



THE PRAIRIE REVIEW

ISSUE NO. 11 AUGUST 2024

GRASSROOTS MAGAZINE OF POETRY, PROSE, ART AND CRITICISM

SPECIAL FEATURE

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VISUAL ART

Gregory Muenzen

FILM CRITICISM & ESSAY

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Christen Foster



WELCOME TO THE 11TH ISSUE OF THE PRAIRIE REVIEW

We are pleased to present to you a great summer edition filled with creative output from members of the Poetry Meetup as well as friends of friends, readers, and online followers from near and far!

Take your time browsing poems, drawings, and prose pieces featured in the magazine. When The Prairie Review was founded it was our dreams to showcase new and emerging writers, to launch artistic debuts, and to keep an eye on the unknown or lesser known creatives. I am happy to say that this issue debuts writing of Fraser Clark from the UK and essays of Jupi Bowen. All poetry will be worth your time, but reading John Garza's and Greg Harrell's work will be extra rewarding.

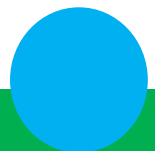
We continue with live poetry events every month starting again on September 21 at the Comfort Station in Chicago —please keep an eye on the Poetry Meetup calendar to see what is in the works.

And on a final note, I would like to heartily thank everyone who submitted their work for the August Edition! You make the magazine come alive and you are an inspiration.

Keep making art!

Kinga Lipinska

Editor



**All art is contemporary, if it's alive,
and if it's not alive, what's the point of it?**

- David Hockney



Hockney Portrait, Kinga Lipinska. Ink / marker on paper, 2024.

10 Excerpts from The Catullus Journals

A Fragmented Year in the Life of an Awkward Man with Commentary from the Author's Cat (Frida)

One

a man eats alone at Chipotle,
the only butt on a leather pad for miles
spotlight fixed on the nuclear football
rolled by a DG North tight end
lost in an online sinkhole
he won't remember in three days
playing Russian Roulette with his stomach,
because who even cares at this point?
if he stepped into oncoming traffic,
his acid blood would be the only proof
he was ever here...

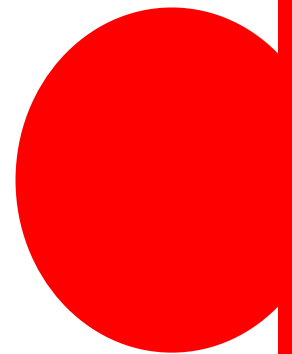
Frida: this another self-portrait?



Two

Union Station After Hours

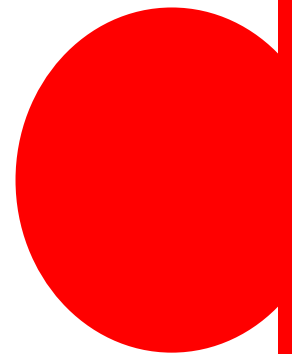
on the black lemonade of a summer night,
it takes a lot of effort not to leap
into the Chicago River
as the buildings stretch like coffins
for something unknowable and gleaming,
the goddamn escalators stop running



Three

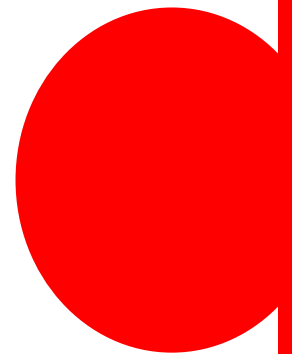
Opening Move: What brings you to Bumble in 2024? Select however many apply—

- (1) bots are more approachable than people offline
- (2) everything else about me is already uploaded
- (3) to piss on the chalk outline left of modern romance
- (4) to scam or be scammed
- (5) a compulsive need for amateur nudity
- (6) because the right grainy apartment selfie is out there somewhere
- (7) to show off all the places my passport has been stamped
- (8) seeking bearded wineskin light on his feet (dad jokes a MUST)
- (9) to vomit my self-worth through my eye sockets
- (10) because COVID ruined everything – even things that already sucked



Four

2024 election forecast:
the grim reaper's foreskin
will lose the popular vote,
but win a decisive electoral victory
with the supreme court's help
he will celebrate by consuming
an entire jar of mayonnaise,
so that he might be as white
and miserable on the inside
as he looks outside



Five

Vegas in three images:

(1) a busy neon conservatory,
whose flora only blooms

at night

(2) a series of interconnected
garbage chutes all ending

in the same landfill

(3) a wallet squirting

blood from every orifice

Frida: you're just bitter

that the most skin you saw

this week was at a drag buffet—

that you can still feel the cold

sweats of a champagne bucket

running down your leg



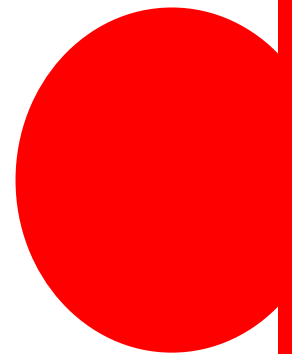
Six

the heart is a hornet's nest—
or maybe it's a sunken ship
trying to raise itself
from a self-made abyss
or maybe it's an old man
who hasn't walked in years
trying to outdance machine gunfire
or maybe it's yet another bomb
that slowly poisons
if the blast doesn't kill
or maybe it's a fallen apple
with flies nesting
in its yellow sores
or maybe it's the corpse of some
eldritch terror whose bones make
pretty noise if you know where to strike



Seven

I should make a plaster
mold of my face, so I have
somewhere to pour the melted
goo at the end of my shift
Frida: why pour the facemelt
into a mold when you could
just do it over your existing skull?
because things
don't need to make sense
when you're dead

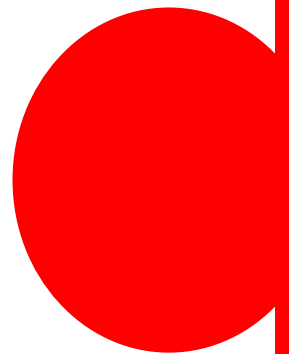


Eight

Variation on a Gu Cheng Poem:

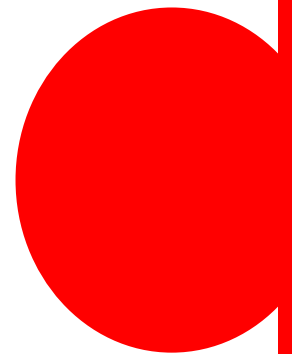
the times gave me a pair of earth-tone eyes

that see as much red as they reflect



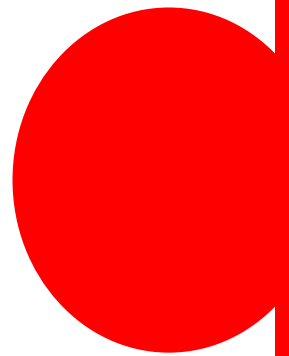
Nine

in a teal brick room
under Wolcott,
I opened all
seven chambers
of my heart
and let their contents
spew onto your bed
your Spanish bulls
saw the mess
oozing from my rib—
the red batter
caked under my nails—
and sank deeper
into their vorpal hell
how easily these rooms
forget what they held—
the sinews now
hardened into scales



Ten

emerging from the summer
rain after midnight,
cicada shells stuck
to my blue soled feet





Short Stories of
Fraser A.B. Clark,
Cambridge UK
by Arman Nabatiyan

On 20th March 2021 my dearest and beloved friend Fraser A. B. Clark passed away after losing his ongoing struggle with colorectal cancer. He was aged 36.

Fraser was a person of intense and esteemed admiration of mine, since the very early days of our mutual acquaintance when we were both students at the University of Cambridge, England.

A few weeks prior to his passing, while paralyzed in bed, with deteriorating eyesight, limited movement and experiencing intense pain, Fraser shared and subsequently bequeathed to me a volume of his work, namely a collection of expressive, modernist, minimalist short stories that he had never publicized previously. After reviewing his work, I was greatly struck by his beautiful articulation, energy and artistry and found his scope of writing to be of extraordinary, inspiring and profound literary significance.



