boy took dance lessons,
waltzes and foxtrots, clumsily
trying to get through the night,
a few months into 6th grade,
anxious for enough training
to survive junior high school mixers.

They could be seen from Main Street,
through the Palladian windows,
boys and girls seated in folding chairs
on either side of a wide, worn oak floor,
awkwardly greeting a partner, matched.

The Boy wore his blazer,
a white shirt and skinny tie,
good shoes polished,
his nametag pinned to a lapel,
even though he knew mostly everyone,
having grown up together,
still, they seemed like strangers,
cautiously following the box step call:

*Left foot forward, right foot slide step,
Then right foot back, left foot slide step,
Finding home in the closed position.*
or as complicated as holding hands.

JONATHAN CLARK PATRICK

The Girl wore a beaded sweater,
black with white pearl buttons,
her white pleated skirt loose and modest,
a white blouse buttoned to the neck,
showing off a small silver cross
as if her mother dressed her for communion –
the Boy recollecting her schoolyard bully days –
her black, patent leather pumps luminous
as he and she traced a foxtrot call:

Left foot forward,

Right foot forward

Left foot sidestep left

Right foot sidestep left.

The architecture of the dancing,
the ballroom, the careful touching,
nods to those from his classes,
and those he wrestled as toddlers,
played kickball, hide-and-seek,
auditioning for a gambol
he would dance all his life,
relationships as formulaic
as the tango steps he gamely followed,

JONATHAN CLARK PATRICK

Trespassing in Reed's Grain Mill

Ten years old, we itched for adventure,
squirring inside Reed's Grain Mill, cavernous,
through a breach where the paint-worn doors,
hung from iron trolleys cast before the Wars,
bowed, weather-warped, from their frames;
Grinding equipment and machine shop long sold off,
now garaging Old Man Laffin's hoard, vintage
vehicles retired before the Boy's Nashoba childhood,
those still running, flaunted in town parades,
others in parts, suspended animation
garaged in the gloaming, longing for drivers
dead for decades, running board to running board,
chrome grill to rumble seat and spare tire, stored.

Pulleyed lifts, industrial age wizardry,
towered above us hitched to oak joists,
hand-hewn, heartwood white when sawn,
a century of summer roasts and winter freezes,
dowels hammered true, through tenons adzed,
raised and lowered the cars.

JONATHAN CLARK PATRICK

We trespassed through the stalls,
our underage ambitions, secretive,
pretending to drive one of the monsters,
sitting on the cloth seats, threadbare, hands gripping
the golden mahogany steering wheels.

The chestnut floors supporting
Packard Twelves and Four Hundreds,
Studebaker Hawks, Hudsons and Nashes,
Ford Big Jobs, Deuces, Model As and Ts,
Pontiac Streamliners, Chieftans, Torpedos
Chevrolet Bel Airs, Nomads,
Cadillac La Salles, Eldorados,
Buick Roadmasters, Specials and Limiteds,
Oldsmobile Vikings and Series 60s,
Dodge Royals, DeSoto Pacesetters,

Chrysler Imperials and Airflows
steel pressed and cast, cars with curves
and chrome, dashboards walnut, worked by hand.

Jonathan Clark Patrick is the author of the poetry books *Songs Presidential* (Kelsay Books, 2022) and the forthcoming *Out of Nashoba* (Kelsay Books, 2024). His fascination with the American presidency began during his childhood in the region around Boston, where so many key events in U.S. political history have occurred. He now resides in the San Francisco Bay area with his wife of forty-five years. Patrick drove a cab during graduate school, writing his first poems while studying American literature. He put aside his writing as he became more successful in his professional services career. Inspired by the 2008 election, Patrick returned in *Songs Presidential* to his lifelong goal of exploring the interaction between history and poetry. *Out of Nashoba* is a continuation of his personal journey started in *Songs Presidential*.



Marie Laurencin, Self Portrait. Oil on Canvas, 1908.

MARIE LAURENCIN - PAINTINGS

Columbus Art Museum is currently hosting two exceptional shows by important artists: one by the early 20th century French surrealist painter Marie Laurencin and the other one by a contemporary American artist Robin F. Williams. The two shows are presented side by side, so it is quite impossible to see one and ignore the other. Was the curator thinking of the earlier work as a precursor for the contemporary one? Very likely – Robin F. Williams is also a surrealist and her focus is also almost exclusively on the female subject.

Marie Laurencin (1883 – 1956) places women in the center in a different way than female face and body figured in earlier visual representations. Laurencin was self-taught and she spent her entire artistic career working out a unique manner of painting the face and the body. Among her many accomplishments and an impressive body of work by successfully moving away from the dominant Cubist avant-garde and creating her own style. She focused on portraiture and well as figurative work that also featured decorative arts, circus workers, fashion, and ballet dancers. While popular culture often presents these areas as 'feminine,' Laurencin – by the singular way in which she painted – exposed their fascinating power and cultural autonomy.



Marie Laurencin, Fairy Flower, Oil on Canvas, 1950.



Marie Laurencin, Portrait of a Man, Oil on Canvas, c. 1914.



Marie Laurencin, La Dance, Oil on Canvas, 1919



Marie Laurencin, Nude In a Mirror, Oil on Canvas, 1916



Marie Laurencin, *The Elegant Ball*, Oil on Canvas, 1913

The exhibition is titled “Marie Laurencin: Sapphic Paris.” because she famously worked and socialized in artistic female circles made up of women who were all in different ways inspired by Sappho and who wanted to pursue their interests ranging from writing to painting to relationships outside of male dominated avant-garde mainstream. While a definite minority in her day, Sappho Salon members are starting to be recognized for their original contributions to the development of art in all its forms in 1920’s Paris.

Marie Laurencin Sapphic Paris is a must see show for anyone interested in surrealist painting that also defies any easy classification. I deem it is even worth a special road trip to Columbus, Ohio.

PHOEBE HURD

In This Poem I Have Died And Gone To The Underworld

and here we have Hades,
forever the defeated soldier,
resting somewhat comfortably among
the tree roots, envisioning
his interior paramour.
The night holds tight to the underworld.
Can I trust myself? Lost here,
with all these small forgotten things?
I evoke philautia, add some tender whispering
and go to plant grapes, fertilize
the dead earth. The only person left to take care of
is me.
I call myself April. I don't pray.
I believe the best way to get close to God
is to sin as hard as you can.
I live here now, like Candide did
littered with scars and tending my garden,
stuck stiff with night and
in consummation with an imperfect world.

PHOEBE HURD

In My Dream We Became Two Pigeons

The birds are calling to each other outside this morning.

The rain dampens the sound.

When I picture you

you are inside of a house

we no longer live in

sitting on chairs

that we found on street corners and

cleaned and loved until

we left them on the streets too.

The birds warble

and my mind lilt.

Now, you are places I have never been

with people I will never know.

I am places you have never been

with people you will never know.

And this is all for the best but

still

in the mornings,

in the dampening rain,

it is you my birdsong calls out for.

PHOEBE HURD

I Yearn For The Temperament of Moss

Moss is tricky.

The ocean pushes and pulls it-
drowning and breathing

meanwhile ants crawl, seagulls chirp
and land.

The moss, somehow,
is unbothered.

I am too much like sand
The waters of my world
have pulverized me
into something irritable and malleable and soft.

I exist in small bursts and flashes of light,
in fragmented thoughts,
in as little space as possible.

Let me go!

I yell out to the reflection in the waves
but it does not respond.

I cling to the wet rocks

PHOEBE HURD

drowning and breathing-
I feel the water pushing and pulling me

and relinquish control.

My feet turn green.

My hands become squishy
and stick to the rocks.

My body melts away
sprawling along the shoreline.

I look up at the sun and taste sugar.

The ocean washes away the sandy parts of me
and I am finally content.

The reflection in the wave smiles
in its green mossy way.

Ants crawl, seagulls chirp, people die
and I am unbothered.

Moss is simple, I realize.

It is all it can be

PHOEBE HURD

Lesbian, Artist, Friend, Cousin, Sibling, Child, Smoker

Everyday I am a completely new person.

