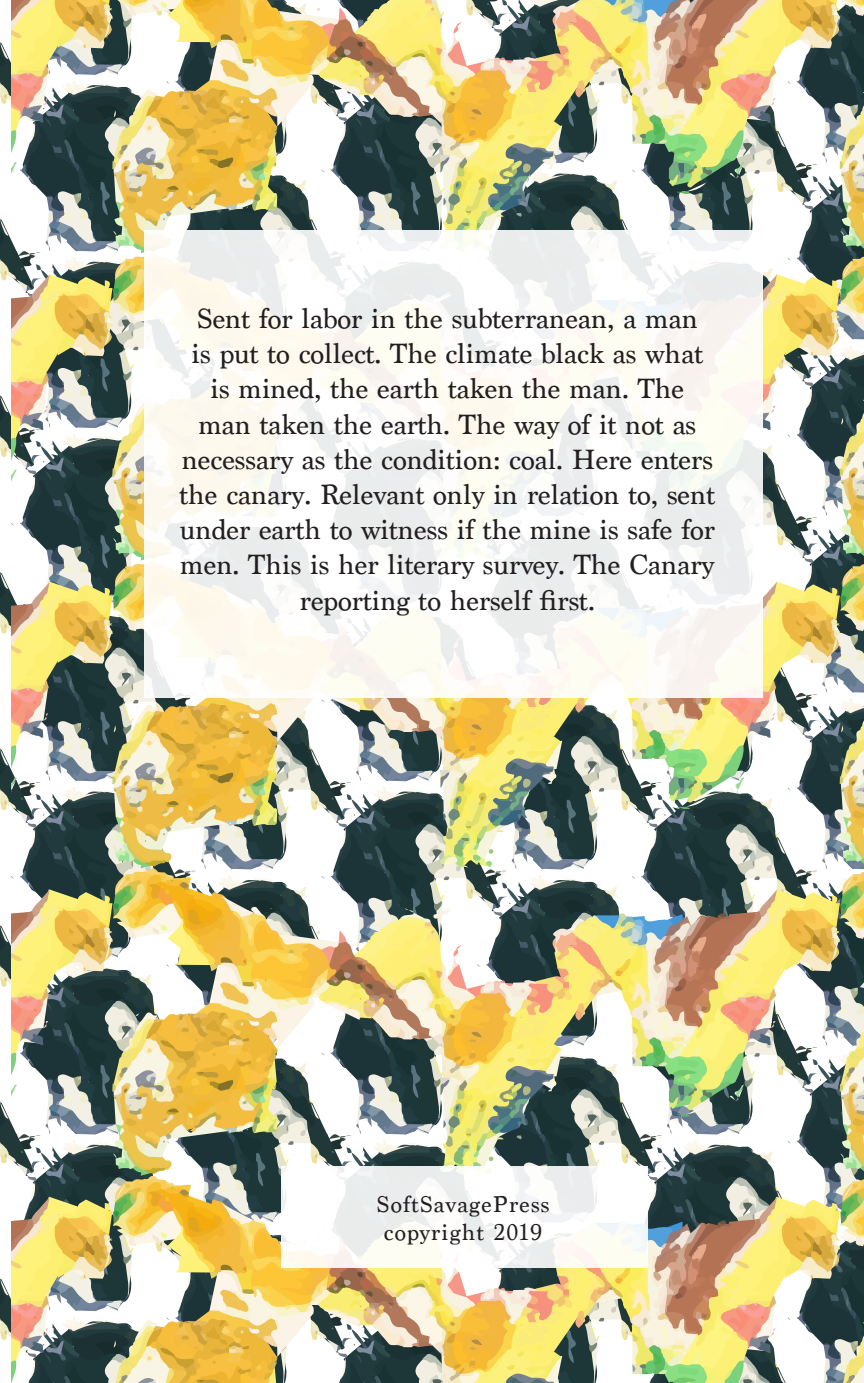





C a n a r y
R e v i e w

Spring 2019
Vol. 1



Sent for labor in the subterranean, a man
is put to collect. The climate black as what
is mined, the earth taken the man. The
man taken the earth. The way of it not as
necessary as the condition: coal. Here enters
the canary. Relevant only in relation to, sent
under earth to witness if the mine is safe for
men. This is her literary survey. The Canary
reporting to herself first.

