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POETRY

Cheshire Catatonic

Kelsey Gallotte

Wood chips under my nails,
metal shavings in my forearms,
green eyes embedded in my cornea.
The more I sleep, the bags under my eyes turn
into Saturn's rings. I inject iron and sunlight
so I can wake up again.
I smile when they ask me to, but
moondust grinds on my gums.
I was in your apartment when
the plague crawled into my mouth.
Now vomit makes me think of you.

how we perpetuate sexual assault

Lindsay Killips

daddy issues send me on a one-way flight to promiscuous behavior / guy after guy after guy /
a hopeless plea for love / asking for it becomes begging, silently, for affection / booty shorts,
pajama pants; crop top, two-sizes-too-big hoodie; underweight, overweight / coping and teasing
/ indistinguishable / toe to heel on the red line between sex and rape / told i am promiscuous /
warned of falling onto beds in men's hands, my own volition / but the world forgot to tell me / i
don't have to give my body / for a boy to fill my space, my being / the world told me i asked him
to / gather me like a blackberry harvest / and leave my soil longing for seeds / that just wanted
water, to sprout / the world forgot to tell me / guys were never meant to be fertilizer / my land
is not nutrient devoid / it is not me / it is not the earth that stops plants from peeping their eyes
through the dirt / it is the farmers and ravenous eaters / the ones depleting the land, leaving me
thirsty, barren and begging, for life / and when a quick fix fertilizer thrown haphazardly across the
ground brings hope / i cannot help but smile / sink in / think / maybe blackberries will grow, this
time / maybe he can bring what i cannot / on my own / but a quick fix is just a band-aid / over a
ruptured femoral artery holding in blood just long enough / to live

maybe i need superglue, duct tape, platelets, time / maybe the doctor who tells me i need to be
cautious of who i am attracted to / should tell me / i am not my own enemy / because my heart is
pumping blood / like cannons during war / my lungs are adding as much oxygen to my red rivers
as my mom planted kisses on my cheeks / my muscles and bones hydrate with that desperate,
red liquid / i try my best / to fight his ghost / and sometimes, my best is breaking / it is squeezing
my muscles / until my body becomes lactic acid pools / nearly drowning myself / and while i was
fighting / the world forgot to mention / demons don't die / they turn to viruses / make bodies
hosts / and bodies learn to please / i bake pies and breakfast / so my haunter will be satisfied /
won't need my flesh to sustain himself / he runs on the pancakes and honey dripping from my
fingerprints / as i become consumed by the war within my body / and suddenly / i can't tell if i am
battling for / or against / myself /

and then it happens again / and this time the boy says / my mom told me to make sure i was
respectful / was i? / was that rape? / and i don't know / i don't think so / i mean / i chose to come
over / gather all my strength / build a pedestal of hurt, root my feet in its wood, / blame myself /
absolve his wrong, / i didn't know you were blacked out. / store it in my cervix / it's ok. / this is how
i perpetuate sexual assault / this is how the world perpetuates sexual assault / because no one
ever told me / what rape is / no one ever told him how to distinguish drunk / and too drunk / and
a girl trying to drown a phantom figure living in her tissue / i was not taught / except to blame the

alcohol-bathed blood and eyelashes / and so i pass down my traumas and accidents / like photo albums / sticky with fingerprints and crinkles / the same way i wake up / in his bed / the next morning / both of us / still, unsure / hoping blackberries will blossom / for us both / leave our lips and tongues, sweet, purple / like the bruises we keep leaving on our necks.

Remember me, my country

Sami McKinsey

When the summer breeze settles into my lungs
and heat rises up to gauzy curtains,
that's when we'll meet again.

Oh, lovely earth,
my smoky country.

Though frosty clocks journey on
into the chilled darkness,
your words and your embrace
will sit next to me.

When I stand in foreign nations
where dizzy voices swirl in my head,
we'll meet.

In my daydreams,
as I resist truculent winds
and sit on mountainous rubble,
we'll meet.

I inhale your musky grass,
cradle your aromatic sage,
and yoke with your aspen leaves.

Pomegranates and Cherries

Sophia Chappell Catto

If you've likened yourself a Dionysus,
 following some small forever as Persephone,

would wine taste like irony
 if it became water on your tongue?¹

would water taste like loneliness,
 if, upon closer inspection,

you discovered

 a handful of pomegranate seeds

settled

 at the bottom of the glass?²

¹You find yourself in a room full of happy drunks. This is impossibly fun and entirely irritating, but mostly lonely.

²You've learned that most toxins sink, and that occasionally they resemble little rubies, that give way to bitterness when bitten down on.