**Everynight my cells
are reborn in moonlight.**

**My hair sheds and regrows
burrowing deep into my pillows.**

Instead of dreaming

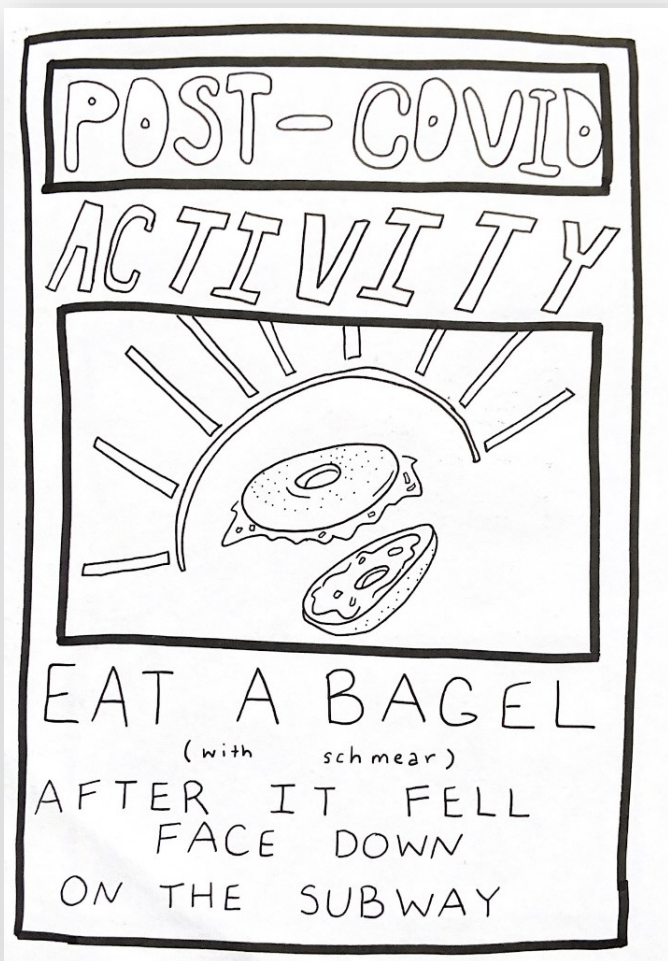
**I think of new and
beautiful and exciting
ways to be.**

To be kind and witty

**life feels so silly
and every morning I bloom
like the tulips at the end of April.**

PHOEBE HURD visual art





ALLEN NGUYEN

to boys who fall

your father told you to get up
when you fall
but never warned
how hard the fall will be
or how long you will be down.
it may be just a second
or minutes,
hours,
days, weeks months years a lifetime.
boy, if you find yourself on the ground
with no strength,
stay there.
take time.
do not let any man rush your timeline.
do not wish for the easy way out.
if sprained wrists do not write,
if sprained ankles do not walk,
then why put pressure on a sprained mind?
and if one day
you notice that the sun rose
and you see your shadow,
know that it is a dance
between you and the sun.
live for that dance,

ALLEN NGUYEN

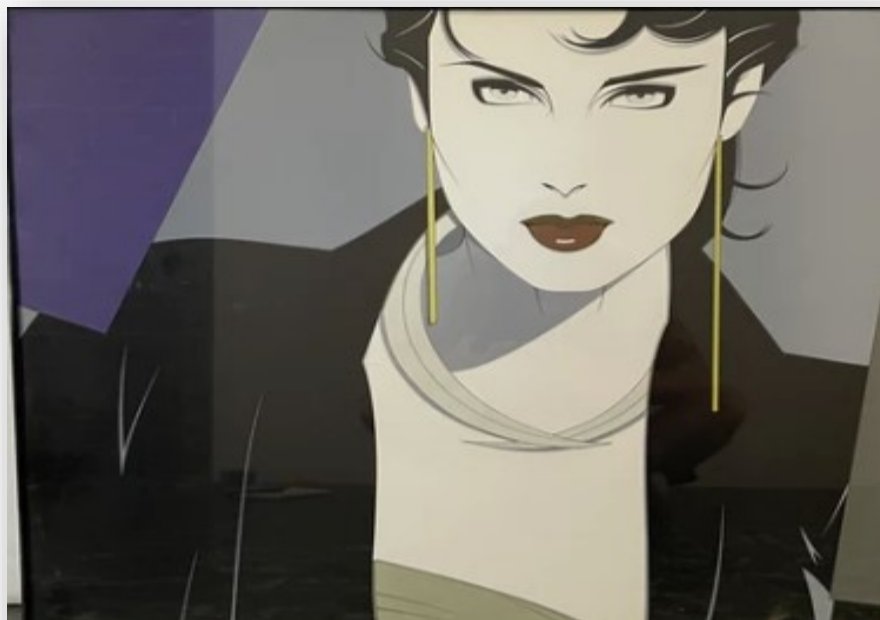
keep the pace of it.
it's just one step at a time,
one day at a time.
don't be fooled,
those single steps
become a dance
and those single days
become your life
and both are beautiful.
on that day, boy,
when the sun asks for a dance,
if you can find strength in those legs,
please stand up
and dance.

Madonna: A Rebel Life

"I am my own experiment. I am my own work of art." — Madonna



Madonna Overlooks her Metropolis in "Express Yourself"



"Michelle" Overlooks Me

I read most of this book under the watchful eye of Patrick Nagel's "Michelle" (it hangs in my living room). Both Michelle and Madonna were quintessential evocations of the '80s, and profound exhibits of forceful femininity. Alas, anything forceful and profound becomes an ordeal when subject to mammoth length like this book. Author Mary Gabriel spends her 887 pages sketching a mostly compelling but incomplete portrait of Madonna and her mythos. Drawing on decades of interviews from all the principal players in Madonna's life, her grasp of the details impresses. But it's loaded down with relentless praise and adoration that blunts our ultimate understanding of the big "M."

Gabriel begins with Madonna's early life in Pontiac, Michigan. It was a special place, culturally enriched by decades of ethnicities – white, Black, Mexican, Eastern European, Italian – all relocating for work in the motor factories in the great motor state. The diversity was striking, and literally close to home: the Ciccone's house was between a Black family's and a Hispanic family's. This teeming multiculturalism formed a fecund growth zone for a young Madonna, providing priceless exposure to Motown and Black culture as she sang to girl group bands with her Black neighbors in their backyards.

From here Gabriel lays out the igniting factors that launched Madonna from Michigan to New York City to everywhere else that could pick up a TV or radio signal: her disregard for gender norms, her incredible work ethic, her affection for (and support by) gay men, and her planet-sized need for attention.

But before it was lights, camera, Madonna! it was Chris, Tony and *another* Madonna. Christopher Flynn was the first "out" gay man Madonna knew, and the first to teach her to dance and to smash her limits in high school and again at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor. Her father Tony hammered an iron work ethic into her forged by *his* father, an Italian immigrant from Abruzzo who worked the Pennsylvania steel mills. And her mother Madonna, taken from her at age 5 by cancer (apparently God couldn't tolerate *two* Madonnas), taught her how to "grow up fast" and "how to just take control and say it's going to get better."

The result? Madonna became something of a tomboy without a mom's steering influence (as if she could be steered). So that meant *she* would chase boys on the playground. And she learned she had a mouth: it helped her be heard when she was one of eight. By junior high she was already a hot sauce: her 8th-grade performance of *Baba O'Riley*, complete with fluorescent body paint and suggestive dancing, scandalized the school.

But Madonna wanted more, and that meant embracing the sludge and glory of New York City. Here Gabriel gives us the unforgettable image of a 19-year-old Madonna freshly deplaned at the Laguardia airport in 1978, looking small in a big coat (necessary in Ann Arbor, hilarious overkill in NYC). She's the Anti-Madonna here, achingly vulnerable as she clutches a doll (1) and a small suitcase. She was scared, but she wasn't leaving until she broke a man-sized piece of the Big Apple off for herself.

This is the most gripping material, where Gabriel charts Madonna's relentless and sky-scraping soar. She had unstoppable drive and iron for guts: she lived among the roaches in NYC hellholes ("I turned on the light, and the whole floor moved. That was new for me. I'd never seen a cockroach before" said her brother Christopher), had drug dealer look-outs escort her down the street, and was raped at knifepoint on one of Alphabet City's rooftops. But she ran on art, so she never ran away. It was everywhere: in clubs, in her bands, and in her dreams of making it big. Gabriel's prose is clear and direct, making Madonna the Starving Artist joltingly real.

And her prose also nimbly surveys a who's-who (and what's-what) of every artist and artistic movement that sprung up like a pop-up book around Madonna. Gabriel paints Madonna's NYC of the late '70s through the mid-'80s as a supercollider of talent, chance, and scouting producers hungry for the next big thing. She befriended or dated big names like Keith Haring, Fab 5 Freddy and Jean-Michel Basquiat and danced to Grandmaster Flash[1]. It's around here that Gabriel leaves you in awe of Madonna's rapacious intellect: she absorbed all the music and art bouncing off NYC's streets and clubs, walking away with it in her acid-washed denim and adding it to her back catalog of European films and other art, novels, and dance routines from school. Many would find their way into her work.

Early epoch Madonna culminates in her first bonafide outrage: her appearance at the first MTV Video Music Awards in 1984. Singing "Like a Virgin" in a wedding dress, she showed she'd be anything but another bon-bon for men: in a whoosh of improvisation she dropped to her knees, humping and grinding away in that dress, for a few holy-shit-am-I-seeing-this seconds. She then rolled around with her dress up (her panties and garters exposed, scandalously), letting loose some sultry and man-breaking stares. Here was a *woman* giving American prime time a hot taste of female sexuality, still vague and largely un-talked about in popular media at the time. And so began her run as one of the best polemicists of the '80s and '90s.

Gabriel covers that remarkable first 10 years pretty well. Most compelling is Madonna's extraordinary expansion from 1989's *Like a Prayer* through 1992's *Erotica*. It meant more than music: there were also incendiary (and iconic) videos and one whopper of an extracurricular called *Sex* (it was a Madonna-style coffee table book, which meant you didn't keep it on the coffee table). Like Prince, sex was Madonna's favorite subject, and Gabriel gives absolutely on-the-money accounts of some of her definitive statements on it: 1990's music video for *Justify My Love* and *Sex*.

Shot in a Paris hotel in moody black and white, *Justify My Love* looks like the European films Madonna glimpsed in college and beyond: dark and brooding, with an elegance cold and distant like marble. The music is tense and eerie, with only drums and a string of synth making up the sound. Gabriel calls the video a "travelog of desires" where Madonna, wrapped in highly craveable lingerie, gets it on with her then-boyfriend Tony Ward in a hotel room while everyone peeping at home gets forbidden glimpses of androgynous men, trans people, and S&M in other rooms. In one censor-baiting bit, she fantasizes kissing Jean-Paul Gaultier model Amanda Cazalet while Tony watches.

Madonna had always toyed with male fantasy going back to her “Burning Up” video, but enlarges interest considerably by taking the view of a powerful female in heat, making her man “justify my love.” It’s not graphic, but the direction can be forceful: a woman topless except for suspenders – a nod to *The Night Porter*? – snaps Tony’s head back before kissing him in front of Madonna. Throughout, Madonna is writhing, commanding, and so ready to have the animal fucked out of her. Here she’s reclaiming sexual fantasy for women, but by including her boyfriend in the video she, insightfully observed by Gabriel, “encouraged the man in her life to broaden his own [fantasies].” And so *Justify My Love* is everything most porn isn’t: erotic, atmospheric, and delighting in female sexuality and fantasy. MTV banned it, fearing it would ruffle the cornfields of American morality.

Sex (1992) was the *ne plus ultra* of this period and one of the most audacious acts of celebrity ever. Shooting in NYC and Miami, photographers Steven Meisel and Fabien Baron bring together bondage, erotica, and (nude!) gay men all under the massive gaze of Madonna. Gabriel astutely points out the publication “may have been the first major book of female sexual imagery ever published that was not created to titillate a heterosexual man” and indeed Madonna appears rebelliously nude, her nipples stiffened at the patriarchy.

Sex roars with ideas. The sex, such as it is (there’s no hardcore here) is by turns confrontational, pungent, and funny. There’s also a bit of a storyline: Madonna assumes the alter-ego “Dita,” a diarist and writer of erotic letters who loves to fuck.

It’s not all great. Madonna’s flirting with Vanilla Ice (!) looks as awkward as it sounds, as does her kiss with Naomi Campbell (and did Big Daddy Kane have to be there?). And Dita’s X-rated confessionals have the oh-come-on quality of a runaway ego trip (many argued *the whole thing* was an ego trip). Finally, critics like Camille Paglia pointed out the book was hardly groundbreaking – Robert Mapplethorpe chronicled the S&M underground years earlier. But when you consider this was Madonna, a world-famous artist bringing this to the mainstream and it was a *woman’s* vision, it’s less easily dismissed.

And then, buried near the half-way mark, Pasolini breaks out. And not just any Pasolini. Here Madonna references his notorious *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975) in two photos where gay Euro cult film star Udo Kier (!) and another man walk leashed men like dogs. Pasolini (himself gay) made his final film as a Marxist wail against capitalism’s commodification of sex and the body. It’s an updating of the Marquis De Sade’s *The 120 Days of Sodom* to the waning days of WWII in fascist Italy. It’s pretty sick: it abounds in torture, scatology, and sadistic sex (it’s one of cinema’s great endurance tests).

Madonna was a Pasolini fan, but why reference *this* odious film? Gabriel gives no answers. At the least, I’d say it’s fascinating to see images from a film so contemptuous of the commercialization of sex reenacted in a book that *literally* sells sex! Whatever her reasons, *Salò’s* cameo proves there were sharks swimming in those Miami waters of Madonna’s imagination.

And she hung above those very waters in one of the most iconic shots. In it she hangs from a helicopter ladder, naked. Suspended and nude, her toned body is at once desired and defiant, erotic and feminist – her philosophy in one photo. Miley Cyrus tried it clad in leather for her *Endless Summer Vacation* album cover but too little, too late Miley.

While Gabriel had real insight for these Madonna milestones, she fumbles with fawning adoration for her *Like a Prayer* commercial. As it happened, Pepsi offered to premiere her song in a commercial before she shot the music video. Madonna couldn't resist. For Madonna, there was always a thin line between savvy and sell-out, but this was a thumpingly obvious sell-out. Gabriel shamelessly supports Madonna's decision, quoting her: "As far as I'm concerned, making a [music] video is also a commercial [and] record companies just don't have the money to finance that kind of publicity." Gabriel goes further, saying "Besides, [Madonna] said, she liked the idea of fusing art and commerce which made the former more 'accessible' and elevated the latter." These highly convenient and self-serving statements are never called out by Gabriel, nor is Madonna's logic. Did Madonna *really* need more publicity in 1989?

If you have any doubts of Gabriel's bias, check out her "review" of the commercial. She describes Madonna as "cool as hell dancing in the street" and in another scene a choir "raises her song to the heavens." She then mounds this hot fudge sundae with the bold declaration that the commercial was "beautiful and inspiring." A commercial that's "beautiful and inspiring" is one of the saddest statements I've ever heard and yet there it is, on page 412.

Eventually the praise is numbing. It settles into an almost Mad Libs of "x producer/musician/director couldn't believe how great/talented/amazing Madonna was."

Gabriel lets lucky readers know Jack Nicholson thought she was "this beautiful, unpredictable, amazing young woman" with him finally declaring, "Jesus! What a star!" And Gabriel says Madonna gave men "new reason to tremble" in her *Blonde Ambition* tour, saying "She was fierce. She did not ask permission to make a spectacle of herself. And she did not apologize for her brazenness. She owned it with fuck-you relish."

All this throbbing Madonna worship makes you wonder if Gabriel is cut out for the job. In fact, she didn't even interview Madonna for the book! Perhaps she heard that one about not meeting your heroes. So Gabriel ultimately distances us from Madonna, making her into a near-perfect crusader with the swagger and state-of-the-art sexuality to blast the patriarchy back to where it came from. No: Madonna is a brilliant but flawed artist (and human) with her best work behind her.

Here's your evidence: a disastrous staging of *Live to Tell* on her *Confessions on a Dance Floor* tour from 2006. *Live to Tell* is one of Madonna's most beautiful songs, spare and spine-tingling. But here it's a travesty, foolishly reworked to reflect her growing awareness of the spread of AIDS in Africa, especially Malawi. The song begins with her rising on a huge glittering cross, her head crowned with thorns. Above her on a massive screen ticks the increasing number of African children orphaned by AIDS. It all finishes with a quote from the Bible!

You could call this a sign of an older, wiser Madonna but I call it cultural decadence: Madonna ruinously misread her own material, making it into an overblown Vegas show with a humanitarian message awkwardly pounded into place [Frisell]. It shows how much damage can be done by ego, by swelling self-importance. But Gabriel raves anyway, gushing about the tour's "awe-inspiring images" and how it brought out the "power of art to uncover beauty in the most unlikely places."

Against the odds, I still came away with an even greater appreciation of Madonna after reading Gabriel's book. At her best, she was a plowing locomotive of ideas who never forgot the music. And she was brave, particularly in the '90s where I'd place her work next to Elisabeth Shue's performance in *Leaving Las Vegas* (1995) as one of the most uncompromising displays of female strength in modern media.