Mr Rogers had never amounted to much. He was just chief engineer at NASA, coordinating the agency's upcoming moon shot – the first manned voyage for nearly fifty years. Not to the surface mind, just around and back again. A figure of eight. Blast off, swing round that big silvery orb, and swing on back home again. Just gravity, and Instagram.

The main passengers on that flight were all high-profile social media influencers. Fashion queens, makeup stars, pranksters, lords of memes, and people who played computer games for a living.

From Buzz Aldrin, from Gagarin, the legends, to this. Blast a bunch of kids around and back again. Not poets or scientists, novelists, nationalists, religious leaders, real world changers... but kids. Just kids.

He headed down to engineering, to the labs where the real work was done. He'd visit now and then, he was a regular. "How's it chief?" As you were engineer. How's the solenoid? Installed? "Sure. Calibration unit's hooked up, we're almost done here." Great job.

Great job. He wandered over, wandered around. They were used to it. The solenoid was a key piece of kit. It was connected to some finely tuned gyroscopes which detected the gravity of the moon, and fed this back through the calibration unit to the solenoid, tripping it and triggering the return booster stage at just the right moment. It was critical. If that solenoid failed, and if its backup failed, they were away, gone forever more.

Four weeks to go.

The media storm was frenzied. Tens of millions of followers. Updates, confessionals, tears and excitement. And in the background, Mr Rogers ruling the roost. Those... children, he thought. How they smiled. Was this what it was for? Was this all it amounted to? All this science, all these decades of work – for these kids? Waltzing in. Not a damned clue what they were getting into. How it worked. Science. There were no statues to scientists. Euler! Did they even know? Gauss. Jesus. Gauss. Bernoulli. In the name of God! These were titans. Titans of all we know... all we are. The levers they built for us to – to what? To... charm billions with our latest... unboxing? Haul? Was that the word? A haul from a shop, digitised, transmitted. Semi-conductor physics... they had no idea.

No. no idea. Oh, oh, but they would.

Blast off came. Up they went. Live streamed of course. Close ups on smiling, scared faces. They were so scared, so human. They'd never even heard of Robert Rogers. They had no idea at all. Then deceleration, and space flight, and the q-and-a's, the zero gravity fun and games, the tears, the anxiety. "Oh my god, I think I'm having a panic attack," said one, as he watched from his favourite bar, after work. But then the person teared up, awed by the scale of the universe, and all was well. He chuckled. Not long.

The whole round trip takes about 6 days, give or take. Only, not in this instance. They approached the moon. More tears, more panic attacks, more awe. It was awful. One of them was a cellist, a poor player by professional standards, but attractive enough personally to make a living as a social media star. He was playing Bach as the craft started its solitary half-orbit, his long fringe moving with so much sincerity. He was very sincere. The make-up tutorial person wouldn't stop crying, or holding the camera up to his face, talking. A boutique owner preened herself in the background. A couple of other young women, faces fixed, all made up for the moment.

And then it happened. Rogers had dimmed the calibration. The gyroscopes would never trigger. The solenoid never click on. It was now. The real show was about to begin.

The universe didn't care. It didn't follow anyone. Didn't like or dislike, or make that laughing whilst-crying-too emoji. It had never seen a meme in its life. Nor a troll. You couldn't troll the universe. Nothing meant anything. It was irrelevant, the fact that there, off the silent moon of a small blue planet, a rocket ship flew a bit too fast. From their own point of view though, it was terrifying. Nobody wants to be lost in space. Nobody wants to drift out into certain death. Nobody wants to face the prospect of starvation, or madness, or cannibalism? It's a bad look. How would they go down? How would they suffer?

Robert Rogers sat on the bar stool, savouring the light beer, and the livestreams all around. One by one they cracked. Freaked out. Not tears. No. This was real. He took a deep breath, smiled. They were screaming. But it wouldn't be cut off. This was everything, just now. This was everywhere. Every shop window, public space, private space, everyone was glued to this. There was no way they could cut it off. That drama was everyone's drama. He smiled. Paid up. Left a tip, left.

Opened the old Ford and drove away. The sight of people. Horror in their eyes. Messages flying around. "Did you see..?" "Are you watching... ?" The whole world was engulfed in panic. He drove back to work. A press conference. What had happened? They would want to know.

"My name is Robert Rogers. I am the chief science engineer from operation moonshot. [pause. His words would be iconic. Whatever he said now. This was his moment. Don't smile. Don't ruin it]. This is a nightmare scenario. There is no hope whatsoever. The people you see live behind me - will perish. Not now, not tomorrow, but soon. They are alone now."

"What has happened is a catastrophe. An investigation will be held. It is all we can do. Perhaps one day, when humans are colonising distant planets, this rocket ship will be recovered. But most likely not. Most likely it will disappear on its current trajectory. Floating away forever. On behalf of NASA and the America people, I apologise."

He took no questions. He tendered his resignation. He drove home.

The moon was high and full. Mid Summer. Warm. He opened another beer and eased down into the lounge by the pool, laying there, looking up. Up there, twelve people were going insane. Shitting themselves. He looked on, detached. The beer tasted good.

And what of up there, up in that tin can, vessel of all humanity's focus and hope, and horror. Prayer meetings were being held en masse in public spaces, candles lit, tearful vox pops from appalled pre-teens, parents too

He lay there. Gazing up at the warm Summer's night, and suffered a heart attack.

Beyond the pale and gravid moon
Beyond the heavy autumn of the sky
Beyond the fallen harvest of stars
Beyond the seasons of right and wrong
A light catches along the sheer of your face
With time, brightness and beauty become full
The heart then regains its strength
The soul is poised, and youth refreshed
The weakness of yesterday is forgotten
As in the new hope of you I am cradled
In the sunrise of your gaze I live again.

When the seas have no tides
When the sun is emptied of light
When the sky is void of stars
I will stop loving you
When air becomes vacant of breath
When the kiss of land is unknown by life
When the earth's core unfolds to cold dust
I will stop my dreams of you
Until the bareness of nothing becomes everything
You are my One, my Love, my All.

It is night at last
Come to the roof my beloved
Come to the roof and steal these stars from me
These starry eyes of yours that I glance at
They make my heart shy and homesick
Longing to lead me to the kingdom of love.
These upward gazes of stars and moon and heaven
Have no compare to my image of you
Come and steal these stars
Be the night sky for me forever.

When I speak of you, my tongue is on fire
When this fragile heart thinks of you, it is ablaze
So why not set my soul to the flame as well
And love me, unite,
Be one with me
In mind and soul and heart.
Across the landscape of naked time
Be the robe of my desire and want
I will wait patiently like a stone
In this desert of burning hopes
Until you lift me up to your lips
And breathe eternal life in me
In the oasis of your loving heart.

The heart heard something
It is your voice
The heart said something
It is your name
Between the wanting ears and that voice
Is the love that bathes in me
And gives me courage to want you
Someone be reasonable and explain to my heart
To neither speak nor hear
But only feel and be still
Whenever this desire opens up.

If Beauty had measure and a name
If Love, by vicissitudes, played not its game
If Heart held power its dreams to not abstain
Then by these I swear, and always true remain
To you of one Beauty and Measure and Name.



