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OF THE ARTS

VOL 1

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MAGAZINE
E N T R E
OF THE ARTS



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Entre: Magazine of the Arts
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Entre Magazine is an independent literary magazine with a postcolonial mission: to challenge and deconstruct the concept of identity through the works of--primarily--queer and/or Latina/o/x/e artists. This magazine serves as a type of *nepantla* ("land between"), a space created as a response to the need within the greater literary and academic communities to bring visibility to these artists - these *atravesados* - to empower them to express and reconcile their *inbetweenness* with a modern/colonial world otherwise hyper-fixated on labels, restrictions, and the persistence of keeping us divided.

Entre is published twice yearly, once in the spring and once in the fall. All artists published within this volume retain the rights to their works.

"A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los *atravesados* live here...the perverse, the queer, the troublesome...in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal.'"
—Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

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FROM THE REPTILES

It is with great excitement and gratitude that I present to you the inaugural issue of *Entre: Magazine of the Arts*. It was on a hike with my brother, Michael, last summer when the idea for *Entre* first came to mind. At the time, I myself was seeking out literary magazines in which to publish my own short fiction. I have only recently begun finding my voice as a writer, honing my avenue of literary research and theory, despite it now being my final semester as a graduate student. It has taken a long time; the exploration of myself necessitated a great branching upward and outward before I felt a strong pull back down, down, *down* to my roots.

I've asked myself - I *ask* myself still - about these roots of mine. Where do they go? What foundation do they serve? What - or *who* - are they nurturing and growing? These questions have begun to form the basis for my writing, most recently in the works I have been pitching to magazines that are particularly focused on

the queer, Latina/o/x/e experience. Of course, I was unsurprised, though still disappointed, to discover that there is a stark paucity of such magazines; I was thus stricken with the motivation to expand this pool - you may be familiar with the expression “write the stories you want to read” - and so, drawing from my background as a writer, a designer, and a content creator, I decided to bring *Entre* to life: a platform, a space, a museo for artists much like myself to express and explore their voices, their identities, their creations, their inquiries, their journeys.

The magazine’s name, meaning “between,” is not only intended to reflect the contents within its pages, but the recurrent themes that I’ve begun to encounter as, over the last year, I ventured into, and engaged with, the works and ideas of prominent theorists and writers like Gloria Anzaldúa, Jose Esteban Muñoz, Michael Hames-García, Ernesto Javier Martínez, Cherríe Moraga, Gil Cuadros, Gibrán Güido, Manuel Muñoz, Helena María Viramontes, Carribean Fragoza, Justin Torres, and John Rechy. The *inbetweener*, the *monster*, the *misfit*, the *hybrid*: these are identities often cited and assumed in these writers’ works.

My monster once believed it was white masked in Brown, speaking a language of one, but not the other. It despised those who bore a resemblance, wanting, yearning to be something it never could be.

Because my monster was envy.

My monster was falsehoods.

My monster was privilege.

My monster was pain.

It was in the presence of other monsters that its instincts shifted - awakened, perhaps? My monster was not predator, but prey. Unsafe in the very world for which it longed. Frankenstein’s monster now - bewitched and tormented by the proverbial pitchfork or flame.

Not only do many queer (and/or) Latina/o/x/e theorists and writers discuss or embody such identities, but they often reference the spaces they inhabit: *bridges, borderlands, fringe worlds* - spaces that consist of a multitude of colliding communities, classes, or cultures, spaces in which languages overlap, spaces that are entirely undefined - hybridized worlds that encourage curiosity, that subvert and destabilize hegemonic norms. What is *Entre*, if not emblematic of these spaces?

I started learning the language of my monster. I talked to it. I listened to it. I looked inward, searching for it, searching for myself. I explored the recipe of my blood and the depth of my roots.

My monster calls out to the spirits in the objects around me. But its cries are often dampened, deemed "savage" by my "rational" self - it is a MONSTER, after all.

My monster. The monster who channeled these very words through me, who brought them to the page.

Just as the concept of identity is fluid, so too is the editorial vision of this magazine. Of course, *Entre's* mission is (and will always be) to give visibility and voice, first and foremost, to queer, Latina/o/x/e artists (as a response to the sparsity of similar magazines I mentioned prior) who explore and give meaning to the *inbetween*, but it is the artists themselves who will ultimately shape the messages of this magazine, give form to it as a vessel. Works like Zaira Gomez's "Secretos Del Chiflon," for example, demonstrate the complex navigation of self-perception through image and language - note the poem's employment of the bilingual; M.A. Dubbs's work of short fiction, "Purr-ez," conveys the struggle of someone trying to figure out how they fit within the Latina/o/x/e community when they also feel so disconnected

from it. Crystal Reyes's "tinder dates make for the best hangovers" explores queer representations of modern dating, while Ofelia Guillen's "Un Día Sin Indocumentados," available in both its original Spanish and translated English, underscores the immigrant narrative from the perspective of the Latina/o/x/e worker in America.

In addition to this mission to give visibility and voice to queer and/or Latina/o/x/e artists, *Entre* also features some works of artists from other communities or experiences; after all, the fluid, dynamic space of the *inbetween* is vast, inclusive, and diverse. Andrea Imdacha's "what has fur is beast" explores the performative aspects of gender and ethnicity, underscoring them as societal constructs, while the speaker in Lori Marin's "Floating" reflects on the role that our pasts - or histories - play in shaping and informing the potential of our futures, begging the questions: *who are we?* and *who are we meant to be?* Regardless of the communities, traditions, or experiences to which they belong, all of the artists in this volume - through the vessels of prose, poetry, and visual art - use their talents and voices to ask us to consider such questions time and time again.

