

# TRANS SURVIVORS

Zine: with art and writing by

Jackson Bailey

Myrfei

salvation burnette

VCA

Nell Kerr

Thiago Porraz

Lennox Dodd

Daniel Rivera

Stahlschmidt

Hannah Rae

Nicole Ginter

j.c. bennett

Will Denis

Finnley Stirling

RS Weldon

Irina Vèrène

N. Abram

Vivid "Viv" Young

Eden Chicken

Donnie Dallas

Finn Mullen

Morten Feindt

Cee Onley

FORGE is a national trans anti-violence organization supporting trans survivors/communities and providing training to service providers. Trauma-informed. Empowerment-based. Culturally-responsive.



[forge-forward.org](https://forge-forward.org)

[trans-survivors.com](https://trans-survivors.com)

IG: [@forge\\_forward](https://www.instagram.com/forge_forward)

Bluesky: [@forgeforwardtrans.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/forgeforwardtrans.bsky.social)

Facebook: [@FORGE.trans](https://www.facebook.com/FORGE.trans)

# TRANS SURVIVORS

## Transformation



2025

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**Vivid “Viv” Young:** Vivid “Viv” