



anthology

**TRANSMASCULINE
POETICS**

edited by remi recchia

Transmasculine Poetics:
Filling the Gap in Literature & the Silences Around Us

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EDITOR'S NOTE

When I first embarked on this project, I was under the impression that it would be the first of its kind: an inaugural, groundbreaking anthology featuring transmasculine poets of a diverse range of races, sexualities, nationalities, ages, and endless other demographics. I was proud of this idea, this urge to share our narratives and lives and naked selves. (The conceit was, incidentally, inspired by Trace Peterson and TC Tolbert's 2013 *Troubling the Line: Trans and Genderqueer Poetry and Poetics*.) I was mistaken, though: At least one poetry collection centering transmasculine voices already had its place in the world. That anthology, edited by Michael Eric Brown and Max Andeo Meyer, is titled *Defining Myself: Transmasculine Experience Through Poetry* and was published in 2016. My initial reaction was dismay. First of all, how could I not have known about this book? How many others were out there, anyway? And second of all—and this does not cast me in a good light—why could my anthology not have been the seminal work on transmasculine poetics? How unfair, I bemoaned. How disappointing.

In reading and rereading the hundreds of submissions in response to the call for my *Transmasculine Poetics: Filling the Gap in Literature & the Silences Around Us*, however, I began to realize how special it was to continue work that others have begun instead of to break new ground. Transmasculine people have, after all, always existed. Our hearts race and lungs sing and palms sweat in every nation and culture and place. We are in your synagogues, your cathedrals, your mosques. We are in your hometown and your destination vacation. We are in your schools and in your neighborhoods. We are here. We are here. We are here.

James Baldwin in his essay “Princes and Powers” says of masculinity, “What, in sum, black men held in common was their ache to come into the world as men. And this ache united people who might otherwise have been divided as to what a man should be.” As a trans man living in the current era of the violently dehumanizing “trans issue,” I have long sat with Baldwin and internalized his words, repeating them to myself in the dark. *Their ache to come into the world as men*. I do not claim that transphobia has had an equally historic and wide-reaching impact as white supremacy. (The insidious hydra of white supremacy does, however, affect all marginalized

people, especially those holding multiple minority identities, such as trans men of color.) I have not experienced racism. I have had many privileges in my life: housing security, a stable income, whiteness. I will say, instead, that as a trans man, I can empathize with a certain aspect of Baldwin's experience in that I understand what it is like to have a majority group of people who do not look like me decide when and if I can be a man. When and if the men in power will recognize my inherent worth.

Transmasculine Poetics: Filling the Gap in Literature & the Silences Around Us seeks to recognize the dignity inherent in all transmasculine people, be they men or nonbinary or genderfluid or anything and everything in between. The poets in this anthology offer great service in representing their softest, most vulnerable underbellies. They make love and tell jokes and pray to the Lord. I tremble and laugh and worship alongside them. Please, won't you join us?

—Remi Recchia, PhD

Pre-Op

I google *how long after surgery can I have you*

in my mouth and take my favorite

answer. As long as we keep

my heart low, my blood quiet,

we can still sate ourselves in the aviary

of my body. Spoon your thumb

past my teeth. Brush my neck

to steer the honey down. Would you,

if I asked,

run your tongue along the stitch of me

like sealing a letter? I know

the body my body

aches for. I go to write a list of what's lost

in transition, but it stays empty.

In a dream, I doe-eye the knife

and your hands hold my wrists

over my head. I decide in the new year

I am never waiting. Even now,

before the scalpel, before the stupor,

my chest

is the cuttlebone

hanging in your cage,

thinning as you sharpen

your ripe beak.

sunlight falling across a void

i.

often the shadows draped along crevices feel more real than the pale
meat of my thigh. i am drowning in the turbulent wake
of reality, but a constellation of pinpricks unfolds across
my skin. *this will make you a man.* & i am
without a body, unmoored & weightless. because
what is a man with no boyhood? i am shaky

foundations streaked with grief.

wherever i go, the fields of poppies die.

& from between the shriveled stems, the wrong
memories scamper in & out, curious & too real.

i fight the urge to pin them to a tray & discover
their anatomy. because it's time to suffocate a myth:
a quick, confident smile not slashed across the ghost
of a young boy. laughter never erupting

on the riverbank. *this will make you*
a man.

ii.

but my name appears like an angel: alien
& soft. too many eyes far too comfortable
in their sockets. too many instances of me
to count. one & infinite, each gazing into
brine. my name appears like an angel: too
sudden. too bright to bury strangers in. they
come & go, always above ground. treading
packed stone too hard to carve. my name
appears like an angel: speaking in distorted
& lost hymns, too loud to truly hear. too
many syllables, all garbled & strange. speak
my name: i am too naked to stay hidden.

iii.

i practice dipping a toe in my sadness, as if i could feel
the siren song. i timidly cup my hands around happiness growing

as fast as my hair. this is not to be confused with nourishment.

if only i was fed forgiveness, that fatty meal

the color of a fish's belly. if only i'd been

properly mourned—a young girl, eager

to scar, dissipating like the sunlight. if only

i'd been permitted to rest in my bones, curled

in the warmth of my own marrow. *this will make*

you a man, & you might sing.

virginia is for [gay] lovers

when a man falls in love with a ~~w~~oman, does he do it face-first out the front door? because i'm going to see if i can assemble the moon for [him]. manipulate glowing chunks of rock in the void of space. there is silence as it wells inside me: this hunger for [his] gravity.

i want to behold [his] hands. fingers interlaced with mine, palms pressed against each other. [& red will trickle its way out of the crevices. we'll be caught & it will be a joy. & to wash his hands afterward is a brand of holy. because] falling in love is a question dislodged & evolved into a declaration.

the loosening of a projectile is acknowledgment of the truth of destination. [relegated to implication & whispers. his face & mine hidden among the stars. 143 words & not quite kissing. because a slogan must necessarily be short.

Bruce Springsteen Visits Me at the Doctor's Office

I'm laid back on the table, feet in stirrups, when he comes in. My first surprise cervical exam. As the doctor learns that she can hurt me, Bruce pulls out a guitar from behind his back. My interior self rises from its tabled cell to meet him. I have organized my life around illness. I have organized my body to fit through hospital doors. I have waited for Bruce to bolster me with his rugged appeal. Maybe he can re-shape the doors. Maybe he can carry me through. Bruce's arm winds up to play. His first notes roil with confused sorrow with ache. I want to clothe myself. I want to change my hair, my face. While Bruce sings, I consider his boyish figure I never wanted it. I never wanted mine either.

My Bruce feels the same way. The two of us are flickering in and out of being. But the doctor doesn't notice. Her fingers continue to probe. She doesn't care for the slick grief covering my nude form. She cares only for the pieces she probes. How embarrassing it is to have my cervix wanted without the rest of me. How exhausting to be a nude reclined with breasts but not a girl. This table was never meant for my body. If it was made for Bruce's, he might save me. But in my doctor's office, The Boss is trans too. You can't start a fire while your body is probed apart. I can't look at fires without anticipating the threat of being marred.

What We Talk About When We Talk About Waylon Jennings

somewhere in kansas you change your mind and start talking again. this is what it's like to share a house with a bigger sadder man:

not enough pain relief to go around. by now we know that anything we can't see from the bus windows

exists only in the future, the future that clicks from before to behind in a fraction of a second. keeps leaving us alone with the empty present. you say you wish i'd packed the guitar instead of giving it away in chicago,

no matter i hadn't learned to play. it's the principle of the thing to you.

man, there's fuck all out here, you say. testing the silence. we're both hoping it won't hold your weight.

how do i tell you that all of my nightmares happen in the middle of the country? you, who dream in east-coast technicolor and don't know that out on the plains folks have to wait for permission to speak.

how do i tell you that i know things you don't? you, who wore
all of my clothes first and took the greyhound west with me
just to turn around and risk it on a plane back

home to where mom's painting the living room roadkill-pink for
the second time. if it weren't for me you wouldn't be the favorite

son, you wouldn't win a birthright. our sisters grew up and
now we can't remember their names.

to be a son is to hold the gun. the bullet's in your name but you
never knew where to point it, we're halfway

through kansas and i'm making some suggestions. miles out
my window i can see you'll run away, too. it's the principle of
the thing.

got your waylon & willie tape in my backpack, it's the only
thing i've ever stolen from you and you won't see it again.
shoot the bus up, man, take us out. a crime's only as deadly as
the shooter's mother

and i'll take the last hit, i'll help you all the way. you, who take
things real personal, who can't play the guitar either

and won't try now, what do you have left to teach me? yellow
kansas is mine, i can see in your hands

you've never thought of it that way before. you'll never make it
west of the mississippi after this. we can both see it out the
window:

the future, the sons' country divided, paint wet on the living
room walls.

if mom had named me i bet it would have been something
awful. if she had it her way we'd be doctors, or lawyers. none
of this cowboy shit. too late now, she'd have us get off the bus

and walk home together.

Toxic Masculinity

after Robert Frost & Nene Leakes

Name: Black boy

There ain't a heart he hasn't broken
in this city. Though shitty men roam
from hospitals to rooms they make
vacant with their failures, he stood tall
& we thought maybe all our men-filled
disappointment would be solved
by a brother who makes the world shine
with his smile. Crooked & tall, he stays
casket-pretty. We stretched our hands out so far
to catch him. Every time he falls out of grace,
every time a new man emerges
just to be infected with this
stone-age sickness, we call our daughters.
Ask how they are doing. Ask them
if they've seen the inevitable news.

Place of death: America

I know they loved me after all. Still,
I'm tasked with managing all this back-
handed masculinity. My inheritance:
attacks on everything, mandated;
my father passed down the right to be reckless,
to expect those "beneath us" to tidy
up our wreckage,
to tell ourselves the translucent remnants
of white supremacy on our skin
are a gender or sexuality's fault, that we must be
harder than walls to withstand its evermore pain.
I'm only obliged to me.
I'm not ashamed of anything.

Cause: strangled himself to death

Just shut the door behind they asses. Kick
the insidious scouts for next generation's
problems—peons passed down from one
broken man to the inevitable next. Just
cut the cord from Mary's belly.
Great monolithic knees, the misguided beings
kick back & watch their mothers stretch
their necks out again & again
& again, the family torn from the inside—

with help of extension cord acquired

In any event, the boy was found.
In a town where night grips
your toes while they dip from under covers,
begging for any cold air. He lived
in peace. He ripped
to pieces the day he learned
his father was the man
he thought he was. He cheated
on his mother, lied to maintain
lifetime dominance over people and things
that didn't ask for it & despised
the world for making him out to be,
closer than thin sheets on a naked body
in a morgue, to failure at all times.
Black is not the word for it. Neither is
inevitable, but that one's closer.

from grandpa's grandpa

The door is closed to men who wait to call
police, or call the streets to come collect
their kin, who think me something subhu-
man—book it; double-crooked; Black boys,
our Black boys, thirsty

like mad soldiers holding on to
something relevant to patriarchy's commands;
so comfy in their empty. Drinking on
my downfall like it was the red sea—God called
Said *teach these niggas how*
to do my deeds better. God is
a man after all. Like the father of a boy
I raised who never calls
'less it's for intent to harm
hard-earned harmony some other God sent
to heal us all from this one.

A 4th-generation suicide tool

I can't wait to tell Columbus—
my father, the father of all hatred
in these states we call home—
he's lost. Though I can't taste the BBQ
of victory without his sauce. What is
victory if everyone's lost?
I'm lost without a need; I want
to decree C's dynasty dismantled,
but does that mean I'm free? That I
share? I want to help myself.

disguised as gift

Suppose there is a power struggle:
white man vs the world; colonizer vs
the things they decided to colonize. Too many
of them want to be god themselves.
Too many are too busy mandating laws
to break laws nature—the actual god
they claim to call—put in place herself. *Help*,
said the Black boy drowning
in all his want. *Help me*, said the billionaire
who legally mandates all of our drowning.

Name: Black man

If ever there was a time to hate, too late;
They hate us always. Like they hate
the crate of cavalier monostophes
charging at their larynx. Especially the one
compelling a grown man—
no, a full-grown synonym for living
in hell, these states, this spell
enacted by white supremacy—
to cry. Who must die to hold
their cold door open? Who folds
the fidgety card table chair
bought for lie 99 into a thought?

Suppose that the Black boy is lost
without the fiery promise of
toxic power. In his quest, he asks—

Name: Black boi

*Am I a god-fearing man? Am I happy?
Am I able to breathe? Am I single?
Will I let my masculinity, my masc-
beaten hands wrap around her waist,
take her down & drape her in all my
inheritance, greenery ~~her beautiful~~
my beautiful neck
with all of my fool's gold
till she goes sinking in quicksand,
the bed my grandpa's grandpa
named Columbus made
for me? Am I an earth-fearing man?*

Name: Black boy

Place of death: America

Cause: strangled himself to death

with help of extension cord acquired
from grandpa's grandpa

A 4th-generation suicide tool
disguised as gift

Name: Black man
Place of death: a state once stolen from Mexico
Cause: unnatural causes
Cause that started at “it’s a boy”
Survived by: Christopher Columbus

Name: Black boi
Place of death: their mind
Cause: a chip on their shoulder
A belly that stayed empty
An empty bed cause of subscription
to Christopher’s sins
Unwillingness to change
Pantomimed “traditional” manhood
A thing that’s taught so can be untaught
Ballistic failure survived by:
a mother’s hysterics
Multiple bruised & bloodied hearts
Bodies that wish they never touched them
A little girl-turned-boy’s initiation
into a cult

Mountains are knees. Uphill,
a tree asks me if it will ever see
daylight not injured by a human’s inner
misdeeds. Its mother burned in a fiery furnace;
my sister interred in a chamber making

decisions based on futures in her womb. My womb
making a run for it—
running the run-on sentence into oblivion
missionary mayhem Mickey Mouse mystery
mini me miming her death in front of a senator—
I think mountains are metaphors for the body.

There is no landscape we can call heaven.

CHING-IN CHEN

Dear O

I was born, they said, a boy
into a heritage of paper

If a fire is placed in a crumbling wall
it leads me to you, separated from the screen

I am not here often

The one who arrived, I lost him in the sea

I was born
so much missing your eyesight
blooming without birds

My body unfolds
and the sound it sings in line

I lost you in the sea.
An ideal neighbor a stone buried below my mother's whitegrain building

A blue vat dye, burning stones to throw

All my unborn reckless as a lamp
strung as a light
broke a path

There was a boy who was not me
because I was a bird singing double-
hearted in the floating line by the sea

soft-throated to face down
the audience

Contrary

once I dove

clear

to quickest end of water the tongue

I watched slow could see no reflection waited for flicker

Wind shook down moaned I stayed

silver crept in my mouth a still bath

I waited for golden eye a glare of sun

might shape a slim body might

JAYCE PHANTOM GRIMSHAW

praying for phalloplasty

Tear us down and remake us in thy image—
spare us this indignity,
constrict this chest, bind down this apostate heart;
call us handsome, call us king.

We know thee, Lord.
We know thy works—
from clenched jaws and shouts,
signs allotting *love no fag*—
to the salt of the earth,
found tongue to skin
between knocking knees.

Let us repent
for every whimpering glance,
for every night spent shuddering, spent sobbing
in an empty bathtub, head against cold porcelain
bleeding in a room with no light.

Whoever said this was necessary?
Which was the science-soaked specter
that ever said we wanted this?

Who will we be when this gouge is gone,
when this gash no longer jags between these legs?

Will we be like unto thee?

In truth, we were only once thy creations,
ever after inventing ourselves.

Perhaps this is only half of a remorse among many.

In the name of thy science,
in the name of society,
and, we suppose, in the name of thee,
Amen.

JESSE SMITH

i dream a man fucks me with the lights on

telling me
his lips into the soft
of my back: this body
 is a male thing

 even
as the scratchwork in
his palm comes to know
my chest, there's flatness
at the second layer

those hands, keeping my hips
their size, pushing my deepest
voice out

 i dream of facing up
to the light, indistinguishable from his hands

Looking at My Chest After Top Surgery

after "Archaic Torso of Apollo" by Rainer Maria Rilke

Ignore the head beyond the mirror's edge
with mint-gray eyes. In view, his torso flexes
under restretched skin and shines with glossy
rapture, in which new absence, stamped with scars,

marks a sovereign will. Otherwise,
the flat chest could not dazzle you so, nor could
blond hairs trail over alabastrine ribs and belly
to that soft chasm where procreation dips.

Otherwise, this body would be entombed
under lumps of fatty tissue and melancholy
and would not strut splendidly to class:

would not, with its rebirthed edges,
triumph against the gods: You can change
your body. You have changed your life.

Ariel

after "Composition No. 3" by John Ollom

Jae the mermaid bleeds lipstick for the sins of the godfatherhead

who can tell a man is a man by the rate he crosses

a room

a man is a crab claw picking his shell bare from the inside

but Jae wears slashed velvet

on his skin gown

the final small blade a man bleeds out from

hides cupped in his touchdown hands like a shotglass

while saltwater streams over Jae's lips

from his scarlet matted hair

his undulation hums an orphaned whalesong

furtively buckled

rhinestone padded bustier hugs his furred chest like a mother

bless us Jae with your black nails

sharpened to teardrops

let the ocean pour out of our mirrors

as you plunge toward us at the rate of forgiveness

JACKSON PHOENIX NASH

Cradling a disaster 30 feet in the air

When I was a kid they tried to straighten my teeth with train tracks,
rogue wires and lacerated cheeks, that stretching soreness,
pain and interdental brushes chugging daily through the tunnels
between cemented brackets,
in an attempt to sculpt my smile
 into something more acceptable,

something a bit less queer.

At about the same time
Maarten Struijs sculpted two plastic whale tails
for Spijkensisse station, completely unaware
that 20 years later they'd save a train driver's life,
carriages caught by a fishy appendage,
cradling a disaster 30 feet in the air—

I wore a t-shirt once when I was feeling brave that said
“Some people are trans, get over it” and people kept misreading it,
they said “Some people are trains, get over it”
and at the time I thought they were wrong,

but now I wonder.

Mermaids are often used as a metaphor for trans bodies
and I dream for a minute that these aren't whale tails at all,
but the lower halves of trans people hiding top surgery scars
below concrete, hiding
from the orthodontist,
frozen in temporal pockets,
pliers poised to snip train track wires

while the votes in America
stay caught between counted
and disputed.

It's a fact that I have transgender teeth, still crooked,
and I'm lacerated
by fears that puncture my cheeks,
holes that threaten to show me
in the places that aren't safe to be shown undersea,
like the classroom I'm working in now
on a Thursday morning,

where young men talk every week about the grossness of queers,
and the things they'd like to do to women, and I shrink

to become one of a million indistinguishable plankton

The Poet Rewrites His Hysterectomy's Operative Report

PREOPERATIVE DIAGNOSIS:

1. Gender dysphoria

POSTOPERATIVE DIAGNOSIS

Same s/p total laparoscopic hysterectomy, bilateral salpingectomy

PROCEDURE:

1. Exam under anesthesia
2. Total laparoscopic hysterectomy
3. Bilateral salpingectomy

ANESTHESIA: GETA

FLUIDS: 1300cc

ESTIMATED BLOOD LOSS: 50cc

COMPLICATIONS: none

SPECIMEN: Uterus, cervix, bilateral fallopian tubes

INDICATIONS: Female to male transgender patient desiring gender affirming hysterectomy and satisfied all WPATH criteria

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURE:

Patient was [REDACTED] prepped [REDACTED] to avoid [REDACTED] the above findings.

[REDACTED] placed in the patient's [REDACTED] grasp [REDACTED] a single-tooth [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] removed [REDACTED].

Attention [REDACTED] turned to the patient's [REDACTED] defect [REDACTED] identified and grasped [REDACTED] entered sharply. [REDACTED] trauma was noted. [REDACTED] revealed [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] each [REDACTED] infiltrating [REDACTED] stab [REDACTED]

[redacted] grasped and [redacted]
[redacted] cut [redacted] beneath [redacted]
[redacted] the [redacted] side.

[redacted] identified. [redacted]
[redacted] dissected [redacted]
[redacted].

[redacted]
[redacted] These steps [redacted]
[redacted] skeletonized [redacted]
[redacted] and [redacted]
[redacted] blanched [redacted]

[redacted] performed [redacted] then
delivered [redacted]

[redacted] taking care to
incorporate [redacted]

[redacted] the conclusion [redacted]
[redacted].

[redacted] the patient's [redacted] direct visualization [redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted] was [redacted] repaired [redacted]
[redacted].

[REDACTED] tolerated [REDACTED] correct [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] please [REDACTED] note [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] i [REDACTED] was present [REDACTED] for the entire procedure.

My dick is a threat to national security

I'm told,
and that is what justifies
groping my body at the airport.

My dick is a threat to national security:
a whistle blown on the lie that surveillance is safety,
a reminder that borders cannot constrain reality.

My dick is a threat to national security.
Who knew something so small
could cause such a big fuss?

The Apocalypse

While you live on planet *Peeing Is a Walk in the Park*, I live on planet *Peeing Is the Apocalypse*. While you live on

planet *Peeing Is a Walk in the Park*, I live on planet *I Know Where Every Bathroom Is*. While you live on

planet *Peeing Is a Walk in the Park*, I live on planet *Fear Every Fucking Men's Room*. While you live on

planet *Peeing Is a Walk in the Park*, I live on planet *I'm Assessing the Necessity of Every Sip of Water*. While you live on

planet *Peeing Is a Walk in the Park*, I live on planet *How Long Do I Have to Be in Here? Do They Think I'm a Guy? Do They Think I'm a Girl?*

Deconstructing gender while reconstructing it for safety with every step. While you live on planet *Peeing Is a Walk in the Park*, I live on

planet *Why'd I Wear This Shirt. Does My Chest Look Weird? Why'd I Wear These Pants? Do My Hips Show? Why'd I Wear This Dick? I Can't Even Stand*

to Pee in a Urinal. While you live on planet *Peeing Is a Walk in the Park*
I live on planet *I'm Waiting 15 Minutes in San José International Airport*

Telling the Fourth Dude to Go Ahead and "Just Use It! I'm Waiting for the Stall."
While you live on planet *Peeing Is a Walk in the Park*, I second-guess everything. Do I

dare risk the impending doom, of only one escape route, collapsing
my world falling into catastrophic defeat? Do I dare to risk trying

the taunting knob of the gender-neutral bathroom stall only to be mocked
when it is surely being used and locked? Mocked by the women's icon

on the adjacent restroom door, a restroom I used to use with ease—correction:
more like repulsive confusion—but at least I knew I passed the test,

played woman so well I knew I was safe. See, while you lived on
planet *Peeing Is a Walk in the Park*, I lived in *Every Ounce of this Skin*

Feels Wrong. Can't go back. So I chase another bathroom:
a multi-stall. Gender-neutral? Or men's? Gender-

neutral? Or men's? Gender-neutral provides safety, while men's, expedience:
the pressure in it all. While you live on planet *Peeing Is a Walk in the Park*.

I live on planet *Peeing Is the Apocalypse*.
As I walk into the men's room, I ask, am I prepared?

Urinal or toilet? Am I prepared? Noises unhuman?
Am I prepared? Men face to face, eyes down, walking

too close. Am I prepared? Men shitting loudly. Am I prepared? For guttural
moans and gassy atomic bombs. Am I prepared? For YouTube videos?

Am I prepared? For the bathroom warzone, never a peaceful place
to call my own. And even when I have the right

dick and choose a urinal, do I risk standing up, leaking, maybe peeing all over myself?
All for going to the bathroom in a way I feel “I should”

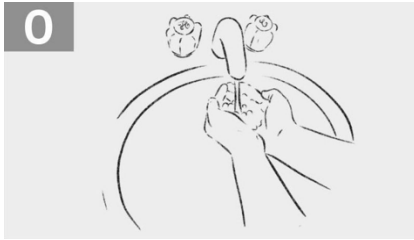
or do I risk the stall surrender to sitting surrounded by piss-
(and probably shit-) stained walls, wondering if they all notice

I’m peeing sitting down? Am I prepared?
Do cis men pee and shit at the same time?

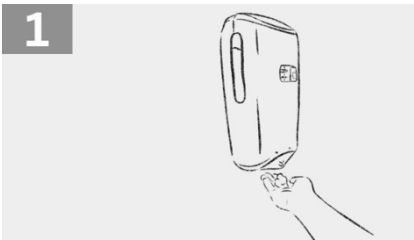
If I do, is that a giveaway? Give way to everything I know,
everything you need me to be, create my own planet, just so I can

sit down, rest, and pee.

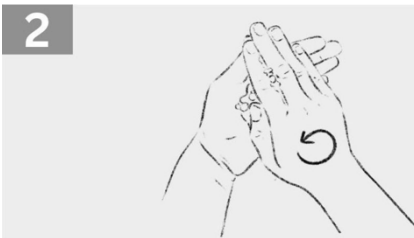
Start with Soap



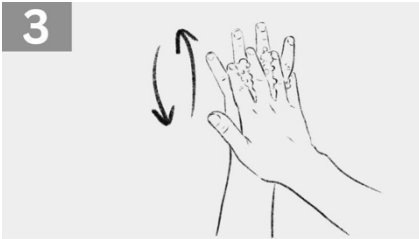
At first you think there is nothing worse than this:
Death of Self.



It is not a literal death
It is the death of a version of you—
a version you thought you might be



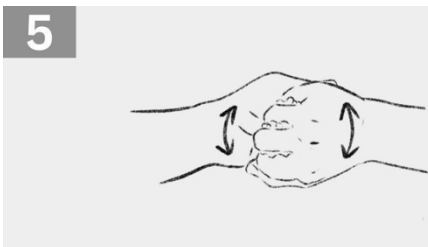
A dances-in-the-kitchen-as-the-sun-rises version
A takes-care-of-your-parents-in-their-old-age version



A reaches-to-call-someone-who-is-definitely-still-there version
An untouched-by-the-grief-of-what-has-changed-you version.



The thing is, though, you have been touched.
That is the very catalyst of the death itself.

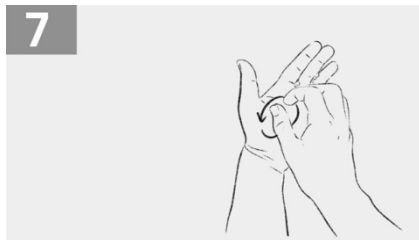


People talk about what to do after the death of a parent or spouse or child or sibling.

What about the death of Self?



There are no resources to help you through this.



There is no instruction manual with illustrations or infographics detailing the steps you can take after surviving the loss of Self.

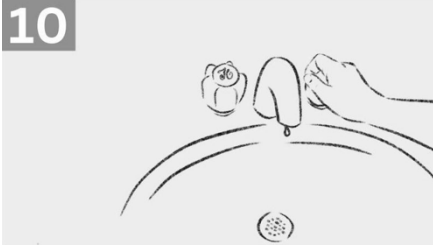


How do you make room for joy?
How do you let go of the expectation to return to a place that no longer exists?



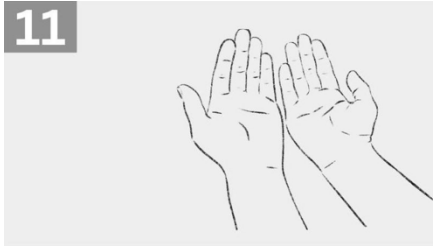
How do you accept the new way you experience the world?

10



How do you wash yourself clean of what you thought you might be and make room for what you are?

11



Start with soap.

Dyke Blues & Note to Self: Stop Dating Cis Women

“Who was I now—woman or man? That question could never be answered as long as those were the only choices; it could never be answered if it had to be asked.”

—Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*

i bend knee, body on top of body, hold cocktail
glass stem, pinched between two fingers.
look attentively at the woman, whose eyes examine
the shape of my hand and the way my body falls over itself.
she measures the space between chin to breasts.
touches my hair, and her hand falls to the chain on my neck.
she cocks her head and says, *i thought you'd be more masculine.*

her hand far from my body now. i breathe a deep sigh
feel the tightness of binder on chest. adjust body
to move like man, to move in a way that makes us both
desirable, me and body. me and lover. imagine us
husband and wife, barely recognizable. so queer
we no longer become queer. an easy answer
to the question, *who is the boy and who is the girl?*
and no, this isn't the first time, and it won't be the last.

but how do i explain to her, i want to be both
i want to be neither. i want to be body that is desired
above all else, i want to be husband and wife. i want to be
butch and twink. how can i explain this to her?
i love this body that moves in ways that go beyond

what she makes of it. that becomes more than flesh
and hands, and knee. that becomes all lover and all
beloved. i want to be bound to a body that holds me
in all the ways i am becoming.

My Whole Name Is a Dead Name

cari, you live in a name // not given to you // by mother // not given
 to you // by blood // sole inheritance // being your own // name //
 not more than a name // body barely even a body // buried in muck and
 red wood // buried in hidden desert heat // cari, time is too little // i see
 // youngest sibling holding it // in
 clenched fist // born from c-sectioned
 // paternal name // cari, unclench the
 fist, // loosen the jaw, // repeat, // it's
 fine it's fine, // burn the part that says
 otherwise // cari, you rename yourself //
 remove yourself // remove the A //
 remove the part of you // painted
 magenta // become nameless
 headstone // in corner of an abandoned
 field // cari, i can hear the yelling // hold the child that collects // in
 crib, crooked necked // and lacking name // cari, name the child // let
 the child have a name // give it the right one // the family name // the
 family name becoming // a word of longing // a word meaning exiled
 by blood // cari, what does it mean // to be exiled by blood? // cari,
 what does it mean // to be exiled? // cari, i want to go home.

ARWYN CARPENTER

You and I both are both

Your hardness and your wetness
your outward driving, your inward sinking
your force to change everything, your agility to switch

First your cock
mouthed
you kneeling above my supine form
I'm kneading you with my lips
rinsing you with wet spit
pulling your shaft out long
from its rooted nook
rolling it
wringing it
milking as it were

Then your cunt
a wet recess
a whirlpool
my tongue drawn entranced
it swirls and plunges
around and in
thickening against your clutch
coaxing
summoning
fucking as it were

Your hardness and your wetness
one asking, one allowing
one dreaming of fullness
one needing to empty
I love that you and I both
are both

You'll know your hand's the key
to my opening need
you'll find me, gauge me
insist, press further
between your fingers, my web of wet
between my fingers, your slippery sap

Daddy me and be my boy
kiss my forehead and I'll kiss yours

Fido Got a Sex Change

Early in the morning a dog who didn't know his name opened his eyes and decided to go back to sleep. He was cozy under the quilt in a flannel shirt and sweatpants plus he didn't have any time-bound obligations that day, no Zoom meetings or doctor's appointments, no pressing reason to disturb his cloth-ridden Zen, but his tongue was sticking to the roof of his mouth so he begrudgingly got out of bed to refill his water bowl from the Britta. Two days ago his country inaugurated a new president, but he missed the televised inauguration because he was getting the plastic tubes in his side *taken out, not ripped out* as his doctor lightly chastised and corrected him, *merely taken out*, no tugs, no elbow flying toward the back wall with a grand inauguration of pain. It hurt more when the doctor replaced the glue strips on his nipples, his chest somehow simultaneously numb and achy where less than a week ago he had had breasts. The doc showed him a pic, warning him that it was gross, and the dog was surprised to see that his breast had been removed all at once, not sucked away in bits through a hose. There it sat on top of his unconscious chest, a slab of red meat with bits of fat and gristle and a few confusing black spots, though not enough to deter him from eating it if he found it on the street. The dog thanked his doctor, put on his shirt and coat, and walked out the door. He thought he might try to draw a picture of his breast meat from memory when he got home, the shape of it vaguely resembling Australia, but he didn't have a colored pencil in a deep enough shade of red, so he laid down on the couch with two pillows behind his head and shoulders, wrapped his body in a blue blanket, and slept. When he woke up, he remembered his name, but he couldn't for the life of him find his keys.

RIVER 瑩瑩 DANDELION

Group Portrait as Parrotfish

science calls us *sequential hermaphrodites*

we have no name

scales glimmer brown gold

after my mate passes

i change gender

don a new life

scatter eggs into the abyss

sixty feet under the sea.

coral crackles sunlight

we camp it

glory holes

shit pebbles

of hawaii's

white sand

beaches

night

falls

we

secrete

mucus

membranes

from

foreheads

cocoon

our

bodies

in memory.

my kind grow giant

loom in storms

at the bottom of the sea

know our existence in itself

magnificence.

End of August

Hurricanes do not scare me the sky is purple and everyone is at home and online
It all makes for a very closed system
Which I love obviously

I do not have it in me for Israel or parties for beer even much less a burrito much less anything with
enough net carbs to send my mother over the edge

I am indebted to my mother

She took me to Atlantic City after my breakup and let me piss away all of her money let me play
video poker let me win four hundred on the slots and slip an extra twenty put it in my back pocket
and pretend like it never existed because that is exactly how she taught it to me. Taught me to lie to
make sure that I know I am coming out the winner. I know and nobody else

She let me play Neil Young in the car at 4am on the way home she said that she liked him actually
there on the Expressway

My voice projects these days

I am a Ben Lerner forever I have been learning forever been leaning forever
A friend says it is mud city but actually it is worm city worms breathe mud mud breeds worms beer
makes me feel like fucking shit hello NSA hello calmer audience hello

I say I am renouncing lesbianhood

Then I make eye contact with Rubyfruit Jungle

The references they
Haunt me

No one tells you that testosterone is actually the femmiest drug in the entire world it makes you
have sympathy for men it makes you want to text men and makes you want to emphasize with
them it
makes you text to your college friends

Hello hello like I'm fucking RuPaul hello hello like I'm fucking fracking

I'm not gonna be Eileen Myles

Second Coming

it's january & god
got it wrong—
ashtrays ice into selves
we sloughed in fire.
bridges crack in half.
how ridiculous it is to want
here. to watch helicopters
crash in smog & still pray
to crush my mouth
against another mouth
just to watch it wilt.
you told me to grow a pair &
i took it literally.
water a silicone cock before bed
expecting morning wood.
is there any time for self-indulgence?
to want some throbbing

future, some phantom

limb to thrust.

LUKE SUTHERLAND

Citrus

In place of a hysterectomy, I ask my girlfriend to fuck the womb out of me / “No more operating rooms / Just lay me down and do it here” / She changes the bed linen / crisps the fitted sheet / The room is cold, a window is open / She tells me this will help / From where I lay, I watch her light candles and fiddle with speakers / It feels like porn, but I don’t say so /

She is the priestess, and I am a small sacrifice ready to give up / my warmest part /

When she fucks me, she uses her hand / Inside me is / everything / she has ever held / Cupped water / a baby bird / sand dollars flat and round / the fingers and fists of other people /

I bite pillows / She braces my hips /

When it is done, she slides out / I close my eyes and feel / heavenly emptiness / Her head on my belly, I cry / Look, she says / and what I see is / the object / in her damp hand /

A small clementine, blood pooling in its pores / I watch her peel the fruit / am misted by its oil / She unsheathes its flesh / arranges pithy segments down my chest /

bisecting me / cleaved / I split /

She eats them / one by one

A Study in Removing Invasive ~~Parts~~ Plants

after torrin a. greathouse's "Burning Haibun"

There is an invasive plant, see: organ, growing in my abdomen. Finally, the day has come to allow the entire garden to unfurl spring ready daffodils. I will take my scalped trowel, dissection breaching the fatty topsoil surface of my skin. Strip back the protective sod fascia, glistening loam under superficial web, then plunge my hand in, to feel the slick warmth coat like a summer storm. Fingers tangle past the wriggly digestive tract of composting worms. Ease through, remembering the screech of childhood Operation, careful not to nick the indulgent bodies. I find the intruder hollowed in pelvic garden bed. I pull but invasive plants cling roots to every bountiful surface. Each tap root is gently pruned while my other hand steadily lifts the trifling rose mass, pearlescent field mouse muscle, until it starts to detach. Unassuming for something that causes so much pain. Equilibrium needs to be returned, the soil and creatures that live within, restored to their natural homes to settle into abundant space. Earthly navel will bear a scar until the skin smooths out, hiding the evidence of today's harvest. The bulbs must stay but their seeds will never germinate. Resource sapper failing to drain away life blood, grow meaty from stolen cells, or wilt the native plants. Instead, burn. Away from the garden. Carried for the final time, to the oil drum in the field, doused with lighter fluid and set ablaze while I warm myself.

█████ invasive plant, █████ allow
the █████ spring █████. take my █████ breaching █████
hand in, to feel the slick warmth █████ past
█████ composting █████ childhood, careful not to nick the
█████ hollowed █████ pelvic █████ surface █████ pearlescent █████ muscle █████.
Equilibrium needs to be restored █████ to settle █████ a scar █████, █████ evidence of
█████ life
blood, █████ Carried for █████ myself.

█████ spring █████ reach █████ in to feel warm █████ child █████ carefully █████
restored, evidence of █████ self.

CODY TIEMAN

You were there but I was too wrapped up in myself to notice

I was asked to stack
the enormous cake at prom

I buried my hands in the thick icing
careful to embed my fingerprints
on each layer, enriching the design

with blue buttercream-coated hands
now shoved inside my dress pants
pockets, I skirted the dance floor
afraid to besmirch
someone else's elegance
with my fistfuls of confection.

Trans Street Boxer

wannabe tapes his knuckles the same way
flattening the pain in a punch saving skin
split against skin watch him fly feather
welter middle cruiser lined up in the
park past sundown spitting blood
and all the rest of it fire cracking
ricocheting crossed and cockeyed
down his spine he's on his back
and breathing hard lungs tearing
chest seared not near enough room
behind his ribs or below his heart
on his back and up again on his back
and up again he goes in knowing he swings
here or from a lazy-knotted rope.
blood and bone and beaten now but later
it's a five in the hand and a ten in the back
pocket denim and paper and all of it blown
in the bar way down the county where they
tell who your mouth's been on
by the size of your belt buckle
dirt road to blacktop to tile floor always
on his knees in the end and all of it
most of it murky in the morning swollen
as a bruise and losing but he never lost
a fight he bet on winning anyway.

MITCH MONROY

read, red, sweetgum

I-69 american sweetgum stretched meadow

blistering airspace billboard read:

“Indiana, meet your Uranus.

FUDGE FACTORY & GENERAL STORE

Coming 2022!”

rosy cheeks mouth full of glee

a blinking tail light azure x starlined

flagged pumper a redneck red truck, turning right

wind turbines and thudding bug bodies

cicada songs safeguarded in grassy environs a

rusted wheel cap cartwheeled face flat over the median

75 miles away from:

a knock rattling fists & swollen bellies
full of sor /ghum bud on the breath never weiser

read sign: ~~REST~~ ROOM

raging beer beardtongue & tangled fright hands
sweltering kidney red stones, wild flowering transboi seas

warning sign: WRONG WAY DO NOT ENTER

billboard read: “HELL IS REAL / JESUS IS REAL”

flaming horse-throats glorify lush american read state sign:

“BLOOD, SWEAT, AND CHEERS ”

beaming sunlines—running—highway birth-scars
a prairie hugged pussyboi allied amidst fields of dense celery rows
across golden height corn & blooming pale beardtongue
on the horizon huddled cotton balls currrl vapor

unparching farm lands breeding boys into green-
into punctured palms full of red

I've got a fake i.d. from nevada and no name

I'm walking uptown to the ritz bar and lounge,
a strange fog drapes over the buildings
like fuzzy orange curtains.
dead phone and no dance moves,
terrified of inhaling a cobweb.
left K on 23rd street, half the city away,
she was parading me around
like an accessory: a wristwatch, a purse, a pet.
in the bathroom, dirty floor,
shoes, shoes scuffing screeching,
get pushed against the wall,
a group crowds in the stall together.
confront myself in the mirror.
tiny glass bottles clink to the floor.
had to pull away, walk fast up the slant of broadway.
wander outside, post up by the smokers,
they've all got stories about fire island, life cycle, and pride,
I've got a fake i.d. from nevada and no name.
at the bar upstairs by the gogo dancers in glittering speedos,
it feels like I've got a piece of fiberglass in my eye.
threading my way to one of the dance floors,
thorns stabbing around in my chest,
in the hallway someone touches the small of my back,
hey, honey.
lean against the wall, and look up—

I can see stars.
there's no one here for me.
pills to wake up and pills to sleep,
blur the hard edge of oblivion.
fade into the same color as the wall.
saw myself once—a reflection on the east river.
how can a god watch over me if I have no name?
what will I say if someone approaches?
it's complicated?
order a gin and tonic as a sorry tribute to my dad,
a hole in the heel of my sock, I've got a blister.
miss staring at the off-white wall.
supposed to be surrounded by my people here.
something is always burning.
don't know what hunger feels like anymore.
they're running out of names for hurricanes.
last week, I got lost in the bronx.
the man at the corner store said I looked like the morning after,
he told me the bus down the block would take me
to the train, *but you've got a long way till queens.*
is this what it all means,
a train rattling into—nevermind.
can almost hear the call of a bird
in that three-note screech
when the subway car is pulling into the station.
sitting on this stupid stool at the bar,
head resting on my knees,
it's such a long way to queens.
spinning away, turning out,
I'm in the back garden running from the wasps,

still don't know why I sprayed their nest with the hose.
eyes closed, pulse of music, clink of ice,
voices clashing meshing.
I'm slipping and drifting through cracks, corners,
puddling, misting, like water,
catch light—light catches me.
he's pulling me to my feet,
he's saying something I can't hear.
I'm pulling away, he pulls me closer,
says in my ear, *just go with it.*
music quiets, voices dull,
my pulse the new beat,
fingers thread together, eyes meet,
skin against skin—warmth. I exist.

Like Any Queer from Ohio, I Mimicked My Host to Survive

Right now my gender is a hole
in the middle of my body. Sometimes
I feel like a monster's mouth:
mostly teeth and hair, devouring
a girlhood I tried on: the ballerina
Halloween costume that itched all night
at the church harvest festival. Any
poem about grief is going to mention that whale
and her dead calf, but I don't want to carry that
story, the weight of it. It's rude to talk about money
and grief in the Midwest. When I say Ohio, you think
of the interstate, corn, and *HELL IS REAL*. I think
more and more about all the astronauts, the internet joke:
what is it about Ohio that makes a person want to leave Earth?
I'm trying to speak up before I'm dead. I'm trying
to stop looking at my phone when I have coffee
with the woman I love. She asked me to turn
the calendar of insects facedown. She asked,
do you think there's still snow in the future? I want
to start shoplifting, want to be as selfish
as my body tells me it already is. My hands
around the lock at night, my hands counting

out change for the dryer. If I look too close
at the specimens I'm gathering, I'm going
to fucking die! I read in an essay that *monstrous*
is code for *vaginal* and don't even get me started
on the teeth. Is it a queer reading if I hate
showing up in the narrative? I'm one-eyed
in my resolve to never see the alien,
its black beetle-shell body, the drumming
in my chest when the crew knows it's near. In Ohio
I wore a girl's body at the waterpark, inflatable
ring drifting on a simulated river. Cicadas
wouldn't stop landing on the inner tube,
on my arms and legs. Wouldn't stop showing up
in my dreams, where they never buzzed against
my skin but crumbled their shells in my hands.
When they woke up, they were already dead.
Like them, I slept for seventeen years, burying
desire in any shallow grave I could. I worried
my family could hear it beneath my feet,
some volcanic rumbling, some vague warning
that would doom only me. That some bird's-egg
blue brought forth by the sun might settle over me.
That I might settle in a body untethered to girlhood.
That a body may be lurking offscreen, a hole
in the middle of a spaceship, in the middle
of Ohio, all exoskeleton and open-mouthed want.

GALEN DAVID BUNTING

if you're Theseus and I'm Theseus,
who's going to get us out of this labyrinth?

from childhood I've been monstrous
my body too large, and yet too small
in short, a freak.

you and I know our places
in the sacred dance
you journeyed from afar,
and me? I'm pacing in the labyrinth

contorting myself to fit through tortuous pathways
my horns scrape furrows in the half-dark
and when a human voice echoes? I run.

must it be this always, this chasing, finding,
must one always be Theseus, one always the minotaur?

if I'm the minotaur and you're the minotaur
who's running behind us, hoofbeats against stone?
who marked us from birth as a portent of woe?

and if you're Theseus, and I'm Theseus,
who's pulling on that silver thread?

who's at the center of the labyrinth once we get there
and stare into each other's unblinking eyes?

when we draw that silver cord taut, our bodies clumsy in the darkness
will there be fantastical creatures painted across the walls of our labyrinth
will we be overtaken with awe like those four boys
entering the caves at Lascaux in the middle of a world war?

no more death matches, no more abandonment on islands
(there's always another island)
no more splitting yourself open on the rocks
and begging for the gods to listen
and no more kings.

if the pale green heart of the labyrinth is empty
we'll leave our handprints smeared across its walls
if we cannot tear them down.
a sign for others

that we, too, have passed through this labyrinth.

Queery

Does my face bend light in a masculine way?

Do you consider my pronouns when we're introduced?

Do I look different than how my voice sounds?

Am I clockable for pointing in my toes? swaying my hips? upspeaking?

Am I < your perception of masculinity?

Are you staring at my genitals?

Do you think transes who aren't on hormones or haven't had surgeries are legitimate?

If my tits aren't bound, will you still bro me up?

Do you accept that I can wear glitter and be a boy?

Are you contemplating if I'm a top or bottom?

Why would you think that was okay to ask?!

Have you ever even had sex with a trans person?

Do you think I'm a fraud for filling all my holes?

Do you know what a chaser is?

Do you gender me correctly in my presence *and* absence?

Is my existence debatable?

Do you ever think of me in a post-gender way? like
me: using whichever bathroom is less busy...

Have you ever seen a dog bite their own tail?

Shame: The Inconvenient Translator

after Dante Collins

how have you felt on T : *you don't look very different to me*

have you heard from your mom yet : *can't you just accept her not accepting you*

what's the name *she* gave you : *what's your real name*

so, are you gonna, like, fully transition : *do you want a dick*

at least they're trying : *why aren't intentions good enough for you*

did you put in your name change application
yet : *do you really even want this*

have you heard from your mom yet : *mmmmm, trauma porn*

sex assigned at birth : *what's that between those legs*

but they love you : *careful, you'll bleed out with blood that thin*

did you see i liked Elliot Page's post : *look at me. i'm an ally now. right?*

so, when do you think : *we can still tell*
you'll be *done* transitioning

i don't have to understand it : *i don't want to understand it*

but—we love you : *please, take it back*

i just don't want to offend anybody : *Here, can you hold this guilt for a sec*

it's all you post about anymore : *the mirror of your happiness terrifies my reflection*

i'm sure your body is going through it ^{right} : *can you feel the poison*
_{now}

what about kids : *what a waste of a womb*

give it time : *it is okay that they cannot love you right now*

i just wouldn't want to hurt your feelings : *the fear you smell is real*

have you heard from your mom yet : *you deserve a mother who wants to know you at least
as well as her own martyrdom*

sending you extra hugs on days like this : *how do we stop ourselves from killing you*

we love you : *that is all that should matter*

you're right. that **is** all that should matter.

LEE NEPTUNE

surgery scars

i carry these lines
two equators
that dip and climb

stretching mighty distance
under / shape-shifting suns / defying time

i carry these lines
smiling up at me
quelling
swelling storms of change
tending to bruised avalanches

imprints of a past life

The Great Outdoors

i am growing as a pea shoot in your hand,
springing up into smoothed-up dwelling place.

watch me blink my way into exhale,
transform to staccato grunt when squeezed at the root.

i admit, i expand under any soft palm,
but:

under your weight, i come
to a newer world. bright and trembling,

full of health, plush as two lips
bitten beestung with impatience.

you too are made new by the slap of heat on heat.
you are archeologist on twice-damned ground, climbing fist by fist

into rapture. i have never been this happy.
origami'd into your nesting place,

lapping up your shriek as rainwater, our cunts thundering
like an overripe sky.

Boy by Flood

Galveston, TX, 1900

Saved from drowning —
the wave swept over,
wrecked, but rescued.

Loaned a pair of overalls,
he found comfort
as a boy.

BOY BY FLOOD

saved from drowning

swept over the wave
wrecked but
rescued
loaned a pair of over-
alls
found
comfort

as a boy

Simple Divorces

Oklahoma, receive me
my friends
like a storm breaking
into the embrace
of the prairie
into the nights
lasting my whole life
the black road
cut into the golden plain
the black cattle
cut into the golden plain
abandoned telegraph poles
a hundred thousand crosses
on the altar of progress
wintering prickly pear leaves
shining like loose silver dollars
the veins of red earth
running beneath the grass

Oklahoma, receive me
like the Silver Jews DJ night
a billboard boasting
a \$799 cremation

your woman in Topeka
you've never met
who makes batik
tie-dyed shirts and who is beautiful
the way someone
who will not drive
is beautiful
life is going to take
back everything
it gave to you
every junkyard
longhorn
every skeletonized
armadillo
every defunct
rattlesnake museum
it takes courage
to do something
as embarrassing
as saying I'd give it up
to get kicked in the nuts
just once

Oklahoma, receive me
away from the oil
derrick-themed picnic area
outside of Dallas
where daffodils are filled

with a billion tiny shards
of glass and if you pick them
the sap can burn your hands
and I picked so many
in New England
like an idiot
from the desert
grinning for the flowers
sprouting up from the cracks
like they thought of it
themselves
no one warned me
it would hurt
so it didn't

Oklahoma, receive me

Jesus never saw a place
that wasn't a table
never saw a nail
that wasn't waiting
for a hammer
and never felt angry
when they turned on him
together
there are parts of me
I will never see
there are parts
of Louisiana

that are underwater
there are two boats
and one heart
one restaurant
with a raunchy name
like Cum Pasta
that's open late
there's a forest
of mesquite trees
full of the warbles
of quail and wild
pigs ripping holes
in the dirt and you'll
never see it
you're watching
at the snow
turning purple
by the highway
the tractor trailer trucks
black against the gradient
sky flying away
from you with the velocity
of all things and soon
you will eat kaya toast
in the city where you live
under two planets

who are nearly touching
the way we are

ABECEDARIAN for TRANS JOY

Apple bottom jeans, boots with the fur, we got the whole club looking at our
Butts shaking in our boy-girl jeans, who
Couldn't join in the glistening share of our sweat just
Dancing our way to the heavens, you know, legs
Elastic like bubblegum roped 'round a perfect finger
From our mouths. We praise each other up and down,
Got each other covered in the glitters of our words, rhinestones—
Had God any other name for it—we're queerz:
In control of ourselves. Our sex is not shy, we
Jump full-bodied into quantum physics, matter fundamentally,
Keep on cooking chicken dinners for lovers—US—no one better,
Laugh like a stomach can rot if not, full bellies in tight dresses,
Makeup our genders, high cherry cheekbones, boy bone structure.
Not a single one of us can't cry tonight—
Opening our palms and turning tarot cards,
Plucked unlucky like ducks from the pond of our fortunes:
Queen of Cups. Leona adorns her throne at the edge of ocean,
Reads our love lives for filth, shares stories of our early
Sex in parks, cop cars lucky not to spotlight
The way we fucked: trans and not out yet,
Under each other promising out best at pleasure.
Vulnerability is a door open at the end of the

World. Step through and here you are in an
XXX bar with us shoving bills in your hands, telling you
You are the prettiest thing we've ever seen,
Zebra-print dress, anointing us with your blessed and hairy chest.

I Love You

With a line from Major Jackson

I love you little
wisp of cloud
center of blue
sky in my home
town, desert
rattlesnake sipping
dust tongue
flicking
like a candle
in a hole. I love
you, big pie
on my birthday
with whipped cream
homemade lime
zest sprinkled in:
I am a kid again.
Hello yellow subway
chair unoccupied
tonight, window
underground still
wet with snow.

Thank you, man
I fished up
from the train's
metal tunnel,
for finding me
on a Tuesday
with no work next
and an orchestra
just a few stops
up. I needed to see
your face, hold
your body. I love
you. Strawberries
sliced packed iced
over with frosting
in the back kitchen
bakery where bored
I wash sheet pans.
Over frozen cherry
pies, Lodok tells me
he walked right out
into it, the 2nd
plane crashing.
“How could anyone
do that
to other human
beings?” *Go home,*

he told me, *see*
your mother. Mama,
I love you. Baby
Julian, swimming
up through struggle,
I love you. Baby
chickens in the
kitchen box,
I love you. I love
you tender. Red
skirt full
of blackberries, I love
you. Big wave crashing
into my sleep, the tent,
Alex at the beach,
my startled sandals,
all signs saying
“drowned” my collapse
into their sunned arms,
good. *I love you*.
I love you too. Moon
coming up roses,
thrift shopping
Caroline switching tags
pocketing keychains
with Reno written
gold. *This happiness*

so hard to come by,
and my life has been so,
been so, been so
good.

NOTES

“Start with Soap”: Art by Rey Jackson inspired by an original pamphlet from the World Health Organization on how to properly wash hands.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Julian Applebaum (he/him) is an aspiring lawyer and poetry hobbyist from Wellesley, Massachusetts. He is an incoming graduate student at the University of Oxford, and he currently works as a legal assistant with the ACLU. He enjoys reading and writing poetry to escape from the often dreary legal world and to connect with his identity as a gay transgender man.