Who are you? I ask. WHAT are you?

Spirit animal!

Shadow creature!

Tono! You reside within the cells of my body, between the joints of my popping knees, my soft stomach, my crooked back, behind the allure of my smile!

(Where are you? I ask.)

Are you everywhere?

Nowhere?

Between. Yes! Between, because the monster inside me [...] likes to mingle.

(Will I ever find you?)

(You will, says my monster. You already have. C'mon, now. Keep searching.)

I return one last time to the magazine's name. "Entre." *Between*. It is not only a representation or reflection of an identity and a space, but also of the *connections* between people, between concepts, between worlds, between who we are and who we have yet to discover. It is with great hope that the art found within this inaugural volume will encourage such connections, will encourage and inspire us to question the constructs of our world, perhaps seek to subvert or change them, seek out growth and transformation. Aptly, *Entre* celebrates its launch in spring, a season signifying renewal and change. The seeds have been planted, a vision has taken root, and now, it is with excitement and pride, that we can look to the future and await what is to come.

Ray Páramo
Founding Editor
May 2024

VOLUME 1

EDICIÓN 1

primavera



Secretos Del Chiflón

ZAIRA GOMEZ

Secretos Del Chiflón

Candied, juicy rain

Velo De Novia (Bride's Veil)

Terracotta staggered squares
Bounded by footsteps and routes

Quinceañera

unveiling of aire y verguenza
Where truth and secrets merge

Arcoíris (Rainbow)

As they pirouette into droplets
Singing into the strands

Ala de Ángel (Angel's wing)

And syncing con las cascadas

El Suspiro (The Sigh)

Bestowing candor only she knows

tinder dates make for the best hangovers

CRYSTAL REYES

At midnight, in the busy streets of Ciudad de México; the luminescent signs-*de los antros* encompassed *La Zona Rosa*, illuminating underneath me. *El olor de tacos al pastor* swept by me, and I anxiously waited for my date to locate me. I turned slightly towards the edge of the street; her beauty struck me over; it made me trip on the side of the curb. A pair of fishnet stockings were wrapped at her knees, they complimented her faux leather boots, her red draped cardigan hugged her hips. We greeted each other with, *un besito mexicano*, a kiss on both cheeks, and a bear hug, as if we weren't complete strangers.

After chasing a couple of shots of *Don Julio*, my head began to spin with the colors of the disco ball, and the blazing, *música de mis raíces* took control of my body. Breathless, and tightly packed like a package of sardines; I made my way amongst a flock of flashy outfits and bedazzled makeup. I danced and pranced until I reached a daze of infinite darkness, twirling and whirling through a rollercoaster of unknown lights and shadows.

As I lay there gagging on my own vomit, Alec held a tight grip on my hair so that chunks of food residue would miss my curly, auburn locks.

"*Donde estoy?*" I yelled softly in a groggy voice. Claspings tightly to my head as it thudded with every beat from my heart.

“You are in my *departamento*. *No te preocupes, estás safe conmigo.*”
Her honey-gray eyes met mine as they reassured me of no danger near my proximity.

La segunda noche pasó. I was myself again. *El día* consisted of an exchange of childhood memories, fears that were still taking toll on our lives like demonic possession, *y una calentura pura entre nosotras.*

Reynalda's Chair

R. JOSEPH RODRÍGUEZ

Reynalda raises the chair high above her head,
and SLAM! A museum floor of harm and hurt.
(Her shaggy hair like Medusa's in a deep frazzle.)

The people in the seminar are befuddled.
Reynalda rules here and makes it known.
Reynalda decolonizes the room and space,
leaving exclamation and question marks.
(Nobody says a word as if silence speaks.)

Reynalda walks away, elegant as a queen.
The seminar comes to an impending end,
and nobody asks what deconstruction is.

*Centennial Museum
El Paso del Norte, Tejas
Chihuahuan Desert*



Mima & Tita's

NOA MELENDEZ

multimedia: acrylic, pastel, colored pencil, collage paper on canvas, 36 x 48

Gentrification

JESSICA ROWSHANDEL

In Los Feliz on Rodney Street we parked
and smoked a joint. One by one
they passed the two browns in the car.
One by one they walked their dogs the secret
police the suvs slid into and
from driveways chins narrowed & questioned us.
“This used to be a very different neighborhood,”
she told me. “I feel like I’m at the zoo
watching them” I said.
Did they want us to break the glass? Or did they
want to call the cops? A glitch
in their evening stroll, a smudge
on the screen, a colored
pixel uncaged.

In Transit

RACHEL PESAVENTO BROWNELL

I kissed her once while we waited for the subway, vibrating drunk. I remember the pounding fluorescence that scared the underground platform naked and reached through my closed lids. I remember how we sat so lightly on the edge of that round concrete bench; channeled the hunger of taking into our lips. I remember thinking about the long hair dressing her head, how although I couldn't see it just then, I knew something about combing it, owning it, being a girlish brunette. I remember almost laughing at the seriousness of bodies meeting when, moments later, the train doors would cut me off from all of this, and how that is what life is, mostly. I remember her small, fierce sparrow body—I didn't quite know how to track such abrupt, strobe-light movements. I remember how the leftover sweat from the city above still coated our faces, a familiar feeling for my skin at 2 am, and I remember that she held my hand right up until I had to leave. I kissed her, and she kissed me. I reassemble this event like a nesting doll from childhood or divided strip of photo booth images, a token of something that stood out but does not now make sense, except through the process,
piece by piece,
of remembering.