But don't take my word for it. Go YouTube the "Express Yourself" video and watch it all come together. It's a Madonna-Meets-Metropolis fusion of Fritz Lang's silent classic, David Fincher's burgeoning aesthetic, and bent gender. She co-produced it, having a hand in the look. Watch Madonna dance in that big boardroom suit, yank it open to tease her femininity, then throw that head back and grab her crotch while flipping a defiant finger gun to masculinity. And despite that defiance there's such a fullness of mind, body and vision that there's no room for resentment of men. She was too busy becoming herself. In *Express Yourself* she's not even a feminist. She's Madonna, her own creation.

Madonna in NYC, Circa 1978-1985

This was such a fascinating time for Madonna and for NYC art and culture. Below is a sampling of Madonna-related NYC stuff from this time. Hope you enjoy!

<https://tinyurl.com/ycs8mcpp> (Danceteria "Everybody"). *This* is what YouTube was made for. The crowd support is great (love that "go on, girl!"). According to a Youtube comment by someone who shot the video, this was Madonna's first appearance as "Madonna" and not part of a band. It was shot at the legendary Danceteria club in NYC. NOTE: Apparently the guy on the far right is Martin Burgoyne, one of Madonna's best friends who was at her wedding to Sean Penn and illustrated the cover of her first single. He, like so many of her friends, would die of AIDS. But not before she did everything she could for him, including renting an apartment for him, paying all his medical bills and calling him every day she wasn't in NYC to visit.

<https://tinyurl.com/2tcf5y98> The trailer for *Liquid Sky*, a real you-are-there account of the early '80s rock and club scene in NYC. As if seen on acid.

<https://tinyurl.com/ywfbvjv> Trailer for *Smithereens* (1982), another winner from Susan Seidelman who directed Madonna a few years later in *Desperately Seeking Susan* (also worth seeing). Classic shot-on-location NYC here.

<https://tinyurl.com/ajwcpsuv> "Trailer" for *Desperately Seeking Susan*. The official trailer sucks so what better than the video for *Get into the Groove*, featuring the movie? Have a Madonna night by watching this, *Desperately Seeking Susan* and *Smithereens*.

<https://tinyurl.com/3t3jvcwu> Trailer for *Ms. 45* (1980). A real grindhouse classic, shot in NYC. And featuring another striking NYC woman, Zoe Temerlis!

<https://tinyurl.com/2hpbx4cv> Classic electro. This is the kind of stuff they played in the clubs Madonna went to in the 80s.

<https://tinyurl.com/2pdjdvte> The amazing (and terrifying) "Frankie Teardrop." Trivia: Rainer Fassbinder featured this song in his *In a Year With Thirteen Moons*. Released months before Madonna relocated to NYC.

IVAN DE MONBRISON

April 19, 2024, Marseille.

Dawn, Marseille, corpses, nothing, we feel nothing. There are pieces of flesh scattered all around, there are pieces of silence scattered everywhere, and, below the sky, the endless roofs of the old city. We will not go further away today. The silence is too low. The silence is too heavy. The church bells have started ringing now, the wind has been slowly dying away, the trees are still, from time to time a bird crosses the sky, the chiming of the bells, and in the background, the loud noise of the traffic. It is quite a cold morning indeed. You have slept a long time, behind you the bed is still messy, and the painting once finished has been erased, and then painted again, and so on a thousand times, whether abstract or figurative, it makes no difference in the end. In the next room my best friend is still asleep, she is very ill, my fiancée is ill too. The bells keep on ringing louder and louder. They're calling the pilgrims to the mass. We will not go further away today. At sunrise, the sunlight has started creeping over on the roof tiles and is now casting the shadows of the chimneys over them. In the trees, I can guess the shapes of some unrecognizable birds. A dome is standing up, forlorn, once it was the building of a department store, now it stays there, totally useless. The sea must be icy cold now, after all this crazy wind, called "Le Mistral", which has kept on blowing all night long. The nearest building's windows are open, but the apartments seem to be still vacant though. The city has changed a lot recently. A pigeon hovering in the sky, then passing swiftly through the deserted courtyard, and much higher against the blueness, one can see the clear spot of just a single white gull. I've been staying pensive for a while smoking a big cigar just after waking up, smoking and watching the other colored roofs. It's still so cold. Smoking gives me a little bit of asthma now, but it's not important anymore. I happily inhale the carbon dioxide, which will slowly kill me one day, I guess. I can hear the soft chirping of a sparrow, and in the background still the loud noise of the traffic. All this as the world continues its mad race at a hundred thousand kilometers an hour within Space, its course being useless, and always circular, just as the Earth keeps on rotating over itself, as it always has been. And all of us, we keep on rotating too, glued on its surface, and at the same time totally unaware of its rotation, all of us locked up inside an invisible cage, the Earth being locked up inside an invisible cage too. All this, as I stay still listening to all this crushing silence, despite the noise all around, discarded like in a ditch, and left for dead by the road.

ANDREA GASPAR

Light

how am I supposed to stop
"hiding my light under a bushel"
when you place the barrel over my head
again and again and again
until there is no oxygen left
until the fire has completely gone out

ANDREA GASPAR

Home

**I heard the gate slam shut
I fell back against the bars
and I screamed.
But with the door closed tight
and the new windows we had installed
two years ago
no one could hear me.**

from

100 Titles From Tom Beckett

parts 4 to 9 of #20:

The Nine Stages of the Decomposition of a Corpse

The sequence of paintings accompanying the separate parts of #20, & #39; The Nine Stages of the Decomposition of a Corpse & #39; is *Kusōzu: the death of a noble lady and the decay of her body*.

Watercolors.

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Source: Wellcome Collection.

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/m4pnfgjd>

Mark Young was born in Aotearoa New Zealand but now lives in a small town on traditional Juru land in North Queensland, Australia. He is the author of more than sixty-five books, primarily text poetry but also including speculative fiction, vispo, memoir, and art history. His most recent books are a pdf, *Mercator Projected*, published by Half Day Moon Press (Turkey) in August 2023; *Ley Lines II* published by Sandy Press (California) in November 2023; *un saut de chat* published by Otoliths Books (Australia) in February 2024; and *Melancholy*, a James Tate Poetry Prize winner, published by SurVision Books (Ireland) in March 2024.

4. nōransō (putrefaction)



This is only part of the play. The domain of an undertaker — except there isn't one & the body is left to rot. A scene seemingly without action, but there is a whole lot of it going on. A life cycle played out on the stage of death — at a stage of death, perhaps more correctly put. Decomposition has started. Microbial action. Time lapse, improvised script. The players? Bacteria, fungi, undigested proteins in the gastrointestinal tract. & fermentation. A last toast to the corpse? Left center stage.

5. seiosō (discoloration & desiccation)



Fluid leaves all the apertures, as well as many other places where the flesh has broken. Apparently abandoned; but that's not true. A deliberate act, & one watched over. Several times a day a servant will walk out to inspect the corpse & drive any birds or land-based scavengers away. Not yet their time. Two complementary processes at work here. The corpse dries out, the areas with less flesh faster, the facial features turn simian. & further putrefaction — the abdomen now a shade of green. Blood vessels marbled. Brown, red. Deep purple.

6. *tansō* (the corpse is devoured by birds & beasts)



Grace has been said; the scavengers can now begin their feast. Perhaps not as sumptuous as might have been the case, but still enough to sate their appetites. They are left alone. Duty is an important part of ritual — or should that be the other way around? & never a crush, or rush, as if in many other fields this scene is replicated.

A *bonsō* has been heard to say: "I see a body discarded in the charnel ground. I compare that body to my own. Truly this body is of the same nature as mine. Mine will become like that; & cannot escape from that. A body is just a body."

7. *sansō* (the beginnings of dismemberment)



The earlier scavengers have moved away — nothing left for them to easily pick at here — so now those barely visible smaller fauna, no longer fearful of the larger birds & animals who would find them just as edible as the corpse, move in to pick at what's left of the body. Pick it to bits, as if it

were an argument they are just about to win. All that holds the skeleton together will soon be gone. The shape still there, posed as if in repose. No sign of life; but the teeth marks that mar the sinews continue to increase.

8. *kossō* (skeletonization)

There is a game she used to play,
jacks, or knucklebones. She doesn't
remember exactly how it went,
but seems to recall the throwing
of an object — a jack — up into
the air &, while airborne, trying
to pick up the other jacks from
the ground. Now they are fabri-

cated, made from plastic or steel;
& though she preferred to use the
knucklebones of sheep, anything at
hand, such as stones, would do. In
the charnel grounds, if she were still
alive, she would be spoiled for choice.