These things aren't always linear

Pomegranates and Cherries

Author Statement

Sophia Chappell Catto

"Pomegranates and Cherries" is an excerpt from a longer series called "Love is Nonlinear" that I wrote during a two-year period of persistent depression. This period began in high school, when my best friend at the time attempted suicide, and ended with a breakup that helped me realign my priorities and sense of self. The poems were written at the beginning, middle, and end of this journey, and reflect the cynicism I felt regarding love and human connection, and the discordance I experienced in my pursuit of these things. I believe this cognitive dissonance is a fundamental feature of the human experience. We seek yet reject love, we desire yet fear intimacy, and we scoff at yet yearn for the ideal of romantic partnership. We are emotional creatures that straddle two impossible universes, one of complete idealism and one of complete nihilism. This is why love is a nonlinear phenomenon; we must criss-cross both universes before we realize its very real and strange power over and within us. Love is nonlinear. Love is human.

My Frontera

Charly Mendoza

Haphazardly criss-crossing down mi frente
you can see how my body is so divisively split
where my mismatched comal burnt parchment skin tells
not 1
or 2,
but 3 diferente stories,
patchwork truths
not another make believe fairy tale
where you constantly fail to not see past the color of my syllables

living interwoven into every waking moment
mi Nestle cafe knockoff eyes shine through your white lies
as you try to tell me for the 99th time
that I will only be taken seriously
if I wear a suit and black tie
as if it is my funeral,
just so you can feel safe as you read my eulogy

I hold my right hand right up to the purple sky,
and swear an oath that my words are bound by the same book of laws
that keep people like me behind bars

My 1st story, taking my right balled-up fist up into the air, is that
of the savage mongrel spirit living inside my blood
Codenamed wetback, mojado, frijolero, beaner
or my favorite
"a Bad Hombre, ok"

I was taught that the pen is mightier than the sword,
but I thank my luck that I was given my family's heirloom of being heavy handed as a necessary
accessory
living out my page-to-page life
where my face is enough to cause you to shiver and shake
as you second guess whether or not to take me on

My first story is
my reclaiming of my brownness where my complexion leaves crowds perplexed
as to whether I am gringo enough to be included at the table to fulfill their ethical diversity quota
or to whether I'm actually mexican enough to be invited to la carne asada,
kicking back listening to some old skool tunes

Ni de qui ni de ya?
Nahh Soy de qui, Y tambien soy de ya foo

My 2nd story is the left side of my body where my family history was once lost to me
A once empty void, ICE cold like el Rio Grande,
it brims to the rim with the constant updated knowledge of my native roots
that provide the reasons for you to give me such venomous looks

Desde teniendo jardineras llenas con las tres hermanas
hasta usando hojas de yerba buena para dormir después de la cena
prepárate que te haga una limpia por ser tan mensa
de dar me un sobrenombre que a tí más bien te conviene
namas porque es tan difícil para que entiendas
que lo que se ve no se pregunta

And my 3rd story
this American made barbed wire fence that cuts me down to the bone
from my head to my toes
in this body that I have on loan

What was meant to divide and conquer
binds my tortilla burrito skin ever so tightly
that my muxe antifreeze blood seeps through and stains this white canvased world,
painting my rainbow words across blank gaping faces,
stinging them like holy water

This is my voice
a patchwork of beginnings and ends
a fighter and a lover, a devilishly handsome brown chameleon
donde cambió de cualquier color

the only inheritance I got from my past,
and the only tool I have to build my own legacy

Can't you see this is me?

And this is my frontera

gender euphoria

Noah Knight

i.

on never, + on now, i throw off
my sealed skin + introduce myself as
a multitude of ocean, + of ark,
of ebb + glowing microorganisms,
of blue hallucinations in a pitch lagoon.

i am a many singularized. i am mostly
vowels howling in the imploding single
doorway between brine + mycelia of rivers.

remember the body as wings parasitic
to my smooth shoulder blades, as winking
lights in the bag of sidewalks beckoning
fruitless into the thorns. remember the
stories eddied around hornets and leeches

ii.

i am chrysalis, i am mushroom
chambers clogged with pollen, i am
new + stumbling on toothpick bones
i am iron-choked + oxygenated pixie

grins sharp at the corners of the eyes
+ painted teeth. they, the them, the
folk, they willful wisps, they wandering

sirens of anomalism glued to sap and soil
+ the lichen continents on stony thrones.
remember the titles of trees, wind-tall
+ raw-meat-strong, my body growing
fisted into the wet mesentery of clay.

CREATIVE NON-FICTION