KB Brookins is a Black, queer, and trans writer, cultural worker, and artist from Texas. They authored *How to Identify Yourself with a Wound* (Kallisto Gaia Press, 2022), a chapbook that won the Saguaro Poetry Prize and an American Library Association Stonewall Honor Book in Literature; *Freedom House* (Deep Vellum, 2023), a poetry collection recommended by *Vogue* and *Autostraddle*, among others; and *Pretty* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2024), their forthcoming memoir. KB's writing is published on Poets.org, in *Teen Vogue*, *Poetry Magazine*, and elsewhere. They are a 2023 National Endowment of the Arts Fellow. Follow them online at @earthtokb.

Galen David Bunting received his PhD in English in 2023; he is currently a postdoctoral fellow at Northeastern University, where he teaches writing. He serves as an assistant editor for *smoke + mold*. You can read his work in the pages of *the minnesota review*, *The Fabulist*, *The Modernist Review*, *Black Warrior Review*, and elsewhere. He lives and works in Boston, Massachusetts. You can follow his work at galenbunting.com, or via his Instagram @pip_istrellus.

Levi Cain is a nonbinary Queeribbean writer from New England. Their work has been published in *The Slowdown*, Arsenal Pulp Press, *Room Magazine*, *Shenandoah Literary Magazine*, and elsewhere. Their chapbook, *dogteeth.*, was published by Ursus Americanus Press in 2020. You can keep up with their work at levicain.wordpress.com, or on their Twitter & Instagram @honestlyliketbh.

Arwyn Carpenter is a queer trans dancer, writer, and teacher. He holds an MFA in Dance from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and taught for the Toronto District School Board for 10 years,

winning awards for excellence in elementary arts education. Arwyn co-runs Flight Festival of Contemporary Dance on Treaty 57, Ontario, and lives on Treaty 13, Tkaronto.

Cee Chávez is the court jester by day and moonlights as your child's favorite teacher. Their debut chapbook, *Directions for Deliverance*, is out now with Bottlecap Press. Their poetry has been published in *Cobra Milk*, *The Acentos Review*, *Isele Magazine*, East French Press, and elsewhere. You can keep up with their poetry and watch them be cringe & free on Instagram @highscorebussy.

Descended from ocean dwellers, **Ching-In Chen** is a genderqueer Chinese American writer, community organizer, and teacher. They are the author of *The Heart's Traffic: a novel in poems* and *recombinant* (2018 Lambda Literary Award for Transgender Poetry) as well as the chapbooks *to make black paper sing* and *Kundiman for Kin :: Information Retrieval for Monsters* (Leslie Scalapino Finalist). Chen is a co-editor of *The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence Within Activist Communities* and is currently a core member of the Massage Parlor Outreach Project and a Kelsey Street Press collective member. They received fellowships from Kundiman, Lambda, Watering Hole, Can Serrat, Imagining America, the Jack Straw Cultural Center, the Intercultural Leadership Institute, as well as the Judith A. Markowitz Award for Exceptional New LGBTQ Writers. They teach at the University of Washington Bothell. www.chinginchen.com.

Samuel Clark graduated with his MFA in fiction from the University of North Carolina Wilmington in 2019. A 2021 candidate for *The Kenyon Review* Writers Workshop, a recipient of the LGBTQ+ Writer Scholarship for The Muse & The Marketplace 2019, and a partial scholarship recipient to the Sundress Academy for the Arts, his work has been published in literary magazines such as *BOOTH*, *Blood Orange Review*, *Gris-Gris Literary Journal*, *The Conium Review*, *Artemis Journal*, and *Shenandoah*. He's currently based in Fort Collins, CO, where he lives with his adopted cat, Emily D.

Charlie Dale (they/them) is a trans-masculine, queer, disabled poet with an MFA from The New School. They have poems in *Water Damaged Paper Anthology*, *Beyond Queer Words*, *Revolution Publication*, *Lemonboy*, *The Shallot*, and *Mulberry Literary*. Charlie strives to cultivate liberation through vulnerability—both on the page and in the world.

River 莹莹 Dandelion is a practitioner of ancestral medicine through writing poetry, teaching, energy healing, and creating ceremony. As a poet, he writes to connect with the unseen and unspoken so we can feel and heal. As a healer, he is an energy healing practitioner who helps clients move through transition and transformation. River also facilitates creative writing workshops, where participants connect with their own inner and collective power. A Tin House Resident, Lambda Literary Fellow, and Kundiman Fellow, River is the author of *remembering (y)our light*, an illustrated poetry chapbook recommended by *Lambda Literary Review*. River's work has been nominated for *Best of the Net* (2024), and is published in *Best New Poets*, *The Offing*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *The Margins*, *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, and elsewhere. He was a 2023 finalist for the Ruth Lilly and Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Fellowship. River has performed and presented his work globally from the Dodge Poetry Festival to the University of Havana. To connect, visit riverdandelion.com and IG: @rememberingourlight.

Gion Davis is a trans poet from Española, New Mexico, where he grew up on a sheep ranch. His poetry has been featured in *HAD*, *MAYDAY Magazine*, *Sprung Formal*, and others. His debut collection *Too Much* (2022) was selected by Chen Chen for the 2021 Ghost Peach Press Prize. He graduated with his MFA in poetry from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2019 and currently lives in Denver, Colorado. Gion can be found on Instagram [@starkstateofmind](https://www.instagram.com/starkstateofmind) & on Twitter [@gheeontost](https://twitter.com/gheeontost).

Shane Dedman is a TRANSmedia artist concerned with representational autonomy, archival fever, and trans resilience. He has been featured in *Wussy Mag*, *Analog Cookbook*, Bowery Poetry Club, the NYC Poetry Festival, the Hambidge Gala, and the Atlanta Biennial. They live in New York City and enjoy confusing strangers with their gender presentation.

n.w. downs lives in Chicago with a cat. He is the author of *where the men come from* through Fifth Wheel Press and *Objects in Mirror*, a book of poems about country music stars and what happens after the dog dies, through Querencia Press.

Kaiya Gordon is a writer and poet from the San Francisco peninsula. Their current research interests trace relationships between trans archival practice and poetics. Previously, Kaiya's work has been published by *Empty Mirror*, Triangle House Press, *Split Lip Mag*, The Wexner Center for the Arts, and others. Their favorite karaoke song is "Basket Case," by Green Day. Kaiya calls on all readers of this anthology to obstruct empire and genocide however they can, wherever they can, with the understanding that liberation for all oppressed peoples requires a commitment to ongoing risk. They unequivocally call for a free Palestine and the dismantling of all settler states, including but not limited to Israel and the United States. Follow Kaiya's brainworms on Twitter @fatiguedfag.

Paxton Grey (he/they) is a transmasculine software developer and poet living in Indiana. His work has been published in *Sundog Lit*, *Palette Poetry*, *Glass: A Journal of Poetry*, *Hobart*, *After Dark*, and elsewhere. His micro-chapbook *the war* was released with tiny wren lit (October, 2022) and his collaborative chapbook *COLUMNS* will be rereleased in Fall 2023 with Fifth Wheel Press. They can be found on Twitter @PaxWrites.

Jayce Phantom Grimshaw is a cryptid living in Southern Utah. He makes art, writes things, and has gotten lost in an abandoned mine shaft only once. His relationship with gender is much like a YA protagonist coming upon a feral, hurt animal in the woods; what follows is a dangerous exchange of human compassion and wild wisdom and, eventually, a parting where neither leaves as the creature they once were. But, honestly, he wouldn't have it any other way.

Julian Guy is a queer and trans writer and educator born in Reno, Nevada, currently residing on the East Coast. A 2023 Tin House Scholar, his work can be found in *Queerlings Magazine*, *Lesbians are Miracles*, *The Adroit Journal*, *Swamp Pink*, *Catapult*, and more. Find Julian online at his website, www.julianguy.com, or at the beach pulling up seaweed and oysters from the surf.

Mo Hakala is a queer nonbinary poet raised in the South. After a brief stop in the medical field, they are re-pursuing their passion for writing and teaching while completing their post-bac in Creative Writing at the University of North Carolina Asheville. Despite having their love of language dampened by the toils of capitalism for a while, they are exploring expressions of our bodies as nature and mythologizing ourselves beyond the pain of trauma into spaces of queerness, community, and abundant joy. When not writing or in class, they can be found working at the local farmers' market, in the woods with friends, or at home with their cats.

Andie Jones (they/them) is a neurodivergent, Bi+, chronically ill, nonbinary transmasc emerging writer nested in Akron, Ohio. Their work attempts to explore the vastness of queer magic and its connection within and between nature, loves, and self. Andie believes that poetry is the soul's way of taking apart its pieces and putting them back together again, for the sake of knowing how they all fit together in the first place. You can find their work in *Anti-Heroine Chic*, Beyond the Veil Press, fifth wheel press, and *South Florida Poetry Journal*, and you can keep up with their art and advocacy on socials @andie_the_enby.

Jessie Keary is a trans writer with a corporate day job living in the Midwest. Their poetry can also be found in Belt Publishing's *Sweeter Voices Still: An LGBTQ Anthology from Middle America*, as well as *Hooligan Mag* Issue #29.