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Dedicated to Frances “Franny” Gibson Curtis
(November 14th, 1920–March 5th, 2018)

*Love
Love bird
Frances Curtis!*



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What do Billie Holiday, mystery, and a candelabra have in common? Other than burning, these are some of the objects Mama Rita Dove urges into subjecthood in her poem "Canary."

In HIStory, the canary was sent ahead to the dangerous underworld of the mines. If there was too much toxic gas, her duty was to die. Her death, or survival, the sign men took to know if the mines were safe or not.

Only men would explore the oxymoronic idea that "safety" and "mine" deserve a shared sentence. Only men would have such open disregard for color.

Back in the Sunken Place, my undergraduate menagerie in North Carolina, I had a birdie dream: a place where mines were safe for Black womxn. A subterranean underground haunting prose, poetry, and visual reflection. I knew I needed to start a publishing press. But what would I name her? I sneezed out names. None snotted with the proper stickiness of being gilded in gold, but not backed by the standard. I kept sneezing out the word "savage, "; I wanted to signify on the Blackened word. Then, a friend, Gemynii--whose radical work is featured in this issue--posted an image of herself with the caption: "Soft Savage." Of course! The canarification of the Black femme *is* as soft as it is savage.

It is as Black as it is yellow. Or, as Mama Dove writes, "[has] as many shadows as lights." And what does a soft savage do but press?

In this inaugural issue, I am excited for you to press with her in color and geography. Here, you'll find the canarification of the Black femme is both yellow and Black. Her flight is global. She flies from the mine shattered South Africa to the mine shattered south of the States; North to the Old Line State, with a brilliant trip to the Midwest.

In the last two stanzas of "Canary," Mama Dove sets up the conundrum and prescribes the remedy:

"Fact is, the invention of women under siege has been to sharpen love in the service of myth.

if you can't be free, be a mystery."

In yellow bird shit,

Jalynn Harris
Editor-in-Chief, Publisher

Demara Austin

“Won’t you celebrate with me that everyday something has tried to kill me, and has failed.” --Lucille Clifton

I’ve always been plagued by people trying to figure out what the hell I’m always smiling about.

“You’re always just so happy!!!”

“What are you smiling about?”

“Demara, what is going on?!”

And when I respond, I’m usually met with a confused chuckle when they realize what I’m smiling about is something so insignificant, I could’ve easily ignored it and not smiled.

I have always plagued people who are always frowning.

“How are you today?”

“Can you change things?”

“What is going on?!”

And when they respond, I point out something small, but beautiful.

Insignificantly magnificent, the beauty of our world and it’s intricate simplicities.

“How do you do that?” they ask.

I’ve had no other choice.

Black joy has always been cultivated as a form of rebellion. Calling joy into

the hearts of those fighting so that they have something in them to fight the next day. It wasn’t the food that gave us soul, it was the necessity of continuously celebrating survival. The fight is not over, so we must continue to intentionally celebrate survival in the small ways we can.

My great grandfather, who was born into slavery turned indentured servitude, carved figurines from wood for any of the 30+ young kids in our family, who would pop over anytime and smoked cigars, lived to be 104. His niece, my great aunt Sue, cooked, sewed, and kept an immaculately organized pantry, that would put your corner grocery store to shame. She was adamant about going to church and added a pillow to her car’s seat every couple years to see over the steering wheel.

They smiled all the time. They focused on the present. They taught me to use the past only as evidence that hope survives all evil, not as a limiting factor in my present. They taught me not to treat the things I love as unnecessary. They taught me that joy and hope were the keys to survival- everything else would work itself out as long as I kept fighting with a smile. So I did. And it has.