Allen Nguyen

Travel Writing

Dinner in Mai Chau

Somehow, I found myself in the home of a Tay Đón (White Tay tribe) woman that I've only known for a week, eating dinner with her family. Finally, real home cooking. It served as a nice break from the restaurant meals and styrofoam-prison takeouts of my past month in Vietnam. And it was perfect, if perfection really is just a lot of small things done right. Fish sauce beat a dark yellowing into an omelette that sat at the center of the table, the hushed aroma of garlic hid in every corner of the room, and scallions spotted the surface as if describing their pungency: loud. Behind this yolky landscape was a dish of pork, cubed and blackened with soy sauce and lemongrass... The poor swine stood no chance against the little pigtailed girl kneeling in her pink plastic chair across from me. She inhaled the cubes quickly, because there was an even stronger hunger to return to coloring in some Pokemon sketches Steph had drawn in a notebook. The child paid no mind to the accompanying soup of mini eggplants, which exploded with crunch and seeds and acidity that cut through the intensity of the prior dishes. All the while, the lady only ate the pork, picking at the leanest cuts, leaving the seared juicy parts to the kids (Pigtails and I). Completely selfless. She was showing her compassion that night; silent because it was simple, yet moving, like low tides that slowly take from under

you. To think, she had been teaching Steph and I to weave for a whole week, with a floor loom passed down through many generations of women before her. And yet she never asked of us anything, except to join her for a meal. From time, you become aware of the love people will give so long as an honest effort for commonality is initiated by you. But perhaps I haven't lived honestly, because under my breath, I was wishing for a way out of this dinner.

My mind then could not accept the heart she'd shown us that night. It would've made more sense if she grew tired of our company and forced us out, but didn't. It made me uneasy. Looking back, I was filled with a sort of guilt; that in passing conversations about Vietnam, I've always done her wrong, because the words I've built against my own bad experiences in the country were also built against her. Behind those faces I recalled in malice, was her face as well. These feelings made me believe there was always a price to pay for kindness, and there was no sacrifice on my part to be worthy of this dinner. I was awkward in just accepting her invitation, saying I'll only eat one bowl. Then I ate another. Eating and eating and eating. Dinner grew longer, and so did my realization that I've been wrong. Accepting that the bad things in my life do not hold some kind of cosmic strength or universal truth or intense magnification, unable to be moved. They were just bad happenings, in my own little world, orbiting on the weight of the value I've put on them. Pressure waiting to be relieved.

To the Vietnamese diaspora like me, do not let what you've been told and your current impression keep you from seeing Vietnam in your own way. You have a negative framework of that part of you, because it hurt you before to find yourself on neither side of race or nation. Perhaps your Vietnamese is broken because no one cared enough to pass it on to you, or your childhood was hostile because of the shape of your eyes. And now you've shortchanged the country for what it actually can be: a place of beautiful lands and hearts even more; detached from your wickeds. And despite your solid stance, you still don't feel good about any of it. This may help you — if you have not willingly worked on some part of your life that you so critically, and quickly, expound on, then maybe it has never actually been critical to your life at all. If that is the case, then do not speak on it. At some point, you'll realize how you've spoken behind cowardice and without integrity, because of pain. And your words hold power. I mean, you too were fashioned by the words of others, so do not so decidedly project over a matter you simply do not care enough about. Come to your own opinion, good or bad, because the world is not in need of more lies, there is plenty of that. Just do it. And do it with kindness.

Gregory Muenzen
sketches















Gregory Muenzen attended the Rhode Island School of Design and lived for a time in Italy then for nearly thirty years in New York City. The subway studies were drawn on site on all of the subway trains and platforms in NYC and the surrounding boroughs. According to the artist "These works on paper are as much about the process of drawing and graphic design as capturing something of the emotional tenor of the varied subjects".

He also enjoys making sculpture and painting and currently lives with his family in Katonah, New York.

To learn more, please visit:

[GALLARUS ARTS SPACE - Renaissance and Later Works of Art](#)

That's So Raven is a television show that aired on Disney Channel when I was a kid. I was obsessed with it. It featured Raven-Symone as Raven Baxter, a high school girl who designed and made her own clothes and lived in San Francisco. Also she was psychic. She had two best friends and parents who seemed like they loved her and each other and life. She had everything I wanted. Clothes that represented her personality, parents that cared about her, and she was free from the suburbs, unlike me. Also, everyone knew she had like special magical brain gifts and were chill with it, it was seen as just another idiosyncrasy of hers. None of this was within the realm of my experience except for the fact that she could never get a boyfriend even though she was cute, and the fact that, at the time it was airing, neither me nor Raven knew we were lesbians. It was one of the only things my parents would let me watch. Recently, I had made a joke in my head that the show feels so integrated into my child-aged psyche, and so subtly intertwined with my personality and experience to this day, it feels like I made it up. Like, Raven is really me in my ideal childhood reality. The show got me through being a Black child in the Atlanta suburbs (terrifying fun fact: I lived about a 20 minute drive from where the KKK resurged) with no friends and emotionally and verbally abusive family.

I bring this up because the film, *I Saw the TV Glow*, offers to the viewer the question of how and what media they've consumed, especially as a child, has shaped who they are. As a queer person especially, it seems like we often identify with fiction narratives laid out in front of us because we don't feel we'll live long enough to be in a world that will ever be kind to us, fully. So we live vicariously through screens. And, before screens, through other forms of art detached from oneself. And for those of us lucky enough to get the chance to be the ones doing the writing,

Jupi Bowen

we make sure the kids like us are represented and explored. I think we, queer people, identify so heavily with fiction because we were born equipped with the expansive imagination to do so. Many gifts lie on a bed of misfortune.

It was another day here, in this slice of space. Meaning, someone was meant to me again, but it was way more visceral and lasting, meaning I needed to go watch a movie.

I have the MUBI subscription that comes with a weekly film ticket. My weekly movie visit is a little time-container-portal that I stick myself into to relieve my body-mind from reality for a second (several hours). Rarely do films get me there as much as this one did. This film understood what a portal is. This film watched me back.

In the theater, there are so many white normies it feels like a mob, which is how this entire city feels, and I am pretty much definitely the only black, queer, or otherwise different person in this room where a very queer film is about to be shown. Scary! But also contributed more to the sense of the film watching me back. Trailers peddling impending apocalypse, prison stories and other American film landscapes mostly fall flat. I'm here for the color, tired of the black and white.

I think it might have had something to do with the emotional state I was in, but I kind of think I was meant to see this movie exactly when I saw it. I've been thinking all of my choices have become some sort of divination. Art, especially, doesn't come into my life without reason, because I am extremely intentional about when I go out, where, and with whom. A gut feeling is required.

Jupi Bowen

Being the way I was and seeing some positive reviews from writers I trust let me get really vulnerable with it. Like, I think I was a better viewer this time; I was more settled in and trusting. I had a couple of hallucinations of the feeling of a seatbelt a couple times during the movie, and, even through my *adhd* which makes it hard for me to stand still, I sat and stared the entire time. It was an emotionally immersive experience that I don't think people who have not encountered acute suburban childhood loneliness will understand.

I Saw the TV Glow is what I would consider a film about the horrors of identity, time, and the sources of our senses of safety and belonging. It doesn't have any serious jump-scares, but it left me horrified of who I could have been and who I am. When referring to Owen, one of two main characters, I will be using she/her pronouns because there is no separating the film from its transness and anyone attempting to do so is invalid in their analysis x.

The film fleshes out the omnipresent sense of being trapped and emptiness of our reality. Maddy, the other main character, attempts to escape because she feels as though she'll die in the suburb where she and Owen grow up, but it's just as suffocating in Phoenix, Arizona. Maddy's character exemplifies the fire that is sparked in us when we are young that grows, but has nowhere to go in our world, and is eventually snuffed out if not provided with the proper environment, which, let's be real, is usually not what happens. Hence why once-activists like Angela Davis are now collecting checks from the same systemic boogymen they so hated a few decades ago.

To me, Owen lives the real horror. She never (or at least we don't see it) lives her true, or closer to true, self. She keeps eating the static of her

identity and living in her dreams, and her dreams are projected onto The Pink Opaque which is imprinted with her times shared with Maddy, a confidant and true friend. The show that brought them together and real life became blurred. Time get's all mashed up, as it tends to do while it passes. It passes, and you die, whether you self-actualize or not.

Pick your poison, indeed.

One night, at work, Owen cuts herself open just to get a glimpse at the static again. But she continues to put most of her energy into making herself smaller. We never know if she blossoms into who Maddy knows her to be. Into Isabel. Owen doesn't know how to be the main character (And I absolutely feel her).