Ari J. Lisner is a poet, writer, and researcher whose writing captures queer intimacy against the backdrop of New York City. His work has been featured in *The Brooklyn Rail*, *The Quarterless Review*, *Peach Mag*, *Triangle House*, *Wonder*, *GQ*, *Allure*, and others. Ari's chapbook *ONE SCHTICK PONY* was published by Bullshit Lit in 2023. Find Ari on Instagram at [@arisbarmitzvah](https://www.instagram.com/arisbarmitzvah).

Ky Lohrenz is a Texas native living in New York, where they work for the Academy of American Poets. His poems have appeared in *Cleaver*, *Peach Mag*, *Ghost City Review*, and elsewhere. He was a semi-finalist for *GASHER Magazine's* 2022 Bennett Nieberg Transpoetic Broadside Prize.

Rebecca Martin (they/she) is the author of *High-Tech Invasions of the Flesh* (Bottle Cap Press, 2022). They are a queer poet, educator, and roller skater with work appearing in *Nimrod International Journal*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Muzzle Magazine*, and others. They received an Honorable Mention in the 2022 *Gulf Coast* Poetry Prize and are a graduate of Oregon State University's MFA program, where they were awarded the Graduate Creative Writing Award in Poetry and served as poetry editor for literary magazine *45th Parallel*. They currently live in Pittsburgh.

Mitch Monroy is a trans Guatemalan poet and multimedia fine artist. They are a coffee technician by trade, daydreaming about queerness and identity. Their projects explore trans realities across borders and this tradition of absence. They were selected as a Tin House 2023 Winter Scholar. Their past works have been featured in *The Polyglot Magazine*, the Parrish Art Museum, and Ashawagh Hall. They currently reside in Chicago, Illinois. Connect with them on Instagram ([@mitch_monroy](https://www.instagram.com/mitch_monroy)).

Cari Muñoz is a queer poet and letterpress artist born and raised in Los Angeles, California. They received their BA in Literature with a concentration in Creative Writing from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and an MFA from Arizona State University. They were the 2022–2023 Artistic Development & Research Assistant for the Center for Imagination in the Borderlands at Arizona State University. Their honors include the 2020 Gary Young's Dizikes Award, the Reyna Grande Scholarship, the 2022 Glendon and Kathryn Swarthout Award, the Virginia G. Piper Fellowship for Cultural Exchange in the Literary Arts, and the 2022 Mabelle A. Lyon Award. Their work has appeared in such publications as *SALT Literary Journal*, *Queer Rain*, and more.

Jackson Phoenix Nash (he/him) is a queer transgender writer from Essex, England. His poetry and fiction have appeared in *Propel*, *Under the Radar*, *Rattle*, *Channel*, *Baffling Magazine*, and many more. Jackson is a Lambda Literary Writer's Retreat Fellow. He was shortlisted for the Creative Future Writer's Award in 2020 and, in 2022, was selected for Creative Future's Next Up Development Programme. He has a PhD in Gender Studies with a thesis on trans YA literature. His debut pamphlet will be published by Little Betty in 2024. Jackson is neurodiverse and dyslexic.

lee neptune is a jewish and taiwanese writer and dreamer with roots in taipei and ohlone territory (sf bay area). they are co-editing a forthcoming anthology of speculative fiction, poetry, and art, tentatively titled, *intergalactic gaysians*. they are rooted in solidarity with the people of palestine and all people who seek liberation from genocide and fascism

Jendi Reiter is the author of the novel *Two Natures* (Saddle Road Press, 2016), the short story collection *An Incomplete List of My Wishes* (Sunshot Press, 2018), and five poetry books and chapbooks, most recently *Made Man* (Little Red Tree, 2022). Their awards include a Massachusetts Cultural Council Fellowship for Poetry, the New Letters Prize for Fiction, the *Wag's Revue* Poetry Prize, the *Bayou Magazine* Editor's Prize in Fiction, and two awards from the Poetry Society of America. *Two Natures* won the Rainbow Award for Best Gay Contemporary Fiction and was a finalist for the Book Excellence Awards and the Lascaux Prize for Fiction. They are the editor of WinningWriters.com, an online resource site with contests and markets for creative writers.

Benjamin Anthony Rhodes is a queer and trans poet living in Northeast Ohio. He holds an MFA from Kent State University and a BA in English from the University of Louisiana at Monroe. Benjamin carries on his mother's legacy by teaching reading and writing to students of all age levels. His work can be found in *Cleveland Review of Books*, *Surging Tide*, *Limp Wrist*, and *Let Me Say This: A Dolly Parton Poetry Anthology*. His poem "Elliot Page Just Came Out as Trans" was nominated for a Pushcart Prize by *Drunk Monkeys* in 2022.

Fox Rinne is a poet and groundskeeper living in New York City.

Birch Rosen (they/them) is an agender poet, zinester, and essayist living in the Seattle area on the unceded land of the Coast Salish peoples. They use personal writing to create space for more nuanced trans and nonbinary narratives. Their work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Southern Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *From the Waist Down: The Body in Healthcare* (Papeachu Press), and elsewhere. They are the 2022 winner of the King County Library System Poetry Contest. Their zines include *T&A (Transitioning & Attractiveness)*, *Boobless*, and the *Trans*

Restroom Rants series. They are currently working on a memoir about their bottom surgery (which made their dick larger but no less of a threat to national security).

jesse smith (they/he) is a queer poet and reviewer from the UK. he released his first pamphlet of erasure poems, *Boy, Found*, in 2021, and their poems and reviews are published with Stone of Madness, *just femme & dandy*, *engendered*, and more. he is the founder and poetry reader of *the gamut mag* (@thegamutmag). find them on twitter and instagram @jessesmithpoet.

Adrian Speth (he/they) is a queer and trans writer currently splitting his time between his rural Utah hometown and Boston, Massachusetts. When he isn't writing, he is usually collaging or researching Great Lakes shipwrecks. They are a BFA Theatre Arts student, playwright, and opera stage manager at Boston University. You can find more of their work on their Instagram, [@adrianswrites](#).

Max Stone is a trans, queer poet from Reno, Nevada. He holds an MFA in poetry and a BA in English with a Minor in Book Arts and Publication from the University of Nevada, Reno. He was born and raised in Reno but has lived in various other places, including New York City, where he played soccer at Queens College. Max is passionate about building the literary community in Reno and frequently organizes poetry readings in town. He is the author of two chapbooks: *The Bisexual Lighting Makes Everyone Beautiful* (Ghost City Press, 2023) and *Temporary Preparations* (Bottlecap Press, 2023). His work appears in *& Change*, fifth wheel press, *The Meadow*, *Bender Zine*, *just femme & dandy*, *Night Coffee Lit*, *Caustic Frolic*, *Black Moon Magazine*, and elsewhere.

Luke Sutherland is a trans writer and librarian living on Nacotchtank (Anacostan) and Piscataway land (Washington, D.C.). His work has appeared in *smoke + mold*, *ANMLY*, *Bright Wall/Dark Room*, *MQR: Mixtape*, Stone of Madness Press, and more. He was a finalist for the *SmokeLong Quarterly* Award for Flash Fiction. In his free time, Luke helps organize a trans writing group that aims to build queer literary community in D.C. You can find him on Twitter or Instagram @lukejsuth.

Cody Tieman is a queer poet from Columbus, Ohio. He is currently working on a collection inspired by dreams and nightmares. His poetry has appeared in *The Brooklyn Review*, *The Allegheny Review*, and elsewhere.

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Max Stone: “I’ve got a fake i.d. from nevada and no name,” *Sandpiper*. Reprinted by permission of the author.

Luke Sutherland: “Citrus,” *Angel Rust*. Reprinted by permission of the author.

RECOMMENDED READING

Our editorial team recommends the following titles with which this collection is in conversation.

Defining Myself: Transmasculine Experience Through Poetry (2016), ed. Michael Eric Brown & Max Andeo Meyer

We Want It All: An Anthology of Radical Trans Poetics (2020), ed. Andrea Abi-Karam & Kay Gabriel

Troubling the Line: Trans and Genderqueer Poetry and Poetics (2013), ed. Trace Peterson and TC Tolbert

Nepantla: An Anthology Dedicated to Queer Poets of Color (2018), ed. Christopher Soto

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Remi Recchia (he/him), PhD, is a trans poet, essayist, and editor from Kalamazoo, Michigan. A five-time Pushcart Prize nominee, Remi's work has appeared in *World Literature Today*, *Best New Poets 2021*, and *Prairie Schooner*, among others. Books and chapbooks include *Quicksand/Stargazing* (Cooper Dillon Books, 2021); *Sober* (Red Bird Chapbooks, 2022); *From Gold, Ghosts: Alchemy Erasures* (Gasher Press, 2023); *Little Lenny Gets His Horns* (Querencia Press, 2023); and *Aphorism / Paroxysm* (fifth wheel press, forthcoming). Remi has been a Tin House Scholar and Thomas Lux Scholar. He holds an MFA in poetry from Bowling Green State University.