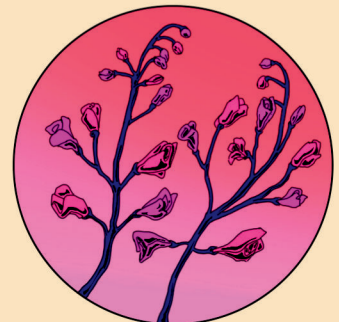
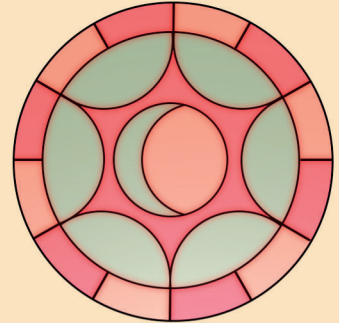




POETRY WITH PRIDE MAGAZINE

2022

BELFAST PRIDE
FESTIVAL



WELCOME

to this year's Poetry with Pride magazine! We've been away for a number of years now, but we're happy to be back with a new look and a fresh selection of queer poems for your enjoyment.

This year's Poetry with Pride event was organised in collaboration with The Lifeboat in celebration of their new anthology, *Queering the Green*. More information about this book and a handful of poems from its pages can be found at the back of this magazine.

We hope you enjoy the poems selected for this year's issue. PwP received more submissions in 2022 than ever before, so the selection process has been both a pleasure and a challenge. Hopefully, this means there will be something for everyone in the pages ahead, so read on!



CONTENTS



3. PRAYING MANTIS
Nina Fatale
4. HOW TO EAT A GRAPFRUIT
Tiegan Johnston
5. RENAISSANCE
Suzi Bloom
6. YOU WERE MINE
beam
7. YELLOW BOOTIES
Montserrat Surmann
8. PRIDE 2019
Isaac Quinn
9. UNDER ANY OTHER
CIRCUMSTANCES
Róisín Sheridan-Bryson
10. QUEER
beam
11. I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE
GOOD FOR ME (AFTER
KILLING EVE)
Róisín Sheridan-Bryson
12. TURPENTINE
Hilary Watson
13. ABOUT WINDOWS
Cody Ares Baynori
15. SUPERGLUE
Chandrika Narayanan-Mohan
16. FRANCES, I LOVE YOU
Eva Griffin
17. AT ST MALACHY'S CHURCH
Paula Cunningham
18. WHEN MY WIFE IS A WEREWOLF
Rosamund Taylor

PRAYING MANTIS

NINA FATALE

When you fucked me asleep,
I dreamt of a giant mantis.
Neon pink with blood red eyes,
Stroking my face with her tarsus.

Barefoot on the skull of a flower,
nectar and ambrosia filled my mouth.
She was like a god towering above,
her antennae swaying in the breeze,

My cheeks were hot with fear,
as her head snapped sideways.
Her forearms slick with fluid,
blades protruding before my eyes.

In cold blood she beheaded me,
her claws severed the wet dream.
Cum inside me, down my thighs,
like a raindrop on a dainty plant.

I flipped you over like a praying mantis,
you beheld my neon metallic claws.
You were too easy to pleasure,
a mere insect before an extra terrestrial.

My jaws widened,
my pallet transcended with you in there.
Your severance alerted every nymph,
that a praying mantis always gets her fill.

HOW TO EAT A GRAPEFRUIT

TIEGAN JOHNSTON

From those pale-yellow giants with paler insides to those fire-coloured orbs who shock with their hot pink flesh. Take one in your hands and squeeze gently, checking its firmness. A decision must be made. Do you slice it round the middle, sliding the knife between its juicy segments, detaching them from their pink-stained skin, so you can scoop them out with a spoon and eat? Or do you chop off the top and bottom, using the knife to peel off the dimpled rind – skin and all – to reveal the fruit? It will be naked but intact, so you can see where those segments join, and that handy knife can pry them apart. You can place them singular onto a plate, pale as salmon and ready to eat.

The best way is to place it bottom down on the chopping board and quarter it. Take each quarter in your hands and bite, teeth right down to the rind, letting the juice flow out of your mouth and down your chin. Pull the flesh from its body with your teeth, until nothing is left but those big orange husks with clinging, stained remnants of skin. This way it tastes bitter, but there's the joy of the grapefruit in your mouth - the rind pushed between your lips, a smile too big for your face and your eyes scrunched tight as you slurp.