9. *shōsō* (reduced to dust)

One wonders about the provenance of the departed. Described in one set of paintings as a “noble lady,” in another as a “courtesan.” Elsewhere identified as a ninth-century poetess, & named. Given those discrepancies she is not named —or shamed — here, though the presence of that stupa is

more indicative of nobleness. But the dust she is reduced to has no regard for class. Nor for meditation. That should be done earlier say the sutras: “meditations based on corpses are best done in the company of the corpse.”

JESSICA GAVRILOVSKI

Bucktown Pub

We had our first date at the Bucktown Pub
I rolled with it when you called it, "dicey,"
Before you corrected yourself - "DIVEY!"
I laughed to myself and still went along
We hit it off and started going out more frequently
Talked about our dreams, what we desired, and everything in between
When we were together, it felt like nothing could intervene
It was the safest I had felt in the presence of a man
It became our go-to spot - bartenders knew us by name
We once met a drunk woman there who claimed I'd be your wife
And as much as we laughed it off, that spring was still the best of my life
To meeting roommates, friends, and spoken words of only seeing each other
Actions and words lined up, consistency was present, I had no reason to doubt
Trivia nights, game nights, movie nights, karaoke, begrudgingly taking Malort shots in your name
Listing your friends names on my phone so that my inability to remember wasn't full of shame
Waiting to watch TV shows together, sharing secrets never told to anyone else, it felt all too real
I don't know what happened. I don't know what changed
I was no longer hearing from you daily, seeing you 2-3x a week, or planning sleepovers together
I missed your hugs, your touch, your kisses - you blew away like a feather
Your voice, your stories, your humor, and even the unconventional jokes - left, gone, vanished
My friends theories range and vary
"There was someone else, he was lying, he has commitment issues, he panicked,"
Even to, "the time is wrong astrologically, he's inexperienced in relationships, avoidant attachment,"
And there is the problem: I am theorizing. I simply stopped hearing from you. I am still a wreck
Despite never getting answers, I still think so fondly of you
And I hope you find peace with whatever comes your way
While I hope to put to rest my hurt and grief one day
It might not be soon, but it will happen...
... When I make new memories to soften the ones we made
Because I still had so much fun
And we had a wonderful run
At the Bucktown Pub

JESSICA GAVRILOVSKI

Shoe Store

I always have a chip on my shoulder
I know it's not the best way to walk about
But when weather and hearts grow colder
At least I'm prepared for the drought
I'm always waiting for the other shoe to drop
As that has become a metaphor for my life
The only roadblock in my mind reads, "stop!"
And my god, does that bitch cut like a knife
The voice in my head tell me there's no point
Not in anyone, or in anything
And here's the cruelty... that voice never disappoints
From her, I have yet to be left hanging by a string
Running into you, I didn't really think too much
Just let myself go with the flow
Turns out, we weren't just a crutch
We were the stars of our two-person show
I wasn't waiting for a shoe to fall
It felt good to leave the shoe store
Instead, I started waiting for phone calls
You, me, and running hand in hand out the door
One, two, three... I blinked and I'm back
Searching through an endless sea
Here, there, elsewhere... plenty of racks
Hanging by a string, wondering, "how could this be?"
Turns out, I never did leave the shoe store
The selection just got more deceiving
I wish I could recall what life was like before
When my heart knew more than grieving

JESSICA GAVRILOVSKI

J e s s i c a

is a Chicago transplant who was born and raised in the suburbs of Metro Detroit, but has deep roots in Macedonia. Among other things, she is a writer, singer, hiker, dog mom, and enjoys traveling and exploring many different creative outlets. Primarily, she writes about her own life and personal experiences.

WHITNEY CHIJI

Love Struck!

Tinkle, Smash

Tinkle, Smash

The broken glass shattered on the floor, a roll of mirrors facing me on both sides leading towards a pathway.

Tinkle, Smash,

I hear the mirror burst into tiny pieces as I run through

Smash, Smash, Smash, Smash

My pace gets faster as I run further into the pathway. I feel the glass on my skin but it doesn't pierce through. I keep pacing, running through the pathway I see a bright light. It gets brighter as I get closer, I feel it consume me.

"Honey, it's breakfast time" my husband calls out.

Alarm Sounds

I open my eyes from my slumber and to my amazement, my nephew is pointing his superhero flash lights directly into my eyes. "Aunty wakes up, it almost breakfast time".

My husband had just recently bought him his new action figure, four in one pack which explains the flash lights. Too stunned to speak, I wipe my sleepy eyes with my right palm. "Sorry Aunty, I had to find gentle ways to wake you up. Uncle said it was breakfast soon".

WHITNEY CHIJI

Snuggled in my blanket, I look at him sitting on top of my blanket, dimples on his face, and curly hair, how could I be mad at him? I pull him closer for a tight hug. Tell Uncle, "I'd be there" and "Wifey wants her eggs however hubby is making his." He runs along downstairs and I can hear his rush of excitement. Hey Uncle, Aunty is awake and she said "Wifey wants her eggs however hubby is making his." He laughs out loud with so much joy like I just made his day.

I hear giggles from the stairs and my cheeks turn red smiling through my teeth, I know those giggles when I hear them the ones that let me know he's having a good time with me in his thoughts. Steps on the stairs, I snuggle back in bed. "Rise and Shine", he calls out. Bringing me breakfast with a peck on the forehead, a peck on the cheeks, a peck on the nose and kisses on the lips. " Good morning babe, breakfast is served by yours truly". 'How's my favourite girl doing?' 'God! How did I get so blessed he calls out'', leaning further for a deeper kiss.

As the morning light gently filtered through the curtains, I couldn't help but smile at the warmth of the scene unfolding around me. My husband's loving and caring nature never failed to fill my heart with gratitude. The way he embraced each moment with tenderness and affection was a reminder of the love that surrounded us. His playful banter and thoughtful gestures made me feel cherished and appreciated.

In that peaceful moment, amidst the sounds of morning chatter and the aroma of breakfast wafting through the air, I knew that I was exactly where I was meant to be—surrounded by love, laughter, and the warmth of family.

WHITNEY CHIJI

Springy

Out on a Sunday,

Sitting on the bench, basking in the sun.

Scents of aromatic nature rest on my nostrils.

My melanin soaks in it's shine,

Glistening, I gaze at the pine tree

inhale, exhale,

Puff, puff,

Inhale, exhale,

Sweet silence of peace,

With more glass in my wine, I alert the waiter, "Excuse me, I'd like to top up."

"Same brand"? , "Yes, I respond softly. "Would you like to try snack board?" "No, Wine will do". I respond assertively. A minute later, A fresh glass was brought to my table.

Glittered heels, crossed legs, a short skirt, a tank top, a leather jacket, and a miniature purse were the mood of the morning. "Don't you dare" A man yells out just a few tables across from me. Grey pants suits, polo shirt, and pointed nose about average height. "Who" a woman yells out, "it can't be me". "Now listen here, she leans forward not fidgeting. "Let this be the last time you speak to me in such a tone". To his disbelief, he couldn't even utter a sound.

WHITNEY CHIJI

I gaze at the table for a long second and turn away. Marriage! What a joke it's become, well to some. It's divorce after divorce after divorce after divorce that's all you hear these days but only the ones who listen to the voices of marriage for its true nature will know and understand that marriage can be a source of joy, love, happiness and mutual support but it takes two to tango. In simple terms, it's two people doing the work which involves honesty, communication, trustworthiness, loyalty and other basic shit that seems hard to do but truly it's the bare minimum. Your partner should want to do that and more but society is never ready for that conversation.

Springy

"Water"? The waiter suggests, "Yes, I'll get the bill". I bring my card out of my miniature glitter-themed purse flashing the bow to the front and tap away.

"Thanks" he addresses, "My Pleasure" I inject.

Off and away I go,

Dazzling Into the sunset,

Tapping my feet to the rhythm of the sand.

A Blissful Sunday Indeed.



Bay of Blood

"If you asked me to tell you the plot of any given Mario Bava film, I don't think I could...the films are simply too entrancing."

Martin Scorsese said that, and Mario Bava's *Bay of Blood* (1971) brings those words to sumptuous life.