“Purr-ez”

M.A. DUBBS

I’m at the VA hospital to visit my grandpa when I’m corrected on how to say my family name. The host at security hands me a mask and formally asks who I am here to see. I tell him I’m here to see my grandpa. I don’t really call him abuelo but maybe I should? Maybe that’s what a good Hispanic should do? But to me, he’s Grandpa. Said with a long A sound because there’s a bit of Midwest twang in our tongues.

“What’s the name?” the host asks, plucking on his keyboard and not looking up at me. I tell him the name is Perez.

The host scrunches his face and tells me he can’t understand. “What are you trying to say?”

“Purr-ez,” I tell him slowly and articulated. It’s the way everyone in my family says it. With no fancy accent mark, my family would often joke. Traditional, sure, but surely a grammatical flourish that dropped sometime during my grandpa’s trek to the States.

“Peréz? Are you trying to say Peréz?” he asks with disdain.

I nod my head. “Yes, that’s what I said.”

He shakes his head. “It’s pronounced Peréz,” he corrects, rolling his r with soft e’s floating off the tip of his lips and a native tongue. “Say it like this: Peréz. Let me hear you.”

I put on my best authentic accent, one I had to study in a classroom in school. Though I was told by a professor or two that I had a French accent when I spoke my supposed mother tongue. By

the time I reached college, I had learned to stop telling the teachers and classmates about my roots. Kids would frequently call me a liar because of my blonde hair and light skin. “If you’re Mexican, prove it! Speak Spanish!” some would jeer or from the less savvy classmates: “Speak Mexican!” I would stumble out a basic phrase that would dissatisfy them, “Anyone can say that. You’re not really Mexican, you just want to be.” And that wasn’t wrong, in a way.

It wasn’t just the kids at school though. I’d go to a cultural event or a restaurant or a shop, and my brain and mouth would freeze. Sloppy words would pour out and I wouldn’t fully process all the words coming in. I’d normally be greeted at the counter with a soft smile: “Oh, it’s okay. I can check you out. I speak English!” I’m always clocked as an English speaker, as a non-Hispanic, as an other. So maybe I’m not what I think I am?

Tired of the request for linguistic parlor tricks, I decided long ago to stop talking altogether. When Grandpa would introduce me, “Esta es mi nieta. ¡Tambien habla español!” I’d grimace with a small “hello” and a prolonged silence in which Grandpa would retort with a sigh and a frown. A sigh and frown not too far off from the one the hospital host is vocalizing right now. But his breath carries less familial disappointment and more rage. I wonder what stokes the fire of his rage because it doesn’t all feel like it’s for me.

His eyes are intense as he repeats, “Peréz! He’s your grandpa and you can’t even say your own name?”

We stare at one another as others quickly come and go through security and check-in. I want to cry and scream. Want to tell

him to walk upstairs and ask my grandpa why he felt he couldn't speak Spanish to his kids and grandkids? Ask him why he had to drop el acento sobre de "e" if we live in such a melting pot of a country. Remind him that we live in fucking Indiana and people only know what "Purr-ez" is. Tell him for many people it means "another fucking illegal Mexican." I want to tell him the story my mom told me. Tell him about her having a hard time with cold calls at work until she took my dad's name and was told, "I'm glad you're calling instead of that Mexican that kept leaving me messages!"

But I'm a damn coward. So I just shrug my shoulders and smile stupidly as the host rolls his eyes, writes my name on a badge, and waves me to the elevators with disgust.

It's not okay to cry, so I hold back tears in the lobby and elevator. On the way, I think of my great-grandmother. Now gone for the past fifteen years. We called her "Spanish Grandma" because she only spoke Spanish and I couldn't understand most of what she would say to me. She'd rub my little pale hands with her brown rheumatoid fingers.

"Te amo," she smiled with a wrinkled face.

"She says she loves you!" my grandpa would tell me, glowing with pride.

I could figure that out without words. The language gap didn't matter when her soft touch or gentle gaze would tell me how we felt. There were a few words I could make out though.

"Bonita," she would tell me, running her hands through the strands of my hair. "Rubia." She'd point to my dad's blond hair and

then to mom's dark brown hair. She chuckled, shaking her own silver strands which my mother always adored. "Rubia, muy bonita."

I was almost in middle school during her next visit, and I remember trying to learn more words so we could talk. Mom warned me this might be the last time we see her. She was right, of course.

"Bisabuela," I slowly called her, in a practiced tone. It didn't feel as natural as her nickname. She couldn't get up but she gave me a long weak hug. I remember wondering if she hated Indiana. Hated the cold, ugly winters or maybe the people, or maybe it never felt like home? We never had the money for passports, so we never did make it down to Mexico. Never did see her home. Never got to touch the soil of our ancestors.

We couldn't go to her funeral when she died. The family said it was too dangerous to go down with the cartels. Mom cried all day. I didn't go to school. On the hour the service started, a gust of wind knocked the front door wide open and pulled the window blinds towards the back of the house. Mom sat up on the couch, eyes still puffed and red, and laughed. "That's her! Her spirit is in the wind!" Such an indigenous spiritual view from my staunch Catholic mother. But then again, what's more Mexican than its fusion?

When I finally get to Grandpa's hospital room, he's lying up in bed and surrounded by beeping machines. He's scribbling in his journal as I walk in. It helps him remember that I visited as his memory has been fading. He plants a kiss on my forehead as I curl into the chair next to him and tell him about my interaction on the way in.

“What an idiot! Who tells someone how to pronounce their own name?” he bellows as he scratches at his IV drip.

“Well, I guess it’s more Mexican the way he says it,” I tell him.

“Eh, sure. But we’re American! It’s “Purr-ez”! It’s my name, and you’re my granddaughter, and I say that’s how we say it!” he states with a mixture of pride and authority. This leads to, yet again, his move to the U.S., how grandma accidentally got him drafted in Vietnam, complete history of his military career, and a rant about how his local hardware store doesn’t have a military discount.

“I’m more American than most!” he tells me and I can’t disagree.

We decide to watch some TV, the Food Channel specifically, to kill some time and boredom. We watch Guy Fieri dine at a local tamale shop just across town.

I point at the screen. “Hey, that’s not too far from here! Near Speedway, I think. Grandpa, we gotta go when you get out of here!”

“Yeah, that looks delicious! Looks like how my mom made them.”

I watch the women on TV quickly smudge masa and pork onto corn husks, a familiar task. Grandpa’s eyes glisten but I know he won’t cry. He’s too tough to cry and he reminds me of that whenever I cry over anything. Though more recently and frequently, my tears have been over the death of my other grandma: Grandpa’s wife of 49 years. He reminds me, whenever he sees the tears, that “You gotta be tough!” I’ve never been quite sure how much that advice is self-aimed.

He continues: “Your grandma used to make all sorts of

Mexican food. You remember cooking Mexican food with Grandma? And the family? Making tamales and enchiladas?"

"Tsk," I tell him, a bit offended at the idea I would forget, "course I do!"

Grandpa nods and continues, "She couldn't speak Spanish, but she could understand some things me and my mom talked about. Grandma was an honorary Mexican!" He chuckles loudly.

"Huh, is that how it works?" I ask him.

"Of course it does! Because I say so!" He laughs but then quietly adds, "My mom used to make tamales every Christmas, dessert ones, too. We'd eat them and open presents after midnight Mass. And they looked just like that." He points at the TV screen. "Traditional, you know?"

I hesitate to answer, but as I watch TV, watch the women that look and move and talk and sing like my family, I finally answer him: "I guess I do."

What has fur is beast

ANDREA IMDACHA

Sometimes I think about the first living thing
one tendril of atoms linking arms
a stitch of breath threaded over the hot-mouthed vents
of the ancient seas and it takes me
back to Chicago, the kind of salon tucked behind an Indian grocery,
air burdened with curry, cardamom, ammonia –
smells that drape your shoulders like the capes
you find in pricier white spaces,
and leaning into my face, an auntie knots a strand of cotton
to unroot the shadow darkening my lip
that velvet boyhood of brown girls
except I'm only brown in the sunlight
only brown when I browse expensive watches
only brown under the scrutiny of the prissy southern girls
lingering in the dust of my South Carolina childhood
and yes, only brown when strands of
mahogany offer shade to the hot vent of my mouth,
and yes, maybe at fourteen I let myself be plucked down
like the milk-skinned women in magazines,
my summer-brown body clenching in the chair,
gripped by the pain of releasing
the peach-down of my childhood
prickling my collar
while I dreamt of fingers combing those hairs,
desiring the unaltered shape of my living body,
and buoyed in a broth of fluorescent light and fenugreek,
longing to link arms with some living creature,
I sprawled wide on a plastic lawn chair
and gave birth to my womanhood.

These days I shave.
I have no patience for the transient spaces
between passes of the thread.
On a conference call I stroke the stubble,
bristles interrupting the landscape of powder and foundation,
and ponder the wholeness of the first bodies –
single cells without loneliness,
never longing for a lover's consideration,
the liberation of a night stroll,
the recognition of a name, a genus,
a category of existence
a place on the long-bodied tree of life rising sunward,
browning in the daylight that warms the beards of white men
who call me "girl"
even though this body knows decades,
even though this body battled dying in the giving of life,
and running my tongue over my teeth
I imagine the dark gravity of my whiskers again
the shadow of childhood deepening,
and the thought occurs that I could allow myself growth,
let my limbs come to fur
face my chin sunward until daylight cooks away
illusions of whiteness,
only then opening my mouth to vent
words boiling under my tongue
and display this long-toothed hunger for wholeness,
for the singularity of early life,
until sprawling in my desk chair
a soft-pelted manhood is born.

Floating

LORI MARIN

I'm tethered in between extremes.
Wanting to be nothing more than
A vapor,
A wish in the wind,
A shooting star that's really just falling.
Disappearing.
Nothing but a breath,
Fogged window,
Goosebumps on your skin.
A whisper.
A silent prayer sent up through the stained glass,
Dancing through the air to the tune bounding out from the organ.
Wanting to burst into flames,
Feeling alive,
Flesh melting,
Becoming someone new.
The person I always wished to be.
The person I might never become.
Yearning.

There's water forming in my eyes,
But it's the color of rust,
And I guess that's what happens when you forget yourself.
I go on walks to keep myself grounded,
And I touch the trees because I haven't heard them in so long.
The sky looks blue,
And it seems so limitless
That I wish I could be there.
Floating.



The Water's Great!

NOA MELENDEZ

multimedia: acrylic, pastel, colored pencil, collage paper on canvas, 48 x 36

I Was There Too

A.C. BIRCH

It's Adam & Eve not Adam + Eve / and in the beginning even
Adam was not / and Adam was not Eve / and was not and / and
even Eve was Adam until she was Eve / and at some point she
must have been and / and at some point she was not / and at
some point so was I / but now I am / and I am that I am / and I
am that and / and I am that ampersand / & I was there too

Un Día Sin Indocumentados

OFELIA GUILLEN

El día primero de Mayo, ya fecha muy señalada
frente a mi televisor yo me quedaba asombrada
a ver la gran multitud que paso firme marchaba
todos vestidos de blanco, es el símbolo de paz
hombres, mujeres y niños unidos por el amor
todos pidiendo justicia derecho al trabajador

Un día sin indocumentados, no fueron a trabajar
las calles estaban llenas y los negocios cerrados
que siga la paz, que siga la unión

Espero que escuchen los gritos de angustia del trabajador
pues la unión es la fuerza que mueve a la gente
que grita, que canta, que baila, que llora, que siente

Antonio Villaraigosa vino, saludo a su gente
había en su garganta una gran emoción
cuando dijo - Gracias, muchísimas gracias
me siento orgulloso de ser su mayor

Un poco después, en una entrevista dijo -
yo también soy hijo de un inmigrante que vino de León
es muy importante que no sete olvide cual son tus raíces
porque si lo haces
estarás negando aquella mujer que te vio nacer

Ante ti, Piolín me quito el sombrero
pues con tus colegas tuvieron valor
este día de Mayo despertar al León que estaba dormido,
más hoy los ruidos se escuchan en todos los pueblos
de nuestra nación

¡Yo nunca me olvido que soy Mexicana!

Porque aquí en mi mente
siempre está presente
la niña escondida
que sufrió injusticias y que vio redadas
pero por orgullo o quizás por miedo

nunca dijo nada

A Day Without the Undocumented

OFELIA GUILLEN

Translated by the Author and Ray Páramo

The first day of May, a date of great importance
in front of my television, I was amazed
to see a great crowd marching steadily
all dressed in white, a symbol of peace
men, women and children united by love
all asking for justice, for workers' rights

A day without the undocumented, they did not work,
they filled the streets, they closed their businesses
with hope that peace would continue, to be united

I hope you hear the workers' cries of anguish,
after all, union is the force that moves people
that screams, that sings, that dances, that cries, that feels

Antonio Villaraigosa arrived, greeting his people
there was great emotion in his voice
when he said - Thank you, thank you so much
I am proud to be your mayor

Later, in an interview he said -
I too am the son of an immigrant who came from León
it is very important that you do not forget your roots
because if you do
you will deny the woman who saw you born

Before you, Piolin, I remove my hat
alongside our colleagues who had the courage,
on this day of May, to awaken the lion who was asleep,
today, its roars are heard in all the cities
of our nation

I never forget that I am Mexican!

Because here in my mind
always present is
a little girl hiding away
who suffered injustices and who saw raids
but out of pride or perhaps out of fear

never said anything

decapitated

JESSICA ROWSHANDEL

by 5 i was ready to be decapitated.

decapitated for jesus because just in case
i didn't get taken to heaven when he returned
the antichrist would make us obey him
or be martyred
by guillotine

the antichrist was always a white guy
all the men in power i had seen were

i'm not entirely sure why i thought i wouldn't make it
to heaven the first go round why i didn't
think i was good enough at 5 years old

after all
i named my cabbage patch after moses

my favorite film was the ten commandments

i kneeled with my abuelo & prayed the our father
& sang jesus loves me in both english and spanish
jesus was always a white guy too

the why i guess was just in case
just in case i went to the bathroom one day
and came out and everyone was gone just in case

i would know how to prove myself
to my sweetsweet god
of a religion shoved beneath Borikén fingernails
by men who looked a lot like jesus & the antichrist

who loved me and hated me
and wanted me
for themselves

Sanctuary

LORI MARIN

I have confessions that I need to make, but my mind refuses to.

My body knows how, but my mind rebels.

My body knows the angles of bended knees and clasped hands and curled knuckles,
And a back slightly hunched over to minimize the pain.

It knows the monthly crimson confessions pouring from between my legs,
And the beads of holy water sweat dripping down my face.

My body knows the goosebumps brought to surface from the worship song
Of sex and skin and heat.

But my mind knows the horrors that wait inside my own head.

It knows the shame that's made a sanctuary

Where isolation and gaps and never-ending roads have settled,
And the church doors are etched with the mantra,

"Don't come as you are."

This place of sanctuary doesn't serve to protect me from myself,

It serves to annihilate who I am.

Rarámuri Runner

R. JOSEPH RODRÍGUEZ

Do you see María Lorena Ramírez Hernández running on this page?

Lorena appears light-footed with long black hair and a colorful dress flowing,

but she is not running from Athens to Sparta. No.

She's running . . .

into these mountains

and canyons of the Tarahumara: her dress on the move and overflowing, swishing . . .

and Lorena keeps going on . . .

carrying her ever so lightly and gently as deer

and as she touches earth, awakening earth's birdsong.