Loving Theta

Linette Allen

fragrant hips

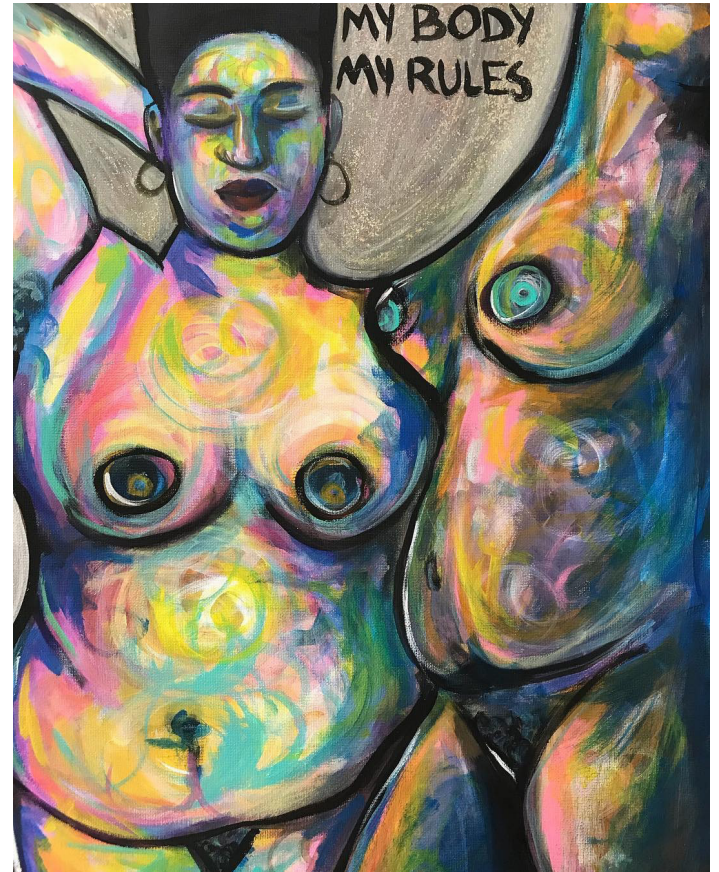
a strut that waves me
from the pines, drawing me
to motorboat on pure lake—sniffing
Daphne, Josee, Jasmine while she
starts the engine, her hands the frequency
of honeysuckle, her back a boxed set
of reblooming lilac; when the boat

moves, we pretend we are Japanese
fountains sputtering Aztec Pearl & African
Daisy,
Queen Protea—hair all frond-like

we hoist our arms, brighten
our eyes, as if children exploring
foreign alphabets in Meroe, earlobes
pierced with little starfruits
our toes

know the way to the camp, know
walking with Theta, at six to ten,
is sailing.

Gemynii



Sweetwater Creek

June Beshae

Nothing is sweeter than pine trees
sap flowing from a point down to a river
where we bathe
naked
call each other names and dry on the rocky
bank
Call you lover more than friend
and call you over more than I send you
away—the way that those pine call the moon,
lift her up above their heads, most nights
tonight they don't

tonight the moon stays away— yet still they
love
still breathe and ebb and flow and their
marriage is still sweet
even when the night comes and they sleep
alone

Ts'epang Matekane



Sage Mack

The first lie we tell ourselves is that we are not
God
The second, is that He walks with divine
retribution tucked in his mouth ready for
spit fire
We shall fear his word
Shall see him in every reflection but our own let
every holy scripture
paint me evil, paint me sin
a mistake his son died to correct
Call him father cuz he be the ghost yo mama
prayed to every night, on her knees bent
and begging
I guess your father and God liked her in the
same position
See I never knew God wasn't a synonym for self
That my birth wasn't a baptism in
placenta
That I wasn't holy just for existing
How old were you when you learned to pray to
everything but yourself?
When heaven became a wish you'd clasp your
tiny hands to make sacred that one day
God won't see you as an angel anymore.
How long did it take for you to wash the psalms
off your skin? Was every proverb
written in burning ink,

scorched in divine scripture on your body
Did it make you finally feel holy?
Like God was just a whisper away
Like y'all was on speaking terms again cuz he
forgot to worship you, forgot to see you
as a mirror
As himself, an equal
In this relationship
reciprocity is you praying to one another
My grandmother used to tell me that if you
looked hard enough you could see God in
just about everything
So I found a mirror.



Interview with erotic writer SammyKing conducted by Jalyynn Harris

Sex in the South African City

I: Where'd you grow up?

S: In Soweto. Meadowlands.

I: How would you describe yourself as an artist?