I know I am not where I need to be when I find myself feeling like Owen, hiding and making myself as small as I can for a sense of safety. But living like Maddy will not actually fix anything, it just has a sideways satisfaction of being certified and sure there are no good options. Coming out won't make a difference to the people around you a lot of the time, and it damn sure won't inherently improve your quality of life. I often think about how pretty of a girl I was, but it was still terrible being treated as weak all the time. I'd rather be a lonely, bookish, spinster dyke than a cog.

Maddy's monologue was where I started the crack apart, in the best ways. "Those memories were put there to distract you" in reference to Owen's childhood memories is extremely resonant I often feel that many childhoods, which consist of the substance that upholds cis-hetero-whatever-the-fuck have so much control over our future, because of course they do. Our childhood forms our entire soul's imagination system, which informs the life we create for ourselves. I didn't understand why there were astrological projections on her face as she spoke, but I felt that they were there just for me.

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People in this section of space where I live do this weird thing where they laugh at things that obviously aren't funny because they are uncomfortable. They do this with everything. Americans do this with everything. Laugh it off, not to keep from crying, but because the suffering of the

Jupi Bowen

Other juxtaposed your privilege doesn't even feel real, so of course you laugh. You laugh because you are so relieved it isn't you. Today, for now, while you're reading this.

I think some viewers were left disappointed, thinking that the film should have been scarier or left them clutching their seats, or something. But, I did find the film scary, especially the ending. Feeling like you are running out of time and air to fully actualize is terrifying. This is the horror of identity. I live the horror every day of living as myself in a world that wants to kill me. Coming out, being in community, living out loud doesn't fix that, and it won't. Nothing will fix it yet I still have to find reasons to not kill myself, and I do, for now. For today, while you're reading this.

On my way out of the theater, I have to plug my ears immediately to keep myself from hearing cisgender heterosexual idiots say things like "the movie looked good, I just thought something was going to actually happen" and I feel as though my entire experience is being gaslit even though they have no idea who I am. In my mind's eye, I am grabbing people by their collars and screaming SOMETHING DID FUCKING HAPPEN AND IT'S BECAUSE OF YOU but, in reality, I am just walking really slowly, scowling, and staring, looking extremely unapproachable, like an owl.

After the film, I stood in liminal spaces too long, staring at myself in the bathroom mirror and walked to the train really slowly and didn't try to perk up my face to look sane. My resting face is angry and sad because why wouldn't it be. I went completely nonverbal and listened to jazz on nts radio. No one else around me existed, for once. I felt like I also had been fed the Luna Juice and now I am slowly spewing blue out of my mouth onto the streets of whatever place in space this is. My chest is

Jupi Bowen

perpetually cut open, that's why people in this place are looking at me like I am a freak. Because I refuse to sew it up. I just glow and glow and glow and no one's going to make me stop.

I had to close my eyes the whole way home so as to not get overwhelmed by the omnipresent injustices, because that's how raw this film made me. Several silent and holy tears escaped me as people avoid eye contact. I just want someone to hug me, but I came to this city alone on purpose. I am lonely again, but still not as lonely as when I was a kid, and I guess I have to be grateful, but I'm not. I want more, I deserve more.

The second time I watched the movie, the theater was empty save me and about 3 ghosts. I took this illegal photo of one of my favorite shots of the film:

There is so much potential for you. You don't have to realize it all today, but it doesn't mean its not there. Those of us, especially, who lost bits of our childhoods to abuse or being in environments that rejected us still have time to do all the things we want to do. You have today, and that's enough. Live under the assumption that you have tomorrow, too. Have grace with yourself so it sprouts and grows to extend to others.

Ok i know its basic to say but like art is so important because feeling so alone in the suburbs (yes i am calling the third largest city in america a suburb because it basically fucking is a suburb with a few open-air prisons attached that it uses for fuel) films like this remind me that there isn't anything wrong with me im just not like the people around me and that would be okay if people living on graveyard countries like the u.s. were not taught to hunt, kill, or otherwise inconvenience anything "different" and breathing.

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If you are a very impressionable person who might relate to the setting of this film, I would probably go with a friend. Personally, I have kind of not been the same since I watched it, so! Like literally hallucinating but it's okay I am taking it with stride. I strive to make something that makes people hallucinate so, good job Jane Schoenbrun. I'm even more inspired now to never closet any parts of myself. I am so grateful to be alive at the same time as this film.

On My Lesbianism

Jupi Bowen

It's hard to write an essay like this and not bump into cliches, but I am working on not caring, because who here has lived a completely unique life? Exactly. When I first got the idea to write about being gay for Lesbian Visibility Week (how quirky of me), my first thoughts were about when I stopped shaving my armpits and switched to shaving my head as a teenager and the first someone that told me she could eat my pussy for hours if I let her. But then my mind wandered into what lesbianism means to me from a gender perspective, what it means to me about the gait of my walk, the way my hands tap the steering wheel, the pretzel of limbs I become given any place to sit more than 5 minutes. My lesbianism is intertwined with my anxiety, with my grief, and with my pleasure.

In 2006, Time Magazine named Jamaica the most homophobic country in the world. Rainbow Railroad, a non-profit that works to provide asylum to gay people in unsafe living conditions, cites that 40% of their requests come from the Caribbean region. This comes to me as no surprise, considering that some of the most popular dancehall that's come out of the country contains lyrics like: "When you hear a lesbian getting raped/ It's not our fault ... Two women in bed/ That's two Sodomites who should be dead" (some Elephant Man song). Homosexuals are perceived and treated as un-apprehended criminals in the Caribbean, and for that reason, I do not know when I will be back, if ever. For this reason, my lesbian kisses my anxiety. My biggest fear in life is not getting sick, it's not the police, it's not natural disasters. It is getting hate-crimed by an angry mob. I think about the man who was chased and stoned in 2013, and I get this shiver of fear that cracks my nervous system into electricity. The grip of christo-fascism in the islands is something I mourn over often. How could one species turn heaven into hell with the brute force of homophobic idealism? Also FUCK RASTAFARIANISM.

Jupi Bowen

My father's side (the Jamaican side) of the family pretends to not know I am gay. They feign the ambiguity of knowledge. My father has known about me kissing girls since I was 16 and still thinks, somehow, I will end up bringing some man to meet him, someone for him to hand me off to, even though he never held me in the first place and he knows I munch cat. Bill Clinton-ass logic.

My mom's side (the Central American/a whole bunch of other stuff side) loves that I'm gay, probably too much. (My mother actually started dating women after I came out to her.) But at least I don't have to hide who I am. I note the differences in where they are from, because Costa Rica has legally banned discrimination against gays and has a lesbian bar in San Jose that has been open for 30 years called La Avispa (bucket list destination) while Jamaica still has so-called sodomy laws and the one major pro-LGBT organization operates mostly underground.

I had the candied privilege of knowing gay women in love fairly intimately as a kid, between the ages of 5 and 9. They were a butch-femme couple with a child, and I saw them every Christmas at my uncle's house, and I played with their daughter, who seemed to be missing her two front teeth the entire time I knew her. I always remember them being the most content and genuine out of everyone in the very full room, including my parents (whom I guess are now both lesbians). The Butch (one of my first crushes) always brought such generous and thoughtful gifts for me and all the other kids, because of course. Even as a child, I could see how much they cherished each other and the life they made together, and I knew I wanted that for myself. I thought everyone deserved to have that. Later on, when I was a teenager, they suddenly broke up and I saw The Femme had married a man, seemingly in a hurry. The next time I saw her, she was with The Man. She looked dead inside.

Jupi Bowen

Her eyes were empty, her skin was grey, and something about her whole family's dynamic had changed. Compulsive heterosexuality kills is the conclusion I came to. I never saw The Butch again and I ate pussy for the first time a month later.

A static identity is something that has never been keen to me. And because of this, I contain feelings of... fraud? Something about the fluidity and expansiveness of my humor, my body, my gender, my sexuality, my desire, make people wary of me, like they are certain I have some sort of malintent. I want many complex things and I am many complex things. Sometimes, things that directly contradict. I come from many places, so my only real home is my skin. White cisheteropatriarchy actively teaches others not to trust people like me, which I find to be a classist and anti-nomadic sentiment. All that's sure is change. Change is my lesbianism. The moon changes signs every two days. The seasons change every three months. And so on.

"Hard femme" has been my most consistent flavor of genderfucking throughout my life. Like, determinedly, clumsily, riding a city-bike fifty blocks up First Avenue with bleeding knees (from eating shit on 86th and having rich fucks laugh at you while they eat their shitty rich people food) and serious pit stains in a mini skirt, lace panties with pubes peeking through with every pedal. Very hot. Like yeah I smell bad and yeah you like it. I really like frilly things but not more than I love dirt, and messes, and things that smell. Hard femme like I started (and then stopped) T so my voice would be huskier, because it's sexy to me. Also it didn't work I mostly got acne, super intense periods, more prickly neck hairs and moods that swung into rage and despair instead of sadness and despair. Hard femme like my abundance of tit reads QUEER TONGUE ONLY.

Jupi Bowen

If the world included only colored dykes, my tits would always be free. But cis male gaze exists, white queer gaze exists, so I wear big clothes a lot of the time to protect myself from the sight of the straights and to be read as queer by the queers. Even and especially when it's hot. So, I have often ended up in this strange place where the people I want to be attracted to me aren't seeing me for who I am, because walking these straight streets the way I would want to gives me extreme pangs of anxiety in the chord that runs from the back of my brain through my chest, to my stomach. So, me and my boobs will see you at the beach, okay? And you will just have to trust that I am queer in this outfit because I am telling you I am, OKAY?

When I present more femme-y I experience unbearable instances of complex heterosexism from gays and straights alike. For some reason, many people (and by that I really mean Black and Latino straight cis-gender men and white queers of all identities, but especially twinkles) titties=straight. Fatness and blackness in the same body=straight. I try to understand why this is, but I just don't have time. Bastard activity from men I can toss aside, but being treated like an outsider from the community that's supposed to embrace me makes me question being alive. I feel like I have been shackled to men/patriarchy in the minds of my peers. Heterosexism is generally defined as the notion of holding straight relationships in higher regard than homo ones, but I would extend that definition to also include any instance where a person is assumed to be straight arbitrarily. None of this is helped by the fairly widespread notion that being thin and white is a prerequisite for "true" queerness.

I was invited out to this book talk at Quimby's Books on North Avenue, and it was a quaint change of pace from being in my house except

Jupi Bowen

people were still mean to me. While I waited for the person who invited me, someone with black boots and fluffy brown curls knocked the zine I was reading out of my hands “accidentally” as they stepped over the fallen zine, like it had just appeared there and there wasn’t a person fully reading it. Sometimes I want to gaslight myself and say “I am just moody they didn’t mean anything by it” , but the lack of intention is the problem. I could never not notice that I knocked something over. I wish I was that ignorant to myself. Gay space does not inherently equal safe space, everybody, try harder.

Anyway, this is always how I am treated in queer centric spaces (and also kind of everywhere) in Chicago: invisible. Two people that I had met at a birthday party (one of whom watches my instagram stories literally every day) pretended to not know me. One avoided me completely, I didn’t see her after the talk. The other I found outside while talking to the person I came to meet (who seems to have local clout, which made people ignore me slightly less) and I taxed them a cigarette, for my patience. Because I remembered they smoked because we fucking met at that fucking birthday party. I often wonder what makes me not worth including in certain places. Or maybe the difference is that they were feeling nicer because we’d all been drinking. Reason to go sober #***: alcohol gives you a false gauge of someone’s tolerance for negroes. Chicago’s queer punk scene is getting an F from me, for the moment. I’d also like to add I have gone out in Chicago maybe 5 times in the 2 years I have lived here and have been groped in those spaces at least 2 of those times.

In Chicago, I feel very attractive, but in the way that people think I am freakish and do not want to be my friend. They want to watch from a distance, mostly. And when they do want to get close they just want to

have sex (the type of sex where only what they are feeling is what matters).

In Atlanta, I felt myself on the cusp of true, full desirability, but not conventionally attractive (read: thin) enough to be seen making out with in public (unless molly got involved, and then it would be fully unacknowledged once sobriety called) and definitely not a viable dating option. I was mostly good for creative extraction while being completely de-sexed and hypersexualized at the same time. Here and Chicago are similar in that people always saved me for after dark, like a guilty treat.

In New York, I make people nervous. But the difference is they will still come up and talk to me, even if they have a little trouble holding my eyes. I feel seen. I don't ever feel like the weirdest one in the room (because I am definitely not). I feel appreciated for showing up as myself. Interactions tend to be slightly more tender. From what I can tell, I am the only Black dyke in my immediate neighborhood surroundings. But I really just hope they, like me, never leave their apartments and walk really fast to their destinations when they do.

When I leave my apartment, I am usually leaving the state, or, if I'm lucky (and luck is often on my side), the country.

Every queer scene and/or community I've witnessed or been a part of is not nonparallel to the one I experienced before it. One thing that remains is this idea that an individual should be easily pinned into a sector of the community, have no more than three words that convey to

others their subculture, gender, and sexual position, and I simply do not think I can do that. Not to be like “I was born in the wrong generation” (ew) but I do yearn for a time where gays had less language available to us. I think, at one point, the unsaid or the undefinable was a major part of getting to intimately know another queer person, and people knew themselves and their comrades/friends/partners as ever expanding universes, to be forever-discovered instead of identity cliques. I don’t want any of us to ever have to water ourselves down, especially not for each other.

My lesbianism is my emphasis on pleasure-based experiences, meaning, doing what you want because you feel like doing it, and we all deserve to feel good as a bare minimum reward for being alive, and because pleasure and grief cohabit in the mind. This doesn’t have to be sexual, but I think it’s nice when it is.

Being pleasure-focused means having the time to slow down and watch flowers get eaten out by bees. It means getting caught in the rain on purpose, ideally because wherever you’re going doesn’t care if your soaking wet. It means complaining and doing just that, without looking for solutions for a second, the pleasure of being a bitch and being loud about it. I find pleasure often does not involve moving forward, it’s about staying right where you are and doing it like that again, please.

I knew I was going to grow up to do something involving sex and bodily pleasures after seeing two dykes at Fort Lauderdale beach in Florida wash off their dildo after what I could only imagine was a lovely afternoon. I was about 10. One watched endearingly as the other tenderly

stroked the silicone with soap and water from the beach shower before placing it in it's bag. The dildo was blue. My first dildo was blue.

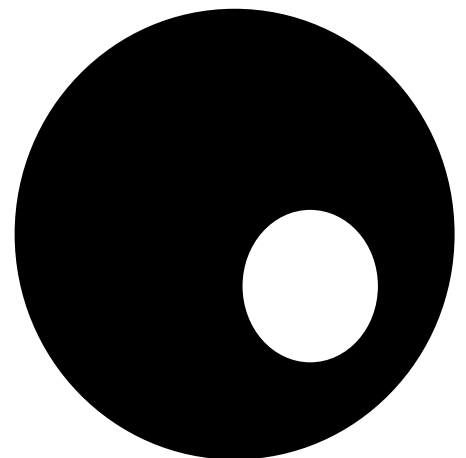
My point is, I don't think I have ever been more curious about anything than I have been about the various ways people can pleasure each other and the reasons why it isn't so easy in our reality of monopolized terror. That is why my day work is centered around sexual health and domestic violence. The more I write about it, the more I can feel myself chipping toward a path of spending my days continuing my sexual curiosity and fostering healthy, grounded community at the same time. All of this is My Lesbianism.



Memphis Magnolia, Kinga Lipinska, photograph, 2024

DINER

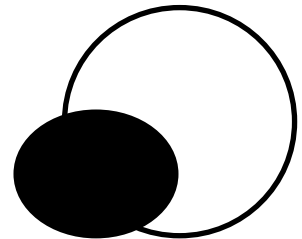
The eggs are good as ever,
over-easy.
Corned beef hash this time.
Coffee in a white cup.
The steam rises from it
acceptably.
Take a sip from that cup.
Red and white checkered tablecloths,
classic. Covered with plastic.
Rye, dry roast.
Look directly forward
& across the room
& out the front window
& onto the street bustle.
Stare that way a moment.
Now,
look back to where you were.
A fork breaks the yolk.
It runs yellow & red from tabasco.
Clinking of porcelain, glass, & steel.
A busser shuffles past,
lugging discards in a bin.
Now, look at a young couple
sitting some ways away.



John Garza

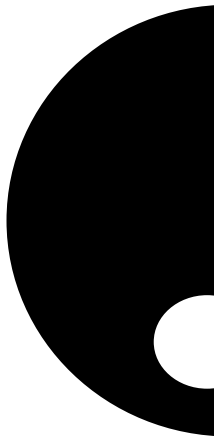
Their hands want to touch.
But it's early yet.
And though a distance is kept,
their tastes are still fresh in
each others' mouths and tongues,
let alone memory,
let alone tommorows.
Soap & skin & sweat: having commingled,
bodily precursor to the unbodied next.
Ah, yes. So familiar.
I will bet anyone.
It's in the eyes that gives it away.
But it's early yet.
And though a distance is kept...

Raise the cup.
The last of its contents
dull your sharpened gullet.
Look away from that young couple
sitting some ways away from you
and some time away from knowing.
Who is going to tell them? Not me.
It's not for me to say.
Sop up the yolk with the rye, dry toast.



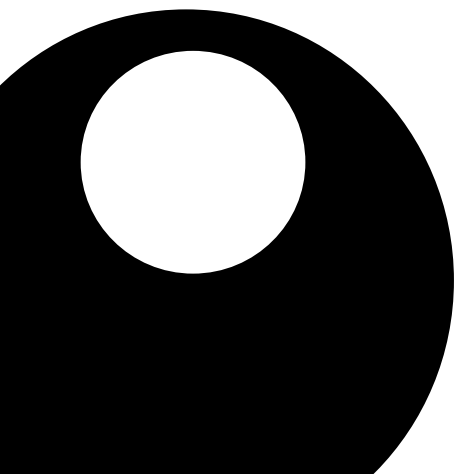
DINNER AT _____'S, 2024

I try to explain
the usefulness
of protest
to her whom I love,
between sips of ginger tea,
brushing cookie dust
off of my shirt and onto
the embroidered tablecloth.
It's my turn to listen.
“Why should we care?...
...but we don't live there...
...there are always two sides...”
And I do this
while looking into those eyes
of her whom I love: gray eyes:
a conscripted mixture of Spaniard Blue
and the Brown from Folk
who I suppose
had it coming, too.



Pantoum: HOUSE ON FIRE

I kept a photo of the house on fire.
The monochromed dusty yellows riding wind gusts
across a backdrop of eastern hemlock.
Tiny dot of the bright sun; observant, knowing Satellite.
The monochromed dusty yellows riding wind gusts
we were able to see and smell and touch.
Tiny dot of the bright sun; observant, knowing Satellite.
I could have loved you then, ignorant of fire, signs and symbols.
We were able to see and smell and touch
in other photographs, each other.
I could have loved you then, ignorant of fire, signs and symbols
despite the heron we saw near a pond (my namesake), but still
in other photographs, each other
living a different knowing, and I yet not knowing,
despite the heron we saw near a pond (my namesake), but still
I kept a photo of the house on fire.



John Garza



Me

Kinga Lipinska

I am the most beautiful
I am the least beautiful
I am the most natural
I am the least natural
I am the most agreeable
I am the most disagreeable
I am the wisest
I am the most foolish
I am straightforward
I am full of lies and
 contradictions
 and

I see me trying
I see me working
I see me looking
I see me walking

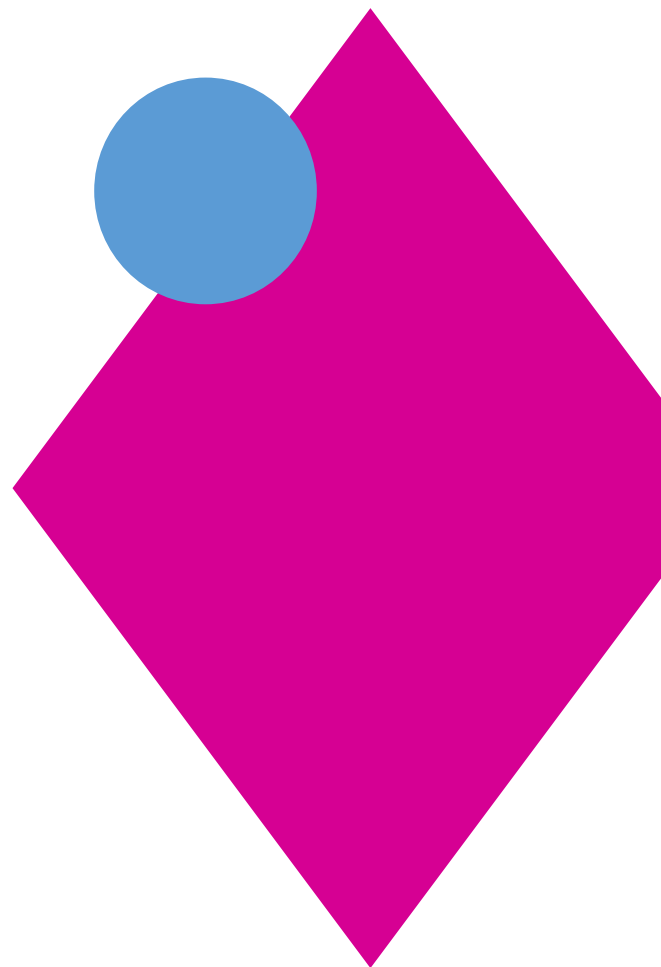
I see my carrying
I see me putting down
I see me enduring
I see me erupting

I see me smiling
I see me crying
I see me hoping
I see me despairing
I see me caring
I see me faking
I see me want
I see me love
I see me shut down

I see me
 like
I am everything
 like

I have always been
 like

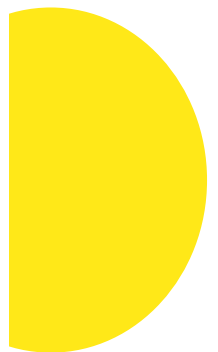
I cannot tell that this is temporary
I mean
I know the world passing, the planet is spinning
I am passing
I know



Rain

Miguel Suarez

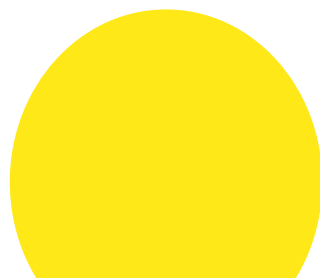
The rain brings peace to my grieving soul
Lost to all the storms weathered before
Showing me life goes on still, though
And I'll weather my storms alone again
With rain, wind, and hail belting my bruises
I feel as if this was where I was meant to be
To exist through senseless pain brought by nature
I deserve the hardships being faced here
They follow me from selfish acts in the past
Unwilling to relinquish ideas of grandeur
Always wanting what made me feel the most
No emotion excluded from feelings mingled with
The rain doesn't allow them to hide within
Instead giving way to free falling tears
The drops from my eyes mix with those from the sky
Creating a mask only sky water could provide



