

**AWP 2020 Presentation // Mapping the Edges of Our Wounds: A Writing
Workshop on Anti-Restitution Narratives & Sexual Assault**

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Participants: Joyce Meier, Sara McKinnon, Sarah Klotz

The following poems will be used as part of this Presentation and Writing Workshop concerning sexual assault, the importance of anti-restitution narratives, and institutional rhetoric concerning victims/survivors and their stories. The Workshop was designed to help other victims/survivors process their experiences, but to also allow space for non-victims/survivors of assault to contemplate their own difficult experiences and consider how processing these experiences via poetry can help them empathize with others who have experienced different forms and degrees of trauma.

Since cultural and institutional rhetoric plays an important role in how victims/survivors feel about themselves, the presenters—all current or previous faculty at Michigan State University, a university that has been rocked by recent sexual scandal—believe that institutions need to continue addressing the way we talk about assault and survivorship, as these institutions also take initiative to continue the conversation on sexual assault and cultural change.

// Poems //

YOUR FIRST BED

Emily Kendal Frey

I keep finding your first bed
in the corner of my first bed.

The starts creak open
like doors and scatter

in all directions as if awaiting
a final decision.

What can I say
about the distance?

Here, body inside my body.
Here's a night-blooming cereus,

light attached.*

* from *The Grief Performance*, Cleveland State University Press

IF YOU TELL

Afaa Michael Weaver

If you tell, the stars will turn against you,
you will have not night but emptiness.

If you tell, you will live in an old house
in the desert all alone with cacti for friends.

If you tell, the police will add you to the list
of people who might have killed the albatross.

If you tell, you will walk in a hollow room
full of the sound of *liar, liar, pants on fire*.

If you tell, poets will call it marketing,
a ploy to get ahead in the game.

If you tell, women will think you are trying
to steal a place that is not yours.

If you tell, you will become a stinky thing
no aromatherapy will ever make sweet.

If you tell, all the therapists you ever saw
will claim you in reports to some conference.

If you tell, you will see the wounded everywhere,
shuffling legions, the murdered souls of children

Under angels' wings, beating a prayer in a place
with no night, no day, no palladium of lies.*

* from *The Government of Nature*, University of Pittsburgh Press

HOME MOVIE

Kimberly Ann Priest

If it is *pornographic*,
there is the soft spread of butter on toast,
the few crumbs that suck salt from its yellow-white solid,

thick with table knife scraping the center into furrows,
yellow running onto white plate showing through
deep cuts—

and if she is *nude*,
the eggs are undercooked, soft round bulb of yellow
shaped bright,
fork impressions on transparent shield,
the full runny width of white plate—

and if there is *sex* it is embryo, salt, slices of toast.

But if it is *breakfast*, it is me—the whole white surface—
bright and bulbing, undercooked, tight as egg—
how much you love salt, to lick it from the surface,
butter rolled over your tongue;

the way you set the knife at the edge of the plate after preening
yellow yolk from its teeth
and never talk about *porn* or *nudity* or *sex*

yet I feel photographed,
a film played across a makeshift screen—
white sheet, clothespins—the cheap re-enactment
of something you eat:
the eggs, the toast, the butter of me spread over its surface.*

* as published in *Welter*, V. 53, University of Baltimore

GRENELLE MARKET I

Pascale Petit

At first I only notice
the polythene it's wrapped in.
then the shout disc
fastened to the front trotter
by a rubber band.

My own nose sniffs
but the day is still
clean. I look harder
under the caul
that glazes the cheek

with a milky bloom,
see a long eyelid
closed against my gaze
and an ear, the flap
open, as if listening for Mother.

I want to mother
The neck folds, my eye
Creeps downwards, over
The sign that says
'cochon de lait'

and the price. Beyond which
the leg seems intact.
I drag myself away
from the suckling pig
only to find

its under-half
also on display. I don't
look directly at the sawn-
through spine,
the coils of brain.*

* from *Fauverie*, Poetry Wales Press

POEM FOR THE MOON MAN

Dorothea Lasky

Have some mercy Dottie

No sex, just milk
Is the only thing I have to show for all my hormones

A little vulnerable, not a jerk
Is what he said about you

I am starting to think I am profoundly fucked up

And the only one who can save me is the one I let go in the
River so long ago

Death, death, it's all death

You get to the point where you forget all the people that loved
you
Where all you can do is cry

A time based upon desire

Oh Wolf
Even I forgive you

Oh Moon Man
Even I forgive you

Not a jerk
But a little vulnerable
Young and stupid like everyone else
Slightly concerned with things to the skew of you

Have some Mercy Dottie
Have some mercy world

Be silly Hannah, it's ok
Be silly, girls, it's just us
Take good care, Hilda
It's just us
It's ok to be us
Play and play Hera, go play the day away

No silly, just us

No sex, just milk
Is all we will have to show for it

And if I am insane
And if I am

Then let me be so

Let this skewed version of the world
Always be so

Moon Man
You will always be the nothing of the fall

Let it be so

Let the others run rampant
Let it be so

Dark eyes
And if I'm insane
Let it be so

I am starting to think
Death death

I am starting to really think
Death is all the world has left to offer

And if I am death
Then let it be so

Forgetting all the people who might have loved me
The blank walls
The marbled walls
The black walls
The night that never ends
The blown-out bits

And if I am so beyond you
Then let it be so
Always darkness and more of it

And if I am darker than light
Then let it be so

I won't look for you Moon Man anymore
I will let you have your life
Go on, go on
Go on, have your life
I won't look for you anymore
I will take my breaths in
I will eat the food they give me
I will live I will die
I won't search for you anymore
Go there, go on
I am done with you
For good
Moon Man, I am done with you
Go there, go on
The light is waiting
The people, with their arms outstretched
Go to them
I have had enough of you
I won't call on you
Anymore
Moon Man
It's my last plea to you
Leave me
For good
I don't want you anymore

I don't want you
Moon Man
Rounding rounding
A head
Bright and white
Rolling out along the hills
Away from me.*

* from *MILK*, Wave Books

