

Queer Here: Hidden Voices

A collaborative project encouraging queer visibility and poetry in the public realm.

KATIE JUKES
ODE TO MY BELOVED'S BACK

your back
my drum
snare drum
drum tongue
flesh thumb
bone numb
skin drum
tongue drum
your back
my beat
beat bone
bone street
bare feet
stone steep
drum beat
lie back
flesh heat
soft beat
birth seat
bowl shell
heart swell
long bell
soft shell
your back
bone rack
my drum
steep stack
snare drum
drum tongue
flesh thumb
bone numb
skin drum
tongue drum

- **PROMPT** Write a poem / ode to a body part of yours or someone else's that don't get the recognition they deserve (eg, what would you do without your big toe, how does your spine function in keeping you up straight - how do you give love to this part of your body)
<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/flying-inside-your-own-body/>

JO MARY WATSON
I made eyeballs

I opened a book
and found a language that I put
between your lips.

I painted by numbers
1 - 10: toes
1 - 10: fingers.

I spun a web
of veins through your body
delicate maze of life.

I remembered the ocean
in somebody else's eyes
and asked her if she could flood yours, too.

I framed a picture
of him and me, imagining the merge of our faces
into existence.

I played my violin
stringing notes together
that curved into your spine.

I forged a sword
only you can pull from the stone,
wrapped it in crimson velvet
and placed it in your chest
for you to lead with.

I wrote a poem.
It is you.

- **PROMPT:** Write an ode (a love poem) to something you are proud of or have created - a meal, a drawing, a relationship, a home, a human! This could be a letter / text to the thing you're writing about. Try to describe the process of how you made it, and the different parts make it up. Try to explain why it means so much to you.

DYLAN JAMES

beer

if you asked me if it was a problem
i'd say:
it's like sommeliers sowing seeds in hearts and minds
it's planting the grain and reaping rewards
it's decompressing after a day at work
it's hazy pales, helles lagers
it's pilsners
it's aromas infiltrating as bubbles
it's the head bursting on a New England IPA
it's glassware kiss on lips
it's liquid caressing throat like fingertips
it's lovers in bed
it's duvets
it's nudity
it's pulling aside the reeds in a pond and floating on your back idly

if you asked me to be honest
i'd say:
it's cells in your skin yearning like star crossed lovers
it's silencing the screaming in your ears
it's riverbank veins eroding
it's thieving from housemates when they're asleep
it's cycling round looking for open off-licenses
it's an escape route
it's not remembering the last day you didn't
it's not remembering falling asleep
it's drinking water to quench a thirst
it's routine in the absence of one
it's how to be yourself
it's never any money
it's feeling too good to stop
it's peeling open an envelope only to find nothing inside

PROMPT:

- Exercise: Free Writing
- Explore your relationship to a substance - it could be positive or negative.
- What role does it play in your life? Use repetition to help you write

<https://gladdestthing.com/poets/wendy-cope>

JAY FARLEY
Waiting on

same stale black & whites as yesterday
shades on, getting a backy to The Burlington

going back to The Burlington, shaded
hangover brash and dusk fragile

a brash hangover still dusking
watching time layered plate on plate away

wishing stale time layered plate on tectonic plate shift
work sponge down the stains of last night

sponge stains down the last night
yes I am small for the thousandth time

for the thousandth small time man again
I drag up my little black skirt for you

but my little black skirt is a drag
you cop a look at my tits my dainty legs

my dainty legs my tits exposed to you
face stuffing your full English

your full English stuffed face
pays for my minimum wage

but it's me that pays for it in the end
gender is not black & white

my gender is not this black & white
my swollen feet cry out for relief

cry out for foothold swollen relief
still waiting on living

still waiting on

PROMPT:

- What is your relationship to work? If you don't have a job..could you think about chores instead? Do any uniforms, sounds or objects remind you of your time working?
How did you measure time?

DARCY MAY GILLHAM
to the young

when it came to leaving
without a word or note
you unpacked yourself
& arranged your small bones
like funeral flowers
into the shape
of a sleeping
boy

- **PROMPT:** Can you write a letter to a past self, a friend or someone close to you, perhaps at a time you/they were struggling or needed help? What words of wisdom or kindness could you offer this person?
If it helps, consider what form the letter/note/email/text/voice recording might have... could it come in a box of chocolate, written across the sky in a plane or on the back of a receipt
Poem: Mary Jean Chan - Cake

JAKE EVANS
Dale Street 3am

Beau-ti-ful you say to me from across the road
In slow motion
Like your mouth has never tasted the word before

Your wet lips glisten in the yellow street light
Like the first piss
Hitting the toilet bowl in the morning

Glamorous girls stand knock-kneed and shivering
In silk slip dresses
Puffing hard on ciggies to keep warm

Your eyes pierce through the club lights and drunken fog
Of the night
And I - vodka brave - meet and pierce you right back

I'm floored by the dark of your stare
On the black tarmac road
And I'm lying with old gum, ciggie stubs and discarded kebabs

We undress our smiles, our clothes, our skins
And hold each other
Picked peeled naked and flesh like two ripe blood oranges

We are inside each other

We're drinking from the mouths of angels
Swimming in each other's blood
And dancing until the sun rises to burn the night to ash

In drunk-time the moment spilled out into forever
And we never really ended
In real-time we did

I forget how

- **PROMPT:** Can you remember a moment of intimacy with a stranger or an animal?
Maybe a first meeting or chance encounter
How did time change as you encountered this moment

ALMA LIPARI
Venus De Milo

undress me
slowly
stand before me
in my nakedness
admired and
exposed
at the louvre

no arms to touch
myself
my entire body
burdened
by desire

caress
my divine cold
with your warm
fingertips
observe my expression
morph as a crescendo
of shivers ascends
my marble spine

lift and
carry me
through the empty halls
of your house
lay me
on linen
before worshipping
pleasure me
because i say so
my faithful devotee

run the tip
of your nose
from neck to nipple
hold your cheek
against my hip
trace erotic verses
along the inside
of my thigh

heal every wound
with a kiss
ferry my
desires safely
to the harbour
of your mouth

PROMPT:

- What if an object could speak?
- What would it say?
- What would its voice sound like?