S: I write. I speak. I think that's about it. I read, but I don't think that's an art form. But definitely writing and speaking.

I: Why did you start writing and when?

S: I started writing when I was in high school. I wrote because there are some things that I read about that I wanted to elaborate on. So some stories that I thought would go a different direction and they didn't. So it was mostly fanfiction, I'd say.

I: When you were writing, did you show your writing to other people or was it just for yourself?

S: Mostly it was for myself. But, I really liked the internet so I also wrote for the internet. Under a lot of pseudonyms.

I: How do you feel like you've grown from writing and reading fan fiction?

S: Now I write my own stories, my own characters. I don't have to base them on anyone. And I used to use a lot of people's descriptions. For example, I'd always write things like, "it was as cold as the devil's tits," or something like that. But that didn't really mean anything to me. But now, I try to be more original and really think about what

I really mean. How cold was it? Was it really that cold? Or was it just mildly cold? What do I mean? And then find a metaphor in that way. And also just, allowing the words to come to me and not fetching the words. Not just saying generic things, describing skin color as bark and coffee. Just thinking, "what does it really remind me of?" "What do I really think this character looks like?" Instead of what I've read. Instead of saying, "olive skin tone" what does that mean? Olives are green. I didn't really understand that. I've never understood that.

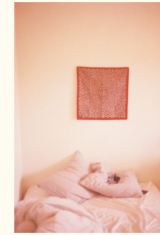
I: How do you come up with your characters now?

S: I write a specific genre of short stories; erotic writing. So characters come last. First it's the scenario. It's the ultimate sex scene. Where is it set? What's there? And then I will pull the character from that.

I: Do you specifically write hetero-erotica? Black people? Queers? Is that something you think about?

S: That is definitely something I think about a lot. I try to have subplots in my stories where there are main characters, but then there's like the best friend who also has a girlfriend. Then, in that way I try to incorporate as many sexes, and genders, and sexual orientations. Underlying that there's other characters going through some kind of sexual encounter, or more likely a romantic encounter that I explore. But sometimes, my main characters are gay and then the sub-characters are also gay. I don't really force it. I

Lenhlohonolo Ndlovu



continued from page 17

try not to be like where's the token gay, or the token straight or the token black person. I'm more likely to write about Black people b/c I'm Black and I know how we look. I know the texture of our hair. I don't know what white people's skin really looks like when it's flushed. That's another thing about writing from my own perspective that I really enjoy is that I used to read a lot about blushing girls. And when we blush, we don't have that rosy-- not all of us, I mean light skin black people do-- but I don't, I don't turn red. So what does it mean to blush? How does it feel? How does it look? How do I describe it? Those are the types of things I think about differently now. As opposed to before where I'd just say, "blood rushed up her skin and it was red."

I: Who are some of the erotic writers that inspire you?

S: Paulo Coelho wrote a book called *Eleven Minutes*. It's heavily erotic. It's about a prostitute. Have you read it? I like that book because it really explores the many ways sex can be felt. And then, one of my favorite authors is Nora Roberts. She writes a lot of books, she's really prolific. Those are my two main inspirations. In terms of actually erotic books, I'd say, Lysnay Sands and J.R. Ward--they just write about sex. That's all that really happens in the books. I like those, but I'm hoping my books are not just about sex, but that they just happen to have really great descriptive sex scenes.

I: So, you said your books? Are you working on a book?

S: Yeah, I am working on a project. I want to write a novel. But I don't know how it'll come out of me, it might come out as a series of short stories because that's really what I write most often. Or it could be a novel. And I want it to be based in pre-colonial Southern Africa. Because I think our stories are not told enough as Africans, and also, as Southern African people. Because it was erased. Also, because we have a lot of oral history, not necessarily written history, so I think a lot has been lost along the way. I want to re-imagine what it could have been. And write about that. And I want it to be heavily erotic. Because I want young Black people to feel horny about young Black people. That's what I want. And I want it to be pre-colonial because I don't want it to be under the influence of whiteness. I just want: I like you, you like me too, how we gonna do this? Or we're not from the same tribe-- maybe that's the biggest problem. I don't want it to be a sad story, I want us to be happy and horny. Because a lot of white people are happy and horny, you know, and I think we deserve that too.