Crimson Eclipse

Miguel Suarez

The crimson sky sends a signal of fear
Nothing but sorrow is seen by the seer
Her visions knowing what outcome is clear
The end of the hope we all have is here
The weight of the world so heavy and drear
It's crashing down on those who've come near
In no rules does the occurrence adhere
Chaos ensues and it's rather severe
Many have hid from the thoughts that were queer
And soon those thoughts enveloped their cheer
All they've suppressed gushes out of their tears
Asking for help while offering no years
Wanting to be brought to the new frontier
But in the dark is where most of them appear
The flaws of themselves run rampant here
Nowhere to hide when all blinds are shear
The sinking ship had no power to steer
Away from the darkness that won't disappear
So to avoid the aura we all tend to veer
Begin to make better that inner cavalier
You'll feel the warmth in the atmosphere
Letting those who feel it be the most austere



Duality pt. 2

Miguel Suarez

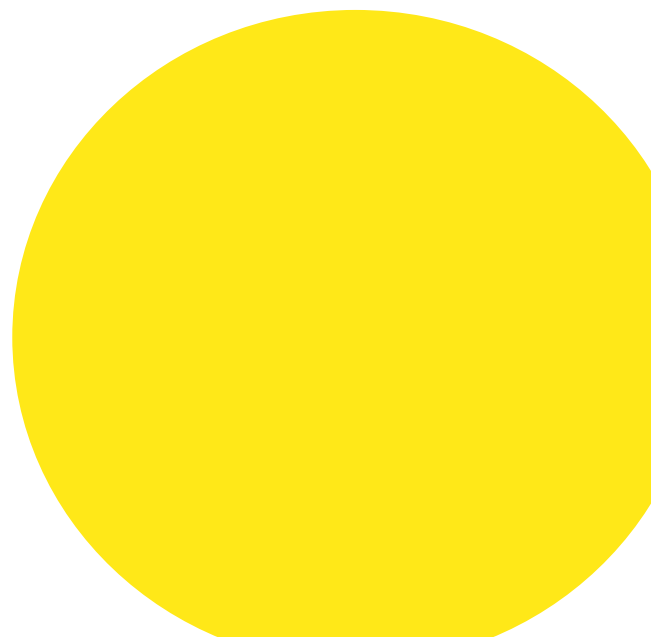
Something about me is changing within
New good thoughts and endless light is brought in
I feel the goosebumps grazing my light tan skin
I'm excited for what's next to begin


My head is healing from all my past pain
I was so close to just going insane
I'm glad I saved myself from the storming rain
All that's left is for me to grow and gain

My heart is on par healing it's own scars
New love is here to build a repertoire
One that allows me stride so damn far
I never thought I'd be bright like the stars

My mantra has shifted from hurt to hope
Much more to see than the initial scope
Refining me is how I chose to cope
It's time to feel what's only fucking dope

Duality runs though all that exists
The good, the bad, and all else it consists
Appreciate all you can try and list
Using newness to let things coexist





No one compares to what you were to me
Those feelings I don't know can ever fade
I'm scared you'll be there on the other side
I feel all alone and betrayed
Every time I close my eyes
The dark beneath engulfs me in spades
You're eyes and your smile pierce me
Freezing my lifeless body where I laid
The feelings from before were coming back
Love and hate all begin to invade
A spirit bomb of emotions
The blast was too destructive to evade
The light I've worked hard to create
Stood no chance to the dark you displayed
No matter where I tried to run
You always outran me unafraid
It was out of spite to keep me close
Not letting me leave your terrible crusade
But I admired the destruction
Finding beauty in the madness you made
The admiration keeping me attached
Our youth wasting away in this trade

Miguel Suarez is an aspiring writer from Chicago, IL. He started officially releasing pieces in 2019, focusing on poetry, to his own Instagram and TikTok pages, @stuff_i_wrote.

Revisit Remember

I came to revisit these childhood grounds
before they faded away from my reach.
But life today seeps in, preventing past reveries
Arguments arrive via small screens, long distance
tragedies occur back home, my distance
feels wrong, too long, not long enough.
Fighting tooth and claw for serenity
I make it to the old woods, the old bluff.
March winds savage the waves, and my breath.
The present refuses me a peaceful remembrance.
I find the past already fled, carved away
with tire treads, the woods now clearings
of churned and treaded down dead earth,
treeless skies full of vicious winds.
So much is already gone. What have I come
to see? When did I truly have my last moments
in that past, my last unknown goodbyes.
What's here is already smeared away, tears in my eyes.



Awful Arithmetic

I hate this part of it,
the doctor's weighted words,
counting up meds, scans,
procedures, exams,
to try and equal
the total sum of my love.
And at what point do all these
burning efforts turn
from balm to burden?
That awful shock when
the kindest thing to do
is snap off each
healing finger,
and let them fall away.
That equation I've yet to crack:
When does love is life
become love is death.



Make the World Go Away

“Make the world go away,”
croons Eddie Arnold
in a vintage, tinny blues,
and this rolling fog obliges.
Already wan midwinter landscapes
get swallowed in white.
I wait for the gray muck and slush
caking my head and heart
to disappear, with the
filthy iced streets below
But the fog does not come for me,
and more tears sting my eyes.
I sing along in hushed harmony,
joining Arnold—
“And take it off my shoulders...”
While the January fog
eats everything else,
I’m left whole, shoulders heavy,
tired, and blinking at invisible trees
with a song that refuses
to disappear me.



As the lightning bugs dance
Along the too green grass
And the sad little dandelions
So do my confused thoughts
Dancing a dance
It doesn't
Quite
Know
How
To
And so the lightning bugs
Go dim and leave my sweaty and confused
Thoughts
All by themselves
With only the old dew to quench them
And the city lights far in the distance
To now light the way

Grass so green
Heart so dark
As the pale blooms
Sway above
My swirling home of a mind
I bask in the shade
From the tree
That will know
More than I
Could ever hope
As my tired back
Rests against
Its forever sturdy trunk
I feel it thanking me
For spending some moments
Honoring its roots
For God knows I have none
As the teardrops
Fall from my
Once full lashes
They soak into
The cracked chocolate soil
The tall tree's
Only friend
Until now
I hope I gave it a memory
Sad as I or it might be

I talk fast with a southern drawl
Everything in my life
Feeling like it lasts forever
But really it's only been
A few seconds
My brain always on a race
With the flesh around it
My teenage days
Feel like an eternity ago
Everything is fast and so slow
How can it be both
I saw sparkles in my eyes
Just yesterday
So please
Tell me
How
It's been
18 years



Roshunda Gulley

Love Has No Season

Love has no season in which to bloom
Whether in September, March, December or June
You can see its blossoms flourishing about
Even as the time for others is out
It does not wither from summer's heat
Nor grow cold from winter's sleet



Roshunda Gulley

Serenade Of a Bird

I heard his serenade last night under my windowsill
After being awakened by the peck of his steady bill
I heard his glad hands clapping to the rhythm of each beat
I heard the constant pitter-patter of his dancing feet



Roshunda Gulley

Strangers

There are strangers that I don't know
And there are strangers that I only thought
I knew



Roshunda Gulley

Thoughts

When the world speaks its thoughts too loudly
I tune out the noise
So I can hear myself think
And find my own thoughts

FOOL'S PARADISE

Wood nymphs blow kisses to each other
in the cherry tree centering the meadow.
The pursing lips shower a tender storm of petals over
the lovers reclining in the buttercups.
One reaches a hand to
the Other and warmth
receives warmth
returns warmth.
Bubbles drift in the sun shimmering
upon the fairies' wings.
A gust howls through the violets
and blasts the pixies away.
Interlocked gazes turn up.
Clouds surge and bulge around the horizon.
One frowns.
The Other rises and pulls.
A flagstone path wavers out of dream
at their feet.



They rush between the rose borders
and get to the waterfall with its
palm-dappled pool.

The dolphin pair leave off flipping and
streak over to bring kisses.

One's smile soothes bent brow,
the Other laughs a blessing over the pair's antics.

A whirlwind whips in behind them,
howling and blowing frost that
attacks the cascade, until it
begins slowing
turns sluggish
becomes slush.

One gasps, eyes flaring.

The Other turns and tugs,
leading them further down the path.

Vines and thorns shred the rose border and
swarm the flagstones behind them.

Arms raise to shelter faces
as sleet needles down.