✱ PALE AS SALMON ✱
AND READY TO EAT

RENAISSANCE

SUZI BLOOM

AFTER BOTECCELLI'S BIRTH OF VENUS (1485)
VIEWED IN THE UFFIZI IN MAY 2022

She looks a bit like you, a man says, leaning in too close to me,
eyes darting down to my chest then to the painting on the wall,
before correcting themselves up to my face and repeating the cycle.

It's something I've been told before, laying in a bedroom in Sacramento,
underneath a wall tapestry with a recreation of the same painting.
It was said sweetly, then, with love and honesty.
I dismissed the claim as the understanding of me
through the eyes of a girl who knows the beauty of my voice and loyalty to those I love,
rather than a true correlation of my appearance with the beauty ideal.

This time, though, it is said with a smile
and intent that I do not have the luxury of ignoring.
I mutter a *thank you* as I turn my body back to her,
though my attention remains half-trained on him now, standing in my periphery.
I guess I do look a bit like her - I, too, emerged into this world fully-grown,
and so my flesh is displayed, six-feet tall on the wall of the Uffizi,
for his hungry eyes to peel off of the canvas and reapply over my linen dress.

I leave the room before I am satisfied - I tell myself I will go back.
I meet my friends at the cafe and cry at the table when the waitress
brings me the wrong coffee. I let them think that I am crying because of that
and not because I am still back there, hanging on the wall,
held up by the eyes of the men below me and those above
and those that watched me walk here from the station,
and those that watched me reading on the tram,
and those that watched me walk through these divine office hallways to this spot
and those that are watching me now and will continue to watch me
as I lie naked in oil on canvas until flood or fire sets me free..



YOU WERE MINE

BEAM

all flesh
the moon was an orange
that split into two

above a train station
that had closed,
the opened arms of an oak tree

a night
an ocean of nights
walking, singing, waiting for

a taxi,
and a gentleness
that brought me to my knees

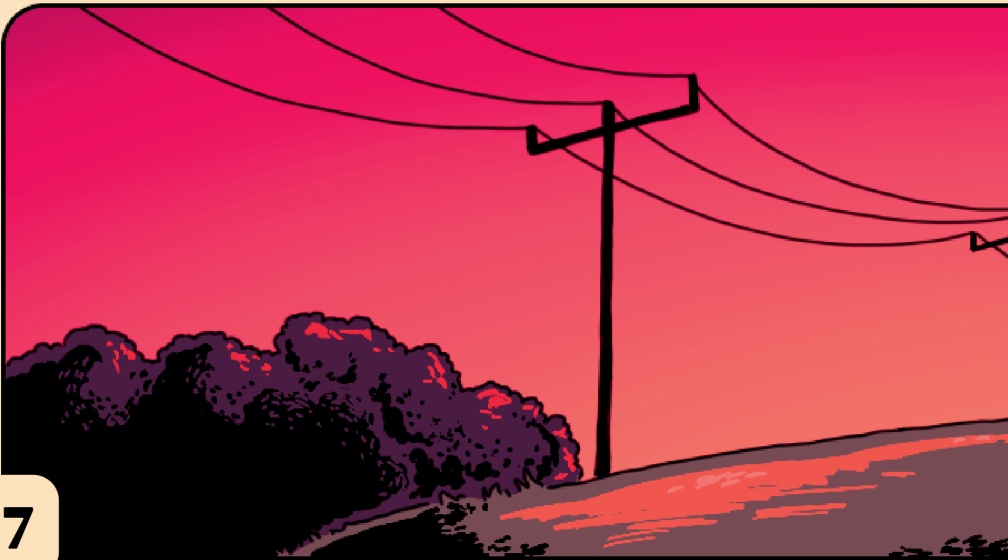


YELLOW BOOTIES

MONTSERRAT SURMANN

Her shoulders don't fill out her shirts any more,
yet her feet can't fit in the shoes she bought them.
Bystanders say, a young woman! Why, look at you, growing and out-growing,
but in her same-sized heart she knows she's only growing out of proportion.
She's becoming lanky, freakishly so; her hands are bigger than her head and
her eyes have set the goal to wander further and further apart. Just like
each limb and fibre seems to be purposefully growing apart from her fickle toddler heart
as it drags on to the encouragement of those who dubbed her a woman.