I: Do you interact with any other South African erotic writers?

S: No, not really I haven't seen any [on the internet]. I didn't add that I'm South African in my online bio.

I: I'm curious if there's a community. Writing across language or anything.

S: Same. I once read a Zulu erotic piece of writing. It was more like essay length, but it was good. And sexy.

And I thought, whoa, people can be sexy in Zulu, it was a good moment. Cause duh, we have sex! It's just that representation of African sexuality is so limited. It's either, non-consensual or it's primitive and it's not sophisticated. But that's why I want to write this pre-colonial book, because I want to show people that we had bomb sex. And we were having sex for pleasure and not necessarily to procreate. I want to dismantle these stereotypes that we're animal life. We're not. We're sophisticated. We cared about the clit. We care. I want that. So bad.

I: I've heard hoteps talks about queerness isn't African because "we're supposed to be reproducing" says the man with 0 kids and no wives, but still he believes that.

S: Or says the man with 10 kids and women he doesn't support! It doesn't make sense. I don't think South Africa, really Southern Africa-- I don't want to say "South Africa" because these were just demarcated areas that were decided by European powers-- we didn't have geographic barriers, we had political and tribal barriers, but did we have geographic barriers that said, "No you can't go that side bc you're not of that land,"--No I don't think so, I think people moved socially.

I: And because of the pussy.

S: And because of the fucking pussy. I think about my characters-- why would they move all the way down here? It's arid. It's dry. Sure there's a conflict up there, but what's happening here? What's going on? Who are these women who are curvy as fuck? You know, what

do they represent? That's what I want to know and explore in my stories. I want a new narrative of African sexuality.

I: How has reading affected your sex life?

S: Reading in terms of sex life has prepared me on what to expect. I read about sex when I was maybe 14, 15. And I read about it for a long time. Way before I had sex. I had sex when I was 19, when I was in Varsity. I think reading about it prepared me in a way that sexual health classes don't. Sex-ed classes are like, warning you against pregnancy and STDs mostly. And being hella technical. But books, really explored. That's why when a guy would say, "I'm so horny, I'm gonna die," I'd be like "No you're lying b/c that's not what happened to Tom. B/c Tom was horny and then he became un-horny, or he masturbated." Or when guys are like, "I'm going to cum quickly in the first round." But I'd always be like, no if you masturbate before you come to my place, then you won't bust quick. I knew those things. In sex-ed they're not going to tell you that. They're not going to make you a sex expert. Which I guess is not their responsibility. I'm just saying books prepared me in that way, I didn't feel like sex was too far from me. It wasn't a novel idea. It also took away the moral implications of it. I realized sex can come in so many different ways, because it wasn't just for if you're in love. Even if you weren't in love, it wasn't always dirty.

I: You didn't need to be in love to have sex.

S: I didn't need to be in love to have sex.

Bryonna Jay

I caught a baby cockroach. It had been living in an overturned Old Fashioned glass on my nightstand. The first few days it crawled around the rim of the glass, licking up the dried cola and salt from my saliva. Around and around it crawled. Its antenna shifting up and down like levers. When the sugar spikes surged through his tiny body he frantically ran in the shape of a star. I wondered if he thought there was a weak spot somewhere on the glass that he could propel his little body through. Or gain enough momentum to push it over. At night, before drifting off to sleep, I watched it do its roachy things in disgust. Living and breathing with its slick black back and copper band across its neck. Why would god paint such a beautiful stripe across the neck of such a damned thing?

Eventually it stopped running, then started shitting. Little black dots half the size of eraser shavings. Finally, some solid food. How long can a baby cockroach live off its own shit? Too long. Long enough to gain its strength back to stand on its hind legs and feel up the side of the

glass. It looked like he was screaming in sign language. Tap, tap, get me the fuck out of here! Tap, tap, tap, this bitch is fucking crazy. It kept tapping in Morse code until it lost its balance and fell onto its back. I watched it squirm for hours. Half hoping it would be able to roll over to its side and carry on with its shit eating. The other hoping it would just give up and die an indignant death with its belly up and legs fixed with rigor mortis in the position of a fight.