They dash to the moat,



A rumbling from beneath the ice
grows to a roar and
glaciers spear the drawbridge.
Splinters fly, pinging off the
silver-armored knights trapped
at the castle gate.

One yells and cowers, clinging to
the Other, who shrugs and drags them
into the darkening Woods.

From behind,
hail and wind and wolves wail, the pack
chasing,
herding,
howling,
coming for them.

Hail bombs rip down leaves and
split trunk after trunk.

The two burst from between
shriveled trees onto
a plain gaping black under a black sky.

One skids in the muck, hands clutching for balance.



The Other shakes them off.

Another pulls up on a black horse.

The Other mounts and circles arms around Another
to grasp the reins

then kicks in spurs.

Hooves splatter One with mud.

The Other shrinks into the distance.

Lightning sparks off grey branches.

Centaurs drag horse halves out of the flames.

The wolves circle and castigate the One
decimated by betrayal.

Fingers and knees squelch in mud
as One's eyes fix on the golden door
opening across the plain.

Stinking wet fur hems One in.

Howlers repeat old warnings
of the Other's false promises,
while supportively gutting unicorns
and chomping butterflies.



Corina Hansquine

One's tears blur the portal of light closing
behind the dust cloud chasing galloping steed,
while the pack of
self-styled saviours savour success,
dancing and singing over
an enchanted forest
withered to ash.



Cage of Pain

inside, it rages
rattling the bars curving round
shrinking down, locking down and
blocking motion
binding muscles
straining against the prison of
spikes stabbing in, from without, that
spear bones
ignite arthritis
triggering nerves to spark, enflame
an imploding explosion of crippling pain
body failing, but
barbs keep striking, inwards
sinking, syncing up a
perfect storm of piercings into
every joint, every point
an immolation of inflammation
inside, it seizes



Can't withstand, can't
sustain, can't escape, can't
stay sane
flailing fists clang iron sphere
that curves and hunches spine, crushing
ball and socket as
shoulders slam against
metal - once thought
entombing - in truth subsuming
fusing flesh to skeletal bars
clarifying as it calcifies every joint
crystallizing the point
that this embattled body
is pierced in tendon and gland
is stabbed across punctured mind
is impaled through nerve after nerve upon nerve
by spikes striking from
the prison
of
its own barbed bones
inside, it screams



The Feed

The light left her face.

The glow shining her cheeks
turned off.

Mood popped;

screen stopped;

phone dropped -

it's gone quiet, it's gone dark.

Morning feet galloped downstairs.

Giggles spurted at pings and beeps
marking waking teen texts
sent past noon.

Checking in, checking up:

Nothing's happened since bedtime,
but the phone trips over bleeps
in a discordant tune.

Then exclamations tapered.

Amused snorts ceased.

Her expression drooped.



Corina Hansquine

She switched to her feed.
The beeps slow,
and I know
other parents of teen friends
also see the glow crushed,
hear the laughter end.
The smile dies
fast,
fast and
faster each time.

 Too much news,
 too much pain,
 too much world
 to save.

So much, it beat down
her initial righteous indignation;
posts, memes, haters eroded it
like lettering on a wind-blasted grave.
My fingers sift through red curls,
my soul weeping
as her heart flails.
Missing the trauma of missing yo-yos,



Corina Hansquine

I'm lost
in the shadows
swallowing her fading spark.
But she's seen the feed.
The light left her face.
It's gone quiet. It's gone dark.

Corina Juliana Hansquine is a 53-year-old wife, mother and poetess living in Ottawa, ON, who snowbirds to Raleigh, NC in the winter. She does not take money for her words, so as to maintain ownership and integrity of her work. Her motto is: "Perimenopausal and pissed about it!"

Roots for Creativity

Christen Foster

From roots that dig deep,
and twist and turn,
Where imagination's whispers start to learn.
The soil of dreams, where thoughts take flight,
Where passions grow, and inspirations take light,
The roots of creativity, a hidden spring,

As we delve deeper,
into the soil of our soul,
We find the source, of our creative goal.
A chasm, of thoughts and emotions bright,
A kaleidoscope of colors, shining with delight.

Like a seed that's planted,
it begins to grow,
Nourished by dreams,
and a heart that glows.
It sprouts with whispers,
of a thousand rhymes,
And the world around,
becomes a symphony of lines.

We become the masterpieces
As we pick up the pieces of
Our fractured souls.

the echoes of dreams,
converge as themes.

The artist's hand is guided
In a world divided

A flame illuminating paths long hidden,
poetry roots break free grown from seeds
In the depths of the soul, where shadows roam free,

Spoken Word

Christen Foster

A language universal,
yet unique to each,
A symphony of thought and speech.

The author's voice,
a gentle breeze,
Whispers secrets to the willing ease.

With every phrase, a world is born
Repairing souls when hearts are torn

With the rhythm of the tongue
stories unfold, The power of the voice
Brings the unseen to life.

In the spoken word, our true selves reveal,

With words that flow like liquid fire,
The spoken word ignites the desire,
A dance of tongues, a symphony sweet,
That echoes through the human heart's retreat.
It weaves a tapestry of emotions deep,
A rich tapestry that our souls can keep,
A language that's both raw and refined,
A poetry that's born of passion and design.
The spoken word is art in motion, a force so bright,
That can move mountains, ignite the light.

Written Word

Christen Foster

Through the written word,
we transcend our bounds,
And touch the hearts
and minds of those around,
We leave our mark,
our legacy to share,
And in the silence,
our words remain there.

The writer's craft,
a magic spell to weave,
A fabric rich,
with threads of thought to retrieve,
The words,
like pearls on a string so fine,
Illuminating the darkness,
making it shine.

A language born,
a language divine.

With ink that flows
like lifeblood from the heart,
The writer's fingers dance upon the page,
a work of art,
As characters and sentences
take their place,
A world of meaning, a world of space.

A realm of symbols and sounds,

Where the poet's pen weaves
ideas that take shape.

The element the written word
Is an element of poetry embraced.

A universe of thoughts,
of dreams, of scorn.
Written words reborn

The poet's quill,
The pen
a wand of might,
Brings forth characters,
both bright and light.

Ink-stained pages,
worn and old,
A testament to stories yet untold.

The written word,
With every stroke
Express your light
From the words you wrote.

You're not the mommy I wanted

Pamela Radke

You're not the Mommy I wanted
The Mommy I wanted
Would slowly brush and twirl my long hair
Into wonderfully-named woman things
Like braids or plaits
The Mommy I wanted would take me to
The Busy Bee beauty parlor
And watch me paint my baby-bitten, nubby nails
Fire engine red
While we talked girl talk with Doreen who did her hair
But you sent me off with Daddy
To Leo's Clip Joint
To sit on a male-hard barbershop seat of insensitivity
To confront the confused and bemused stares
Of boys who wanted to be men and men who wanted to be boys
To listen to the snip-snip
Of shiny straight hair
Silently sobbing on the dirty tile
Clip-cclip
Into a short uneven bowl with bangs
Like a lopsided Prince Valiant
You'd snap in tacky plastic bird barrettes
Who soon flew through the baby-fine forest of brown
Too embarrassed to be seen with me
You're not the Mommy I wanted.
But you're the Mommy I got.

Drug of Choice

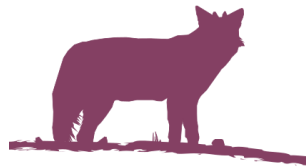
Pamela Radke

Veuve Cliquot
Oh let me go
With you in flutes of fun
Joy juice
Nectar of night or day
With OJ
Mimosa-mixed
Or all alone
Perrier Jouet
Oh let my tongue play
With your blond bubbles
Nose numbing
Throat tickling
Lush liquid
Grapes ground into a glass of bliss
Mumms
Oh, you're the word
I've heard
Popping your cork of celebration
Clinking excitement
Valley of the French-toast of the town
Down vines of green gladness
Champagne insane
Until the last lingering sip



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