TOM HESSOM
In Public

Do you remember the walk back,
some song blaring, the last drops
of wine burning a path inside us,
and you kept catching my eye on yours,
and you glanced to the houses,
to a man in the field, and then,
to me, to my lips, leant in,
mouth already curling at the corners
at the thought of it, the thought of him
watching, and kissed me, and it felt like
diving, and you pulled up to
see if he saw, to tell me you'd never
done that before, your breath
snatched from you

PROMPT:

- Write a poem about a significant memory - it could be your first kiss, the day you left school, a funeral / wedding.
- Begin with the phrase, 'do you remember', or 'I remember when'.
- Write in detail about the sights, smells, sounds
- Try to bring this memory into the present day - where are you while thinking of this memory? How has it affected, shaped your life today?

JAIME STARR
Beautifying the Mitzvah

1. Begin in night's rich velvet darkness. Allow loved ones snores to pass through you. Spend 60 breaths imagining their dreams. Unclench jaw. Let envy seep out.
2. Name each uncontested breath. Nourish it like a firstborn.
3. Wake. Infuse the day with longing. Whisper darkest held secret into each second until clock hands drip.
4. Find birds in late afternoon. Name them Emotion. Accept they will never be tamed, be still, never alight on your outstretched hand. Adore them anyway.
5. When hunger strikes, interrogate it. Examine which molecules crave union with you. Find them in mango and fish – use their juices to anoint the body.
6. Bless skin with sweet scent twice daily until lovers mistake you for rose, coconut, ripe pear.
7. Greet each magpie from the window, though they will not acknowledge you – invisibility is their generous gift. Return to night.

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PROMPT:

- Write 7 rituals for 7 days, (or whichever sequence feels right for you)
- Utilize objects, smells, senses, music, tastes, movements
- Imagine an end goal or result. What are these rituals accumulating to? What are we conjuring?
- Try to use simple, direct, and directive language, try to stay in the real, the physical, even when hyperbolic or symbolic. I lift, I sit, I move, I smell, I turn, I balance.

JAY MITRA
Springtime

I unfurl
under tenderness.
the warmth of a voice
a soft crescendo of heat
like dawn delicately evaporating
dewdrops. Palms push,
and diaphanous petals spread apart.
before, I was a closed white rose,
a bud yet to breathe
but you
you sound like springtime.
and I
unfurl unafraid.

Prompt

- Describe yourself as a natural object - if you were a flower, if you were a tree, if you were an animal, which would you be?
- Where is this natural object in relation to your life? Are you a flower in a vase in your mothers house? Are you a bird on the roof of your lovers car? Are you a cloud crossing the sky, a tornado ripping through the streets of your hometown?

DAY MATTAR

honey

the people are hungry, get up out of bed
out of pity, get dressed, and feed them.
drizzle the molten honey of your hair along the bannister,
out the door, and into the sun. dab the tip of your index finger
into the dip of your collarbone and anoint each stranger
with the sugar that pools there. honey,
crack the jar of your mouth open on the concrete
and drool out a kind defiance to the two young boys
who pressed knife to the hollow of your neck,
stabbed you in the shoulder and ran. honey,
get up. mark the progress of your healing on every lamppost,
decorate each doorknob with a gold rosette, flood every letterbox.
get up. make each sticky footprint
a forgiveness.

PROMPT:

- Write about a time you survived something: this can be about the banality of survival, 'I survived the exam', 'I survived the heartbreak', 'I survived the humiliation of stepping in dog poo'
- OR write about 'survival', in relation to something in nature, eg: 'the snail survived being stepped on'. 'The shore survived the approaching sea'
- You could repeat one word, or term of endearment, 'honey, babe, angel, love', and circle that word, use it as an anchor to bring back the theme of the poem.

BRENDAN CURTIS

Saint Helen

It is said she built the roads
diehard bricky
hard hat, hi viz, tats, shaved head
Chuffing fags
They say she built some churches
Some road
Let's call her
Saint of Builders
milky tea, 4 sugars
I <3 Nan tattooed above her backside
Boxy shorts and big arms
Lumping steaming tarmac
Onto ground
Slurps up a whole plate of beans
On our break
No one's sure where she comes from
Wales, serbia, greece
doesn't speak much
But she's a laugh
Our helen,
works hard, doesn't take the piss
Gets it done
Can put away more than the boys
Has good tunes
And spurs us on
Gold crucifix round her sunburnt neck
Destroys us all at darts
drains her ale
And rides off laughing, on her harley,
Cheeky cow,
With the barmaid arms
Around her waist

Prompt

- Who would your version of Saint Helen be? How could you distill St.Helen's as a place into a person - who would she be? a drag queen? an old man dancing in the queue for maccies?
- Alternatively, if you wanted to celebrate someone as a religious figure who would it be? Your nan for pope? What if god was your childhood dog?

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