The cheers get louder, but all she hears is earth singing, whispering . . .

en la sierra su canto hondo y familiar

humming as she reaches

valleys and keeps going forward as an ultramarathoner with might.

Here's Lorena, and the sun's with her:

without brand-name shoes, only her homemade

and homespun sandals matching

f
e
e
t

light speeds: Lorena's secret is to keep going . . .

and no distance is too far away

past the 26.2 miles / 42.2 kilometers—

and Lorena's running . . .

off this page—*just look!* . . .

Coming Out / Of Grief

RACHEL PESAVENTO BROWNELL

What

will you remember

when you stop constructing

Hilary when she said

I miss that

(who you used to be)

I want to see that

fire

again

last tears:

ten months ago

in a Starbucks

parking lot

dead car

sitting

parallel lines

white in the dark

the passenger-seat man thinking it was fear

of falling for him fear, yes, prescient

fear of

not crying

again

for ten months

fear of fact:

wanting

him

always wanting him, them

to leave

Esau

A.C. BIRCH

you wash the butter knife and wonder if you will remember these as the dishes you cleaned while your mom died in an emergency room you should be able to get to on the subway line but the station is closed and dad says don't come and you have to wonder if it's because of the beard and you have no proof that it's a stroke but you can't stop wondering if it's the stress of the visit you remember the dream before the film screening where she was hit by a truck that you saw coming you think maybe she is just going blind and the just makes you dizzy you debate if you should just show up anyway you ask Chris if he can drive but he's out of town you imagine Esau and the goatskin and the first tease of gender envy and isn't it funny how often it all comes back to goats you wonder if she would touch your beard and think you are your brother in law you realize that you would have to describe to her what you look like now or else she will live with that frizzy haired girl in her minds-eye you can't leave the house you might punch an angel but only if it leads to cathartic gay sex you should eat some stew you gloat that like the Original Twink himself you also nicked the goatman's birthright you know he felt guilty too

Bien Arreglada

ZAIRA GOMEZ

Three heavy chunks
As her hands thread
One by one

Golden engraved loops,
Black and brown tresses pulled back
Cinched by the crunch of brush and snap of elastic

Each strand
A right of passage
One by one

Unveiled thick arms
Lines etched against skin
Unbound open and full

Dead Name

ATHENA VASQUEZ

Sometimes I heard someone call out my deadnames.

Albert! Alberto! Beto! But when I turned around— air. For a minute I thought the air was playing games with me, messing with me the way I used to mess with people when I ding-dong ditched their homes. Maybe the air was playing Ding-Dong Ditch with me. But instead of knocking on a door, the air whooshed out my names with a strong gust of wind from its mouth. Maybe it was the ghost of Albert taunting me. Maybe it was my karma, never forgetting who I used to be, for doing bad things.

My old name and all its variants were placeholders. Misnomers. Deadnames. They called it “dead” because the person it used to belong to ceased to be, maimed from limb to limb, name torn apart letter by letter, and disposed of. It wasn’t entirely true for me. As much as I hated to admit it, there were still fragments of Albert that had fossilized internally and externally. The nose I carried, not at all pointy like the edges of a chiseled jawline anymore, but instead softly rounded and dainty, was the same nose Albert used to sniff the gardenias in Apa’s garden when he was a young boy. The same nose we used to take deep breaths of the men bathed in designer cologne that we slept with.

As bad as I wanted to eradicate any trace of Albert, demolish any connection between he and I, I had to carry him everywhere I went like a haunting ghost with unfinished business. He was one of

the *espíritus* Ama talked about. The ones she urged me not to provoke because “*te dicen tus verdades*,” in your ear, while you slept. Somehow Ama knew I couldn’t handle the truth. Wouldn’t handle it. Worse came to worse and they’d attached themselves to you. And I couldn’t handle that either.

Sure, I could steer clear of ghosts. But what was I going to say when I got asked about the scar on my right hand where there were once stitches? Running into a glass-encased fire extinguisher and getting impaled by a large shard of glass didn’t happen to me. It happened to Albert.



I was looking for a name that was so feminine it would make me want to curtsy. I avoided unisex names like “Taylor” that could be mistaken for either man or woman. I wanted my womanness to be certain, undeniable. Even in the phonology of my name.

I googled, thought of characters in books I’d read and films I’d watched, and narrowed my selections to the top four names as potential new names. I ranked them on my Notes app in my iPhone:

1. Athena.
2. Aurora.
3. Savannah.
4. Everly.

I tried on every name on my list like a black halter dress. Swapped one for another when the name didn’t fit because it carried images and feelings and notions that were so remote from the person I was

becoming. Of course, I did all this knowing damn well what name I liked best. Knowing damn well which name represented the laborious and testing quest I had set off on when I decided enough was enough, when the image of me aging into an old man prompted me to act as soon as possible. But there was a hesitance from flat out choosing the name “Athena” that stopped me like a force field. I feared coming off as uppity or pretentious. I already had a reputation. The talk was that I was too good for anyone else because I didn’t like to talk.

When I was Savannah I felt too white. Tia Rosa made sure I and the whole neighborhood knew that.

“Ewe! Not Savannah,” Tia Rosa said. “You’re no *white* woman”
“It’s just a name,” I said.

Tia Rosa was never the kind of person to keep her opinions to herself. She’d explode if she did.

“You don’t even look like a Savannah,” Tia Rosa said, her eyes doing a backflip so all that was in clear view was her sclera.