You might think it's strange calling a film titled *Bay of Blood* "sumptuous," but then you might not know Mario Bava, either. He began directing with *Black Sunday* (1960) ¹, about a witch's vengeance all steeped in black-and-white. It was atmospheric enough, but it was his 1964 film *Blood and Black Lace* that pointed to a new kind of horror filmmaking, one flooded with morbid glamour. Literally: it concerned a string of killings in a fashion house all under a Technicolor dreamcoat of colored lighting lined with pockets of light and dark. This didn't happen by accident, or by hard work alone. No, Bava came from a lineage of sculptors and his father Eugenio was also a hidden architect of early Italian cinema, photographing and providing pioneering optical effects for 1913's *Quo Vadis?* (Rodin called it a masterpiece) and additional effects for *Cabiria* (1914). As Mario said of his father, "We are indebted to him for some of the loveliest images of the Italian silent cinema."²

So by the time of *Bay of Blood*, Bava possessed an overwhelming richness of cinema and its techniques, its allure. Now he wanted to have some fun. At the time, a stylish and violent brand of Italian thriller called gialli (a genre Bava created with 1963's *La ragazza che sapeva troppo* AKA *The Girl Who Knew Too Much*) throttled audiences worldwide after a rip-snorting Roman named Dario Argento tore the lid off the giallo again with his debut *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (1970). But even that film had only one lousy killer, like so many other gialli. Could Bava do better?

Around this time screenwriter Dardano Sacchetti, on the rebound from Argento after a pay dispute on his second film, began talks with Bava. Then came the idea: what if they made a flick where everyone was the killer? This nugget of nihilism became *Bay of Blood*, about a bunch of loathsome jerks (some greedy, some just unpleasant) fighting over a prime bit of bay real estate. In all, 13 murders would be committed in 85 minutes. It was Bava's goriest film.



And one of his prettiest. Here Bava unwound his repertoire as compellingly as ever: *chiaroscuro*, prowling tracking shots, eye-catching zooms, and all that succulent colored lighting. Bava also shot the film, turning it into a sort of moving museum – so many shots could hang in a gallery. He also deployed a striking technique of pulling an object – an eye, a knife – from 1
Technically, it was 1957's *I Vampiri*, co-directed (uncredited) with Riccardo Freda. This is also considered the first Italian horror film. 2 Lucas, Tim. *Mario Bava: All the Colors of the Dark*. Cincinnati, *Video Watchdog*, 2007, p. 40. blurry abstraction into baleful, acute focus. Most impressive, perhaps, is Bava furnished all this eye candy under duress: this was a basement-budget film and Bava used a child's wagon for the tracking shots and the "forest" was just a few well-placed branches held just off camera! But you'd never know, such were his powers.

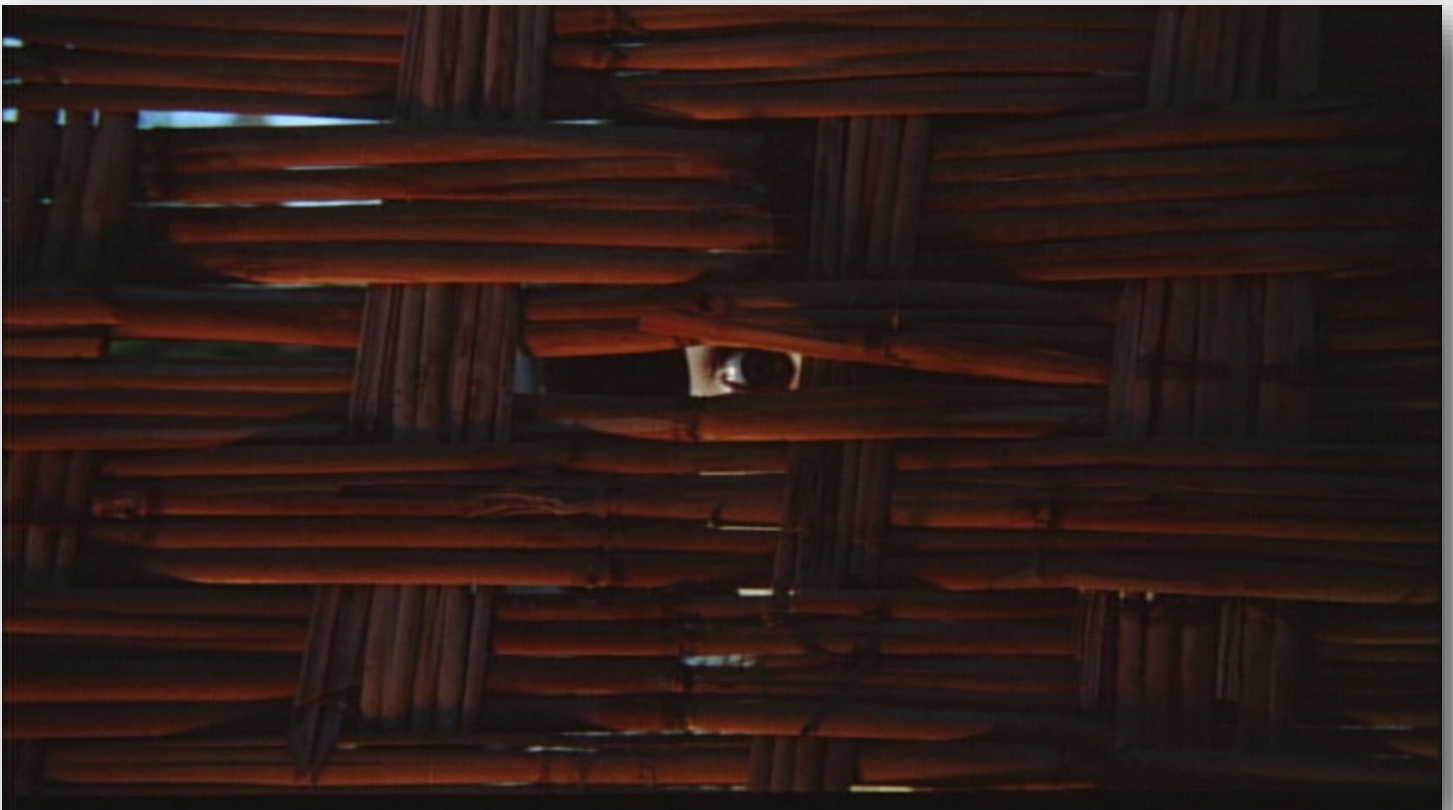


As you're enraptured by all this skill and lush cinema, Bava pours on the killings: stabbings, a beheading, and one double-murder that gives new meaning to the term "double penetration." The murders slash like a switchblade into the expressive silk of the visuals and may register as vulgar next to them. But remember violence has often featured in art – blood is beautifully red – and while Bava's violence unsheathes itself around art, it's not art itself like some of Argento's elaborate butchery. The murders last seconds and often slip by without music; this would be unthinkable in an Argento film. The muted mayhem actually cranks up

Bava's trademark cynicism, blackened to perfection here: these dopes don't even deserve music or a socko set piece. Only after the murders does Stelvio Cipriani's sweetly condescending score sometimes waft over with occasional shots of the still and unfeeling beauty of the bay as if to say, "humans are such stupid asswipes." This running together of high art and low people will make it hard for those who can't decide if they love or hate humans.

And so there you have it: everyone killing everyone in a profusion of chiaroscuro and refined cinema, all laced with rat-poisoned cynicism.

Bravi, tutti!



GABRIELA AYALA

Poem 21.

I will join the countless souls, poets, writers and musicians in the-perhaps-futile attempt to define love:

I am me, and you are you. And together we continue to be and we are more.

Love humbles you, it revendicates you, it calls you by your name pronouncing all the syllables, like tribal drums, like golden trumpets, loud and clear on a glorious day.

It sits you down at the head of the table, it serves you generously, until your belly is full, you have the certainty that you are an important guest.

But love is not eternal, or static, it's not carved in stone like a monolith, like a statue frozen in time, unchanged.

It is like water that runs freely, like the river and the sea that always find each other.

Like the moon that changes its shape but continues to be the moon, even when we do not see it.

Like a tree that blooms and bears fruit, shelters you in its shade and grows roots,

Even when the most voracious winter comes, and it loses all of its leaves, a peach tree continues to be a peach tree.

We have all fallen in love before, we know the feeling -- remember?

It swallows you whole, it lifts you up, to the summit of the highest mountain.

It reminds you of who you are.

GABRIELA AYALA

Love Is a Good Guest

I met Love

opened the door

pulled a chair, sat it at my table, and kept it company.

We spoke of tanned skins, black hair, and brown eyes.

We spoke of summer and rain, of white curtains blown by the wind, and the chirping of birds in the early morning

We listened to Brazilian songs, and Soviet-era waltzes,

unlike what you may think, Love does not know how to dance, it has two left feet.

Love is a better listener than a talker but recites poems like no one else

Love feels like the present, volatile

you could meet love 100 times, but it is always new

Saying goodbye was as hard as ever,

Love is a good guest, I am now cleaning after a party in its honor.