His Flaming Boyfriend

Darius Wilson

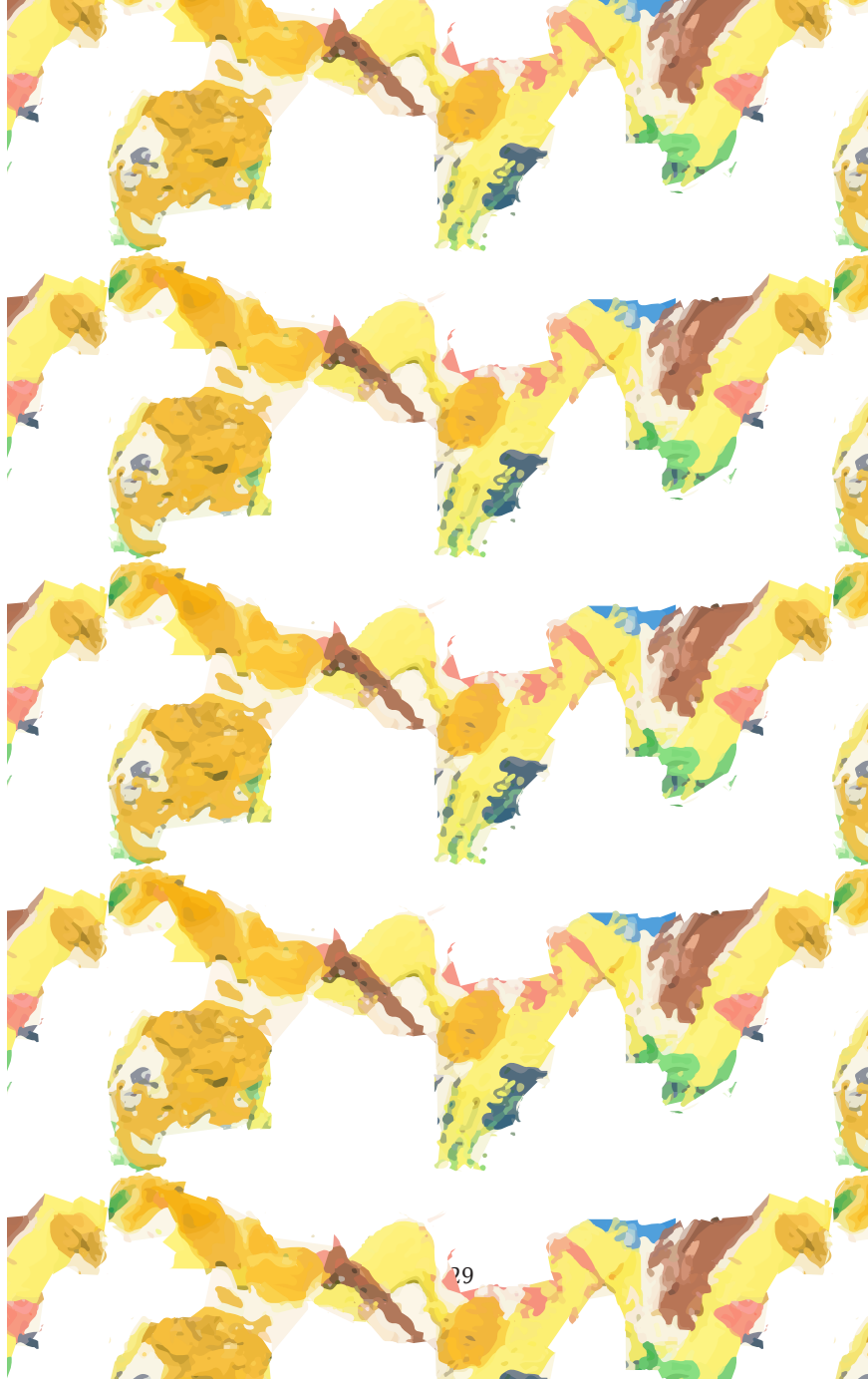
Babe, let me be enormous,
fill a room cackling,
spraying the walls
yoke orange, ick yellow,
spreading like electrical fire.
I'm here, I'm now!
"Your boyfriend seems tired".