“Your eyes are going to stay like that,” I snapped back.

Everly didn’t last even a day. It was too delicate a name. Feeble like a pansy. But worst of all—boring. I loved the name. But I wasn’t delicate or feeble or boring.

Aurora sounded like “roar,” which was kind of silly to me. But it was the name of a princess. I loved the idea of naming myself after a princess. I loved the idea of naming myself period. It wasn’t every day that a person got to name themselves.

What was in a name, really?

Clearly it was something profound because Apa named every

single one of his boys Jesus, after his first name. And the one offspring that didn't straight up have "Jesus" as his first name had it as his second. Clearly, I thought so too because I turned looking for a new name into an exhaustive task. But it was a lifetime commitment. Like a tattoo before laser removal. I was only going to give myself this one chance. One chance to get it right. I wouldn't go through that pain-in-the-ass legal process again. I couldn't risk changing my name a second time and having people puzzled and calling me too many different names—unsure of which name I had found solace in.

Homing

RACHEL PESAVENTO BROWNELL

lake—dark, bulbs of
orange lamplight hanging,
in reflection, on the water, pure
tint picture-shapes jostled
slightly by ducks: dreamed-up
animal outlines
losing detail as night deepens,
their jerking walk turned swim
when we pass with our own
departing; old friend, our path
along the edge, treading miniature cobblestoned
pavement

out of

the deserted park, leads
me to ask our quiet, our soft
armfuls of grass-fragrant
blankets, the joking push-
pull of our touch, magnetic—
how old? new in life,
to each other, how are we both?

how did we arrive

as if

in return?
felt in the filament range—outer rose
from inner, like halo,
like memory, the gossamer
substance in between times
of day, mesh of dusky air,

surround us
one another
we do
when we reach into
the body, water—
her and I. old friends
expanding
outer from inner
substance
ripples
between

Bricks, again

A.C. BIRCH

How to make sense of a moment
in time, when shying from headlines hurts
and reading them hurts more,
when debates don't actually matter,
but also, they have to
when umbrellas and arrests and calls for more bodies
in the park, at the school, fall on
deaf ears, yours
when your baby queer cousin went to a
counter protest you forgot was happening
and now you're sick with FOMO
for not showing up, 'saying [HELP]
aloud enters each body differently'
your comrades brought you groceries
and you started journaling
gratitude, for the first time
to no One in particular
you ashed a half-finished cigarette
to grab your keys and do all you could,
you picked a brick two-below the
previous tenant's pleas
and added your own request

to no One in particular,
maybe to the clay itself, as though
it could awaken and Protect
as it did back then, at the inn,
wielded within the hands of Trans elders
who have cried and fought and resigned before
and passed the torch to Kids soon to be sore
from lobbing their own boulders,
now the leading cause of Little League Shoulder,
red rover come over, break my arms I'm not letting go
there will be more bricks to chip and time for slow
and strength to cast again

I Still Hope

LORI MARIN

What part of my body remains pure?
If it hasn't been touched by someone else,
It's been touched by me and sometimes
I'm my own worst enemy.

I've seen my eyes shine so bright
And my body stand so strong and tall,
And I've been wanting to get back there,
But I don't know how.

When my fingers run up my thighs
And I feel the chills lick my spine
And I remember that it's burning outside,
It doesn't feel like I exist.

I've been caught in this place I dislike,
The place where I don't feel real,
Like those scenes from a movie where everything is spinning around except the main character.
And trust me, I know this is temporary.
I know things always get better.
I know I'm ok, even when I'm not.
I know.

The thing is... I'm not a runner.
I was never trained for a marathon,
Or even a sprint.
I don't know how to jump over hurdles,
Or stretch out my muscles,
Or even when to start or stop.
I just find myself here.

And it feels pretty lonely sometimes
Because sharing the weight has never been a gift of mine,
Unless you need me to share yours.

And I've been trying real hard to be honest.
And I've been trying real hard to be strong.
But it's hard to plan for the future when
It's been flipped upside-down.
Ultimately, I settle for this:
Today is today, and it's here for me.
And tomorrow is tomorrow -
Ready or not, I still hope it comes.
 I still hope it comes.
 I still hope.



Happy Bday!

NOA MELENDEZ

multimedia: acrylic, pastel, colored pencil, collage paper on canvas, 48 x 48

ARTISTS

ARTISTAS

contribuyentes





ZAIRA GOMEZ is an emerging writer from Pennsylvania currently located in Mexico City. As a queer Mexican Femme, her works explore themes of adolescence, femininity, sexuality and post trauma healing. Her work is forthcoming in the *Sonora Review* and was awarded a seat at The Juniper Summer Institute Retreat. She is working on her first chapbook entitled, *Sentidos de Mi Mismo*. Instagram: @zairamex

CRYSTAL REYES (she/they/ella) is a Chicana poet/writer native to Houston, Texas where she was raised by her grandparents. She is a multidisciplinary artist with a B.A. in Liberal Studies, with minors in: English Literature, Psychology, and Education from the University of Houston, and a M.A. in Higher Education from Sam Houston State University. She will begin her MFA in Nonfiction Writing with Bay Path University in Spring 2024, and is also a creative writing facilitator with Amherst Writers & Artists. In addition, she is an alumni and teaching assistant with Community Literature Initiative, a non-profit organization dedicated to teaching writers of color how to write and publish a book. Crystal is passionate about supporting teen and young adults in their creative and career journeys, and is a mentor with Girls Write Now. Her works have been featured in *Love What Matters*, *Berlinable*, & *Silent Spark Press*. She spends her off-time raising her children, traveling around the world, and advocating for the LGBTQ+ community. Crystal can be found at your local bookstore or neighborhood coffee shop, sporting a red lippie. Follow her work on Instagram @crisreyeswrites





R. JOSEPH RODRÍGUEZ has taught language arts in public schools, community colleges, and universities. He has published books, research articles, and narrative poems. His interests include the study of children's and young adult literatures, language acquisition, and socially responsible bilitercies.