GABRIELA AYALA

Dear Young Women

Take your insecurities

and bury them,

you will grow

peace lilies

so tall

you will forget the war

you declared against yourself.

Or beautiful red roses

so magnificent

you won't even notice the thorns.

Perfection is poison,

you are not meant to die,

not like that

Sister!

stare at the sun

blindness may dignify your decision

to not see

your own flawed holiness.

GABRIELA AYALA

Manifesto

I possess nothing

naught that I can take with me.

The Land sustains me at every coordinate

leave some apples on the tree for those behind me

are they not hungry too?

No lofty titles

sir, madam, priest, or monarch

all flesh rots after a day.

No gods

that demand the bloodshed of my kin,

no pillars of salt, water turning into blood, or claims upon the earth,

the stars can guide me towards the north but not towards destiny nor the divine.

No masters

beholden to neither flag, or gold

I wield the words I summon,

my only possession, the echo of a conjuring,

they resound like triumphant trumpets.

Like the Salmon, I reconcile with no stream

I chain myself not to honor, or glory.

GABRIELA AYALA

**Anger is a blessing
harnessed like a kite
surfing violent waves that may otherwise drown me,
I am,
in the present
and when I cease to be
I shall dwell in the memory of those who recall me
as the seed, and the water,
the plow, and the soil,
the words digested,
inherited.
When I depart, I will carry nothing with me
no gods, no masters.**

CHRISTEN FOSTER

Shifting Tides

The shifting tides of change washed over me like a tidal wave.

It was in that moment of chaos and uncertainty that I found my voice,
rising above turmoil with a clarity and conviction that I never knew I had.

The event carved a new path within me,
reshaping the very core of my being,
leading me on a journey of self-discovery and transformation.

And as I stand here today,
a testament to resilience and growth,
I carry with me the echoes of that pivotal moment that changed me forever.

As I stand here today,
a testament to resilience A warrior forged in the fire of adversity

I rise from the ashes,
broken but unyielding

With scars as my story,
each mark a reminder Of the battles fought and won,
of the strength within I am a monument of survival,
in my brokenness,

I found my might I stand tall,
unwavering,

CHRISTEN FOSTER

unbroken I am poetry words felt the ink has spoken

Scars are not just marks on our skin,

but stories etched into the story of where I been.

They are the landmarks of resilience and survival.

Each scar tells a chapter of the journey,

a reminder of strength and scarsdness.

Let me trace my scars with words,

Sentences not to long and metaphors that stand strong

let my poetry breathe life into the wounds that have shaped me,

let my story be told in the language of scars rhythm and rhyme

Like the shifting tides.

CHRISTEN FOSTER

Woven In Lines

**Woven in lines, a tapestry divine,
Threads of time and space intertwine,
Each strand a story, each pattern a tale,
in this fabric of life, we all prevail.
Connections bind us, in colors bright,
Weaving together our days and our nights,
In the warp and weft, we find our way,
Each verse a thread that binds the
fabric of expression,
creating a tapestry of beauty and
meaning that speaks to the soul.
In the hands of a skilled poet,
words are crafted into a work of art
that resonates with readers,
like a river of authenticity and vulnerability,
Flows a current vibration that carries the weight of our
innermost feelings. Evoking powerful images of
free-flowing, unfiltered expressed emotions
and experiences through the art of spoken word.
This phrase suggests an unapologetic and genuine
form of storytelling that dives deep into the depths
of human essence,
inviting listeners to connect
on a profound level through the unfiltered lens of peace,
Prosperity and poetry.**

DANICA I. LEPOJEVIKJ

Into the Realm of the Fool

**" Welcome to this court,
this castle, my king! "
said a beautiful creature
on a throne of a queen.
Standing in the mist,
in the middle of a twist
and turn between a woodland and a wall,
and a paper and a stone,
she was a dream and a dawn,
a pure existence on her own.
A drop of shine
captured in-between the sleazy line
and the vicious mind
of the fairy-ruler of the maimed undermined.
But she was delightfully obscene
and dainty intriguing
daunting your everything
in the middle of this scene
of your life and obliving being.**

DANICA I. LEPOJEVIKJ

But you liked it
and hook was tossed
and it was too late
because now...
the night is near to her end
and she said:
"You can be played,
you know, just like me"
she turned her other cheek to thee...
crying, smiling, squinting,
grinding with her teeth
words
and tremblings
she showed her chains and manacles beneath
her knees
and around her ankles
and her feet.
When time came

and only dust of the down remain
a slight whisper fall to your ear
before she disappeared
in the layer of a lace and ice
"I was captured twice..."
And sadly, you knew:
Though she shone like a jewel
she was not a queen, but rather a fool.

DANICA I. LEPOJEVIKJ

Just a little relief...

Well you do

I know that you do

you really do...

You know how I feel

deep down in my heart

in my soul

in my core

in my very bone.

You do!...

So why don't you just say something

just a whisper

just a sigh...?

Why don't you just give me some kind of sign?

There is no "yes"...

or a "no",

not even some kind of "maybe so"...

So

I actually never know

is there a glimpse of hope

for my forevermore,

or should I be drowned in despair right away

and dream no more?

So please,

just - please,

because I am strong

but I do have a soul,

please

show me

with just a hint

how do you actually feel in your core.

DANICA I. LEPOJEVIKJ

Pale Pink Petals

Bright and shy
Birth and shine
A little dot of morning divine.
Tiny flower kissed by light
Made of dawn in blush and white...
A dash of winter on the almond tree
The first sigh of spring that you can see
Among the waves of concrete sea
And bare branches.
You will look for an omen
You will look for a sign
But among the pale pink petals
Look for an earthly Shooting Star.
That spark is your mark:
She will lead you through the last winter's dark.

Danica I. Lepojevikj is a Macedonian poet, working as Transformational and Birthing Mentor, educated as psychologist, yoga instructor, doula and breastfeeding counselor. All of her experience is always incorporated into her poetic worldview, as well as her enthusiasm for life, joy without reason, everyday magic and the beauty of the moment. She can be found as Danica Disrupt on social media.

She has published 3 books: two poetry collection "Shine and Fear and Poems" (Сјај и страв и песни) in 2016, "Residences" (Пребивалишта) in 2019, and a hybrid work that combines poetry, private journal clippings, and Instagram reels named "Rains in May – sublime emotions with two teaspoons of honey" (Дождови во мај – сублимирани емоции со две лажички мед) in 2023. Her first prose book of short-short stories "One night another – snippets of daily magic" (Една ноќ друга – исечоци катадневна магија) will be published in May, 2024.

DANICA I. LEPOJEVIKJ

LITTLE SOMETHING ABOUT MACEDONIAN CONTEMPORARY POETRY

After a long period of stagnation, poetry in Macedonia in the last fifteen years is regaining the position it deservedly held on the literary scene after the Second World War.

Building on the lineage of well-educated and articulate poetic voices that on the one hand kept the tradition through social poetry, and on the other carried the flows of modernism and surrealism, the new current of younger poets is quickly adapting to the trends in the world.

New voices flirt with language and style, rush with the rhythm of the ferocity of slam and experiment, but also feel deeply through salon lyrical poetry and haiku. Poets of the current generation actively create and often combine their work with performance, music, and painting.

Presently, many poetry events and festivals are active in Macedonia. Some have a decades-long tradition on the world stage ("Struga poetry evenings" & "Racin's meetings"), and some, although appeared in recent years, in a short period have created a stable poetic core ("Astal projektions" and "Poetry Slam Macedonia"). An additional confirmation of the need to create urgent, deeply experiential, current and activist-engaged poetry are the numerous poets who are active participants on the international scene, as well as the festivals that are part of the international poetry networks ("1000 Poets for Change, "Poetry Slam Macedonia" and "Woman Scream").

Composers, arrangers, instrumentalists, performers – recently, Third Coast Percussion keeps on proving that they are one of the most exciting musical acts with a constantly evolving repertoire – anywhere. The quartet is based in Chicago and their local residencies run 4 – 6 local shows. Naturally, every performance is unique. They specialize in contemporary classical music but it is virtually impossible to qualify the performance as anything but boundary expanding, daring, and masterful.

I attended two Third Coast Percussion concerts in the past six months and both times were remarkable. It is the way the group works the stage, the way they play the unlimited - limited medium of rhythm, percussion, and sound instruments. The musical selections include their own arrangements of Philip Glass works, selections from the best contemporary composers such as Jessie Montgomery (another Chicago gem) or works from emerging musicians. And it all seems to work at an exceptionally high and inspired level.