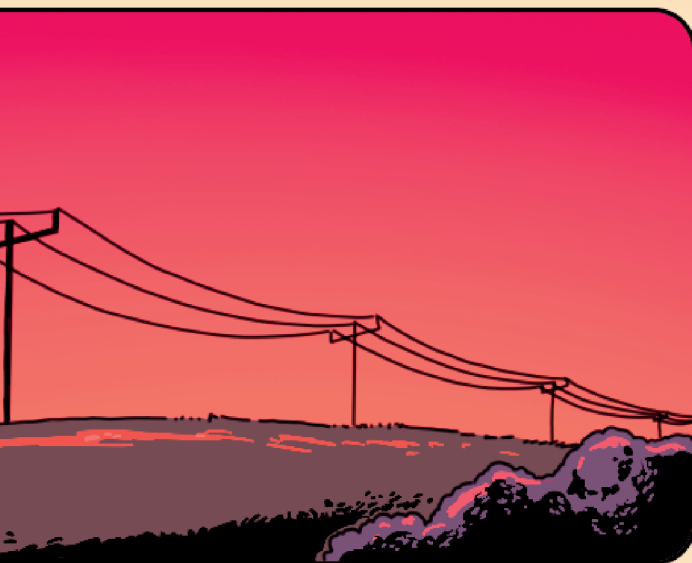
In her lamp-shaped dreams everyone wears goggles to inspect her changing body.
No one says that loaded term. They exclaim, I've never seen a fish as colourful!
There's one just like it in my collection!
Her heart puts its yellow booties on,
her wispy chest opens like clockwork for it to leap out
and bite all the bystanders. It pulls on their goggles
and chokes their un-wandering eyes while all other parts, limbs and fibres of her body
stand there and applaud. Cheering on their proud and small companion.
These lamp-shaped dreams are followed by sun-shaped days,
in which her heart tap-dances to the creak of her disproportions.



PRIDE 2019

ISAAC QUINN

it was the start of my life.
the sea of people,
the crash of drums,
the rest of the city watching as we marched,
free of shame, full of pride.
the shouting and spitting in the face of the world,
saying “fuck you, we exist”,
was more eloquent than the words on the blackboard
and more freeing than the water and wine
that came with the white dress.
you said this was wrong, but nothing has ever felt so right.
we had that old queen song playing,
and we were all singing along in imperfect harmony,
screaming until our faces filled with colour.



UNDER ANY OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES

RÓISÍN SHERIDAN-BRYSON

You invite me round for tea some Wednesday afternoon and we push all your soft furnishings into a corner of the living room. Make space for **something** to arrive. Every room in your house feels like an attic, even the bathroom. Outside the window someone keeps walking by, pretending they've landed on the moon, keeps herding sheep up the back path, keeps crushing snow into little square boxes. You have the same hair I remember you having, it's the same as it was before. I hope this Wednesday leads to longterm collaboration, I say. It comes out too formal. It ruins the moment.





QUEER

BEAM

I never heard it in your accent

the people I knew
would never lean
into the *ee* sound

for fear of ruining
the punchline of a joke

but

when that word fell from your lip
it landed like something good

because everything you said was *buttery*
you were a home I had
before I knew I'd need one

I cried
in public
over Skype,

can hear you from across the world

say it again

I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE GOOD FOR ME (AFTER KILLING EVE)

RÓISÍN SHERIDAN-BRYSON

I watched you kill a deer and eat curly fries
same hands, same sharp teeth,
I watched you pull a boat across the lake
Held your hips down under the blanket
If there's anything I could say it would be
I love you
Instead, we fight like foxes
Bite each others' necks and
chew nettles to pass the time

It starts at my jugular and
ripples out from there
You've put up electric fences
All round the perimeter
Shower when it rains.
and I don't want to scare you off
So the cheek is all I go for
Squeeze you, swing you around.

The air isn't hot or cold
But dead, just hangs,
stings at the sweat on my shoulders
Every ache is dull.
I love you.
I do.
In a minute I'll be dead.
In a minute I'll be dead.



TURPENTINE

HILARY WATSON

I want to be the china mug that no longer hooks inside your fist,
or sits pride of place, or hangs from the belly of a cupboard
touching base to rim with other cups of Bridgewater hens.
No, I will be the mug the cat's tail lashes the handle from
while seething round the table for Sunday dinner scraps.

Shrugging off my name, you'll see me perfect for another task;
fill me with turpentine or else glug linseed oil down my sides.
Jasmine tea tempers out-of-reach of paint-clad fingers and rags.
Don't quench your thirst with me, yet keep me close to hand.
Let me be the lip and well your brush caresses again, again.



ABOUT WINDOWS

CODY ARES BAYNORI

A glimpse into the windows of the world will reveal countless stories. Two of them, side by side, can house completely separate lives.

In one window, perhaps, resides a man that often thinks about his neighbor. He takes him to be a marvelous and kind soul. Those small, brief interactions with each other before they both disappear into their respective universes are cherished deeply by this man. The night fades away as he envisions two windows becoming one.

The wall between the two is pressed on occasion, in hopes of feeling a connection.

In the other window, a man cradles his lover closely. Loving thoughts spill into his mind. He only knows the warmth of his partner; arms wrapped around each other and the sweetest words whispered. The mornings bring about the raw intimacy of bare feet touching cold hardwood and the comfort of knowing that everything has gone according to plan.

Not all stories to be told are happy and fair; some know the warmth while others face the cold. Some lives will only be the dreams of others.



QUEERING THE GREEN

POST-2000 QUEER IRISH POETRY
EDITED BY PAUL MADDERN
(THE LIFEBOAT PRESS, 2021)

Queering the Green brings together 31 of the most distinctive Irish poets to emerge since 2000 and, taken together, these writers represent the multiplicity and vibrancy of the queer experience in 21st Century Ireland. Several are already recognised as leading poets in Ireland, but the anthology also includes poets at the beginning of their career who are redefining the landscape of Irish poetry.

The anthology addresses the exclusions of the past, speaks to the diversity of the present, and points towards the radical possibilities of the future.

The following four poems are by readers at our Poetry with Pride event for 2022, all of whom are featured in this landmark anthology.

SUPERGLUE

CHANDRIKA NARAYANAN-MOHAN

A new chip on a favourite bowl
Pressed back into place
I relish the nestle of it, the perfect rupture.

A faultline appears along the bottom,
I trace it, shining like a trail of spittle.

The vacuum's cheap plastic cracks.
I drip, smother, hold in place,
Wrap it with tape.

When it coats my fingers I wait,
Let it harden,
Chew the skin off,
Spit it into the sink.

FRANCES, I LOVE YOU

EVA GRIFFIN

Although her sigh – one sigh – replayed on the radio for days.
Although you whispered under your breath that you'd do anything
to make her sigh – really sigh – like that, she died anyway.

The sigh that was heard around the world,
and everyone shook Jimmy's hand for fighting
the war and writing the letter:

We'll win it single-handedly if we could only hear Carole Landis sigh!

A real woman does it for the troops and Carole was real.

Named after a third wife and becoming

LA's newest girlfriend with a fistful of dollars,

a retired hula-hoop over her shoulder; a born-again blonde.

Frances, I'll call you

Frances and tell you that your real name is beautiful,

but I love you as Carole and I love you bleached, nervous,

swinging a hoop from your hips and singing. I love you

pinned-up and dumped, B-rolled and rallying, even childless,

even selling me cheesecake. I'll believe you when you say

it's for no man you died but for yourself

because I know us sad and desperate girls do things

like that, things that make people sigh – really sigh – and say

it's a shame but wasn't she sad and desperate anyway?

Bit part, dance extra, co-ed, blonde at airport, girl in beret,

girl at fair, girl at beach, woman waiting to go with her Johnny.

Uncredited, uncredited, uncredited, uncredited,

uncredited, uncredited, uncredited, uncredited,

uncredited, uncredited, uncredited, uncredited, uncredited.

I still kiss your star on Vine Street despite the weather.

O, Carole.

O, baby doll.

Born Fairchild and died peroxide.

When the boys needed someone to pose in a skin-tight white
bathing suit,

go sleigh riding in shorts, or climb a ladder in a skirt, they'd yell *Get Landis!*

And there she was: Bosomy Blonde of 1940, the cabinet open, her
shoes still on;

Wisconsin wonder dead on the bathroom floor.

Yes, sir, that's my baby. That's my weakness now.

(from Fake Hands / Real Flowers, Broken Sleep Books)

AT ST MALACHY'S CHURCH

PAULA CUNNINGHAM

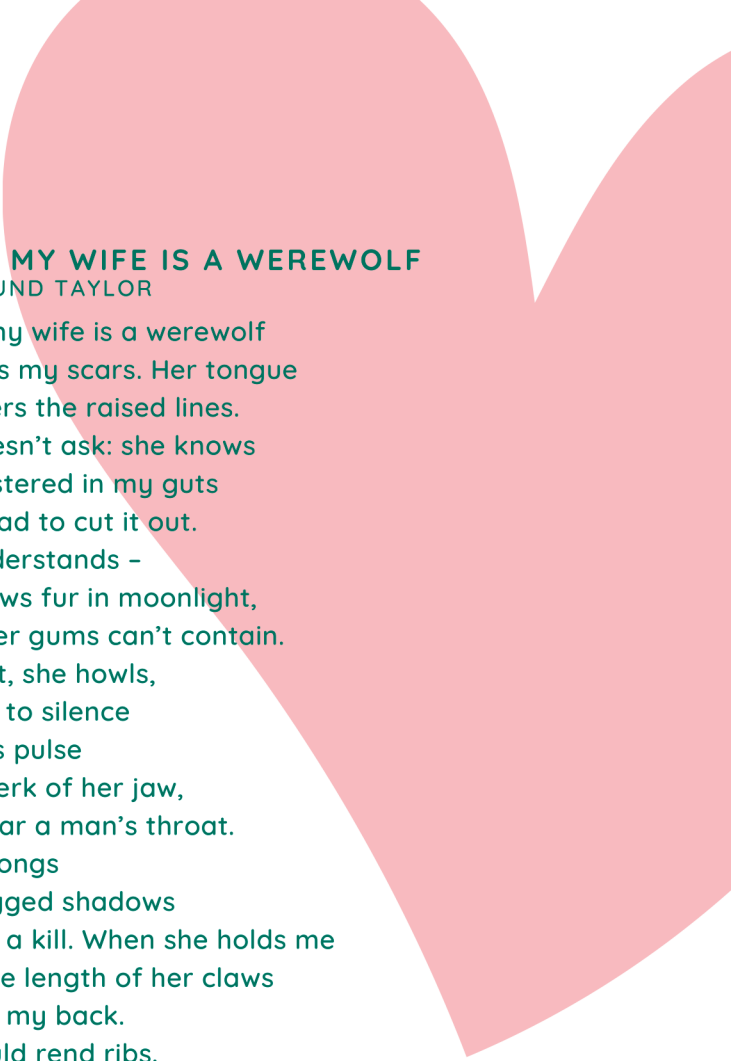
I came to light a candle for a friend
but Jesus had a really bad moustache
and those were only pin-pricks in his palms
so I passed on.

I came to light a candle for a friend
but Joseph's hands were manicured
and soft as Fairy Liquid hands
I could not light one there so I passed on.

In the corner was a fellow with a cowled robe
and a tonsure like a saucer - he palmed
a young and curly blonde Adonis - so
I passed on then to Benoit-Joseph Labre,

a tattered man whose wide eyes blazed,
he looked quite mad, had beggar's hands,
I liked him. I lit two dozen candles didn't pay
and nicked this book on him before I left.

I did all this in honour of my matchless absent friend,
whose honest calloused workman's hands
maintained the half of Belfast,
and nothing's been the same since he passed on.



WHEN MY WIFE IS A WEREWOLF

ROSAMUND TAYLOR

When my wife is a werewolf
she licks my scars. Her tongue
deciphers the raised lines.
She doesn't ask: she knows
fear festered in my guts
until I had to cut it out.
She understands –
she grows fur in moonlight,
teeth her gums can't contain.
All night, she howls,
longing to silence
a deer's pulse
with a jerk of her jaw,
or to tear a man's throat.
She belongs
with jagged shadows
sharing a kill. When she holds me
I feel the length of her claws
against my back.
She could rend ribs.
I bury my nose in her fur,
smell a peat river,
bitter tea. I am small
as a rabbit against her
yet I feel huge
as the forest she longs for.

(from *In Her Jaws*, Banshee Press 2022)

POETRY WITH PRIDE MAGAZINE 2022

WITH POEMS BY

CODY ARES BAYNORI / BEAM / SUZI BLOOM /
PAULA CUNNINGHAM / NINA FATALE / EVA GRIFFIN /
TIEGAN JOHNSTON / CHANDRIKA NARAYANAN-MOHAN /
ISAAC QUINN / RÓISÍN SHERIDAN-BRYSON /
MONTSERRAT SURMANN / ROSAMUND TAYLOR /
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