Motivated by the art of teaching, learning, and writing, Joseph is a reader of diverse U.S., borderlands, and

world literatures, including banned and challenged books. Currently, he teaches at an early college high school and is a teacher educator at local universities in Austin, Texas. Follow Joseph on social media @escribescribe or write an email to: escribescribe@gmail.com.

NOA MELENDEZ is a painter, designer, and avid art consumer from La Mirada, CA. He loves music and being outside in nature. He has always found connecting with--and exploring--his inner self through his art to be healing, though he also views taking a step back from creating an important part of the artistic process. Since college, he has taken on commission work for others, and he is excited to see what the future holds for his journey as an artist. You can follow him on Instagram @noa_doesart if you're looking for color and fun.



JESSICA ROWSHANDEL (they/them) is a queer Afro-Taíno Puerto Rican + Persian writer, visual artist, and musician. Their creative writing has been published in *Fever Spores: The Queer Reclamation of William S. Burroughs*, *Mid-Level Management Literary Magazine*, *beestung*, *Bizarrchitecture*, and others. For more information, please visit jessicarowshandel.com or follow them on Twitter: @JRowshandel

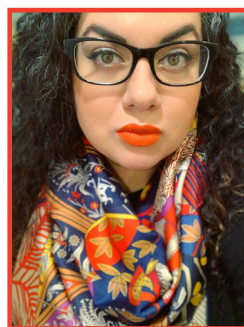
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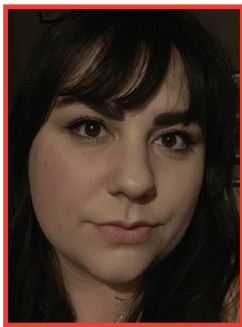
is a queer poet living in Long Beach, CA. She received her Master of Fine Arts in Poetry from Long Beach State University, where she also served as editor-in-chief of the program's literary magazine. She has worked in publishing since then and continues to write, focusing on themes of identity and becoming in the environment of Southern California. Her work has previously appeared in *Foothill Poetry Journal*, *RipRap*, and *miniskirt magazine*. Instagram: @faces_of_rach



M.A. DUBBS is an award-winning Mexican-American and LGBT poet from Indiana. For over a decade, Dubbs has published writing in magazines and anthologies across the globe. She is the author of *An American Mujer* through *Bottlecap Press* (2022) and served as judge for Indiana's Poetry Out Loud Competition. She recently won the 2023 Holden Vaughn Spangler Award from River City College MUSE. You can find her on Instagram @madubbspoe

ANDREA IMDACHA (she/her) is a genderqueer writer and poet of Sri Lankan and Hungarian heritage who hails from Savannah, GA. Her poetry and short fiction have appeared in *North American Review*, *Beyond Words*, *Literary Mama*, Cuyahoga Valley National Park's *Poetic Inventory*, and *MASH Stories*. Andrea currently lives in Cleveland, OH with her husband and son. She is currently at work on a novel.





LORI MARIN is a poet from Southern California. Her writing centers around themes of mental health, nature, spirituality, healing, and rebirth. She enjoys reading, hiking, spending time outdoors, and being a mom. You can follow her poetry on Instagram @No.Poetic.Device

A.C. BIRCH (he/they) is a Toronto-based writer, filmmaker, and performer. His body of work includes the feature documentary *A Queer's Guide to Spiritual Living* and its companion piece *The Queer Devotional* (available to stream on OUTtv), as well as an upcoming short film about the iconic drag artist Kreme Inakuchi. He can be found around town performing goofy gay standup, and also at @a.c.birch on Instagram and on a secret Tumblr account that's he's had ever since he was a 14-year-old fangirl that no one can ever know about.



OFELIA GUILLEN is a Mexican-American poet originally from Guanajuato, México. Her poems explore her spirituality, her love of nature, and her personal experiences as an immigrant into the United States. Presently, she resides in Orange County, CA, local to her family and friends. In her free time, when she is not writing, she enjoys gardening, crafting, and spending time with her loved ones.

ATHENA VASQUEZ (she/her) is a graduate student in the M.F.A. Prose program at California State University, Long Beach where she also teaches creative writing. More often than not, her identity and journey to becoming the Mexican transgender woman that she is makes itself into her work.
Instagram: @__enigmawrites



RAY PÁRAMO is currently a graduate student at California State University, Long Beach, set to complete his master's in May. Outside of school, he works as a trainer, content developer, and designer for a company based in Los Angeles, and he also tutors part-time in writing at Cerritos College. He founded *Entre Magazine* as a result of his desire to bring more visibility to queer Latina/o/x/e artists like himself. He has academic papers published in *Watermark* and *The Acacia Archives*; he recently had his first creative work published in *Enjambéd Magazine*. He resides in Placentia, California.

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