"You can't dance," but what is this?
The fag is lit and burning all
in friendly fire. First, you fan,
I'm raising the roof, glass in hand.
But now, there's smoke in other's
eyes and coughs of laughter.
Brimstone falls on you like glitter,
yet you can't see the shine.
Stomp the flame out, usher
me to the door, and I'm carried
away like the paparazzi's whore.

Jade Harris

I am Perfect

I am perfect
from the pure grain of my hair to the
curve of my hip
straight to the soles of my feet you'll
love the way and tear of my skin
the huff of my breath and the grip of
my touch
I'm perfect
made not created
learned not taught
put together not build
I'm perfect
I'll draw anyone into my layer feed on
your soul with my lips you'll be mine
forever admit defeat
you cry out my name knowing it's a
sin
thinking of nothing less than death
but here there is no saving nothing
such
I am perfect
longed for not seeking
amused not tempted
goddess with no prayer



contributors

Linette Allen is earning an MFA in Creative Writing & Publishing Arts at the University of Baltimore. She has traveled widely and says her prior master's from The London School of Economics uniquely fuels her poetics. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in Gargoyle, Notre Dame Review, and Free State Review, among others. Whenever she sees a birdbath she wells up in memory of her grandmother, Sylvia Elizabeth, who was an avid birdwatcher.

Demara Austin was born and raised in Chocolate City before it became Cookies and Creme City. She always loved reading, writing, and casually philosophizing about patterns in our world. With a Bachelors in Math from St. Mary's College of Maryland and a Masters in Math from Kansas State University, she currently teaches high school math at a private school in Baltimore by day and writes many unfinished thinkpieces or poems by night while snuggling with her 3-legged dog or black cat. She's also trying to figure out if she's a witch.

June Beshae is an Atlanta-born poet whose mom used to live on a commune in Tennessee. Pronouns are flexible but prefer they/them.

Bryonna Jay is a writer based in Baltimore. She is a candidate for the Creative Writing and Publishing Arts MFA at the University of Baltimore. She has a crush on humanity.

Gemynii is a self taught artist who creates paintings focus mainly on abstract portraits and figures of people of color and is influenced heavily by social issues, music, body and gender acceptance, and the overall Black experience. Her work can often render audiences uncomfortable, forcing them to critically think about blackness, representation and the body in a white supremacist capitalist patriarchal society and within the contemporary art world. She currently lives and creates in Durham, NC.

My name is **Jade Alexis Harris** I'm 25 years old and I live in Baltimore city. Originally from York, Pennsylvania I am the eldest of 5 and a pastor's kid. Being a trans human of color can be very difficult especially here in this city. I just always have to remember to keep my head up and keep moving forward.

Sage Mack is a writer studying English at Cleveland State University. As a Omo Shango in Ifa with Virgo placements in 4 major planets Sage's passions run deep, not only in writing but in other areas of art including videography, street art, and creative directing. Sage is a non binary witch hoping to change the world one spell and poem at a time.

My name is **Ts'epang**-meaning 'to have hope' in my native language of Sesotho. I was born in the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho and grew up in both New York City and Johannesburg, SA. I am a doctor (very soon to be) by day and artist by night. I would describe myself as a multi-culturalist with a firm belief in the upliftment of the African people. Dream, Explore, Learn, and Grow is my life mantra.

Lenhlohonolo Ndlovu is flying on nimbus clouds & honouring amadlozi wam's (my ancestor's) wildest dreams. Making iyeza (medicine) with all that I create.

SammyKing is a bisexual erotic-romance writer with a penchant for the nasty. I touch myself when I'm writing. All my characters know how to locate the clit.

Darius Wilson aka Jesus Vice aka Demise Ruby is a rapper, performer, outreach worker & possibly the baddest faggot in Jewish Park Heights.



Frances “Franny” Gibson Curtis attended Baltimore City Public Schools and graduated from Carver Vocational High School in 1937. Afterwards, Frances worked for a family in a domestic capacity. She later worked at Fairfield Shipyard in dining services. During World War II she was employed at Glenn L. Martin Company as one of the historic aircraft women riveters. Frances then moved to Oxford, MD, married the renowned Black sailmaker, Albert Curtis, and started her own business, Oxford Hand Laundry. Her painting, “The New Blue” appears on the front and back covers of this issue.