If you have heard them live, you know they blow any ideas of what a percussion quartet might be right out of the water. Not only in terms of music but also in terms of choreography. Yes, that's right – they shift around the stage and a series of percussive contraptions throughout their shows. Another characteristic, every member of the ensemble has a moment with the audience. Each as if he were running the show at a given moment. This radical equality of the band members only adds to the already transformative music.

Third Coast Percussions music performance showcases mastery of a classical structures and classical musical grammar, yet they sound fresh, surprising, and completely engaging. Is it despite of or because of their very contemporary yet strangely relatable style? Third Coast Percussion takes ensemble performance to a new level of greatness. And sound adventure.

Link to Third Coast Percussion's arrangement of Philip Glass' piece "Japurá River"

[Third Coast Percussion | "Japurá River" by Philip Glass \(youtube.com\)](#)

KINGA LIPINSKA

ANCESTOR, OR SO I HEAR

my remote ancestor, or so I hear
glazed dark moist places
with undulating rippling
in the likeness of life
living and searching

I have a feel for your signal
it raises upwards
you are - plankton the neurotransmitter
stuck to its many-same-selves and floating

plankton my uncle, rifling along
in the likeness of my little self-boat on the sea of living

no, we find no discernible beginning
no ending
to the bodies
our bodies, organized into
sides
planes
memories

KINGA LIPINSKA

ANEMONE

(a la Lorca)

Anemone -

i am dying to see your

your sweet face

those blushed colored petals of your cheeks

that perfectly belie your cruel and lying heart

i am dying to see you again my

moon flavored lover

your disappearing act

I already forgave

I want to forget, because

anemone - i am dying to see you

enchanted bird

running stag

you impossible fish

I am dying to bite

the blood orange

of your tongue.

KINGA LIPINSKA

IDOL LOVE

I think I've worshiped at the wrong altar
for a long time
a life-digression that I have not intended
a blasphemy that has quickened my spirit - by mistake.

I was the fastest runner to the precipice.

epiphany and heartbreak came together
a deep fissure opened in my soul
a crevasse breathing ice in my mind

YES, I've worshiped at the altar of YOU for way too long

seeking life in your idol eyes
seeking compassion in your idol arms
asking for love from your idol heart

I have not hurried to abandon my illusions.

what I sought with you, saved my life –
but it was not you and I did not know it.
what I found with you, broke and humbled me –
but it was not you and I did not know it.

I am no longer putting flowers at the altar of the plastic god
I am no longer kneeling at that altar straining my ears for hollow words
I have turned my eyes away and
gave myself rest from the stupor of hope.

I have stopped my legs
from walking towards that altar of you again.
The big fallacy I have made for myself
has been disassembled.

Your false image has been covered.

The flowers are no more. The candles are no more.
The light is no more.

I am not afraid that
the insects come crawling
that the wood is gathering dust
that the flowers have withered and fallen apart
on the altar I built for you in my mind

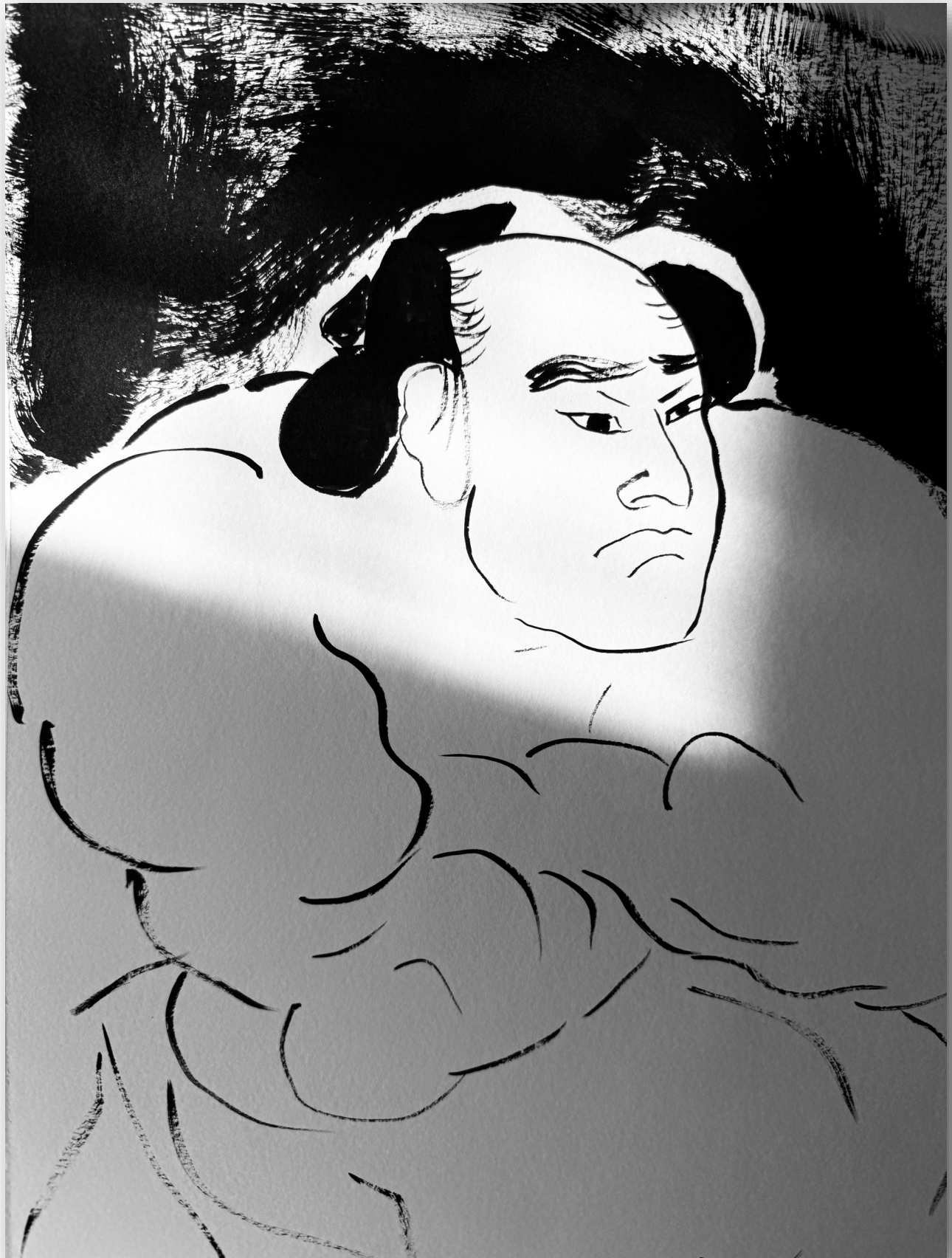
I have opened my eyes
I am strange in that room
in that empty dwelling
in that dilapidated chapel
without false gods.

KINGA LIPINSKA



All Things Considered. Ink drawing inspired by Edo Period Japanese Prints, 2024.

KINGA LIPINSKA



Waiting His Turn—Sumo Wrestler. Japanese ink and brush drawing inspired by Edo Period Japanese Prints, 2024.

MADELINE WIERZAL

Another Moment For Our File, Archived

Skin so soft of someone beloved
that even as a summer sweltering
starts to build between to two
of us, it feels sweet enough
to stay in place. This small flavor
of warmth and slightly sweaty
contentment.

MADELINE WIERZAL

Now, with only a few stings
of embers and candle sized flames
to lick and pinch out
I can take stock.
The questions still here,
like me, singed and crooked
but still standing,
and I
did not let go of your hand.

MADLINE WIERZAL

Somebody With Me

Bodies on bodies
and bodies of
every permutation
of each curve and cut
of muscle, fat, flesh
the hands that grasp the
who and when and why.
It all drives the chorus
to grow louder, more vicious,
"Repressed, slut, prude,
whore, confused, cold,
fake-gay -straight or -bi."
that floods my insides,
from my soles on up
to my hair, no air.
The only thing for it,
late evening walks
on late evening walks,
the beat of my feet
sounding like thunder.
I use small mantras,
song lyrics, snatches,

MADLINE WIERZAL

from Indigo Girls
on to Mitski,
to strengthen my step,
to find my way towards
a clearing, a day
when the great weight
of expectations,
each relationship's
gravity melt away,
the chorus quiets, and
allows me to touch
each body and soul
as they come to me.
One by one, one on one,
standalone in that never lonely
singularity.

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Love to Write and Make Art.**

**To submit work for
consideration, contact:
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The Prairie Review

Kinga Lipinska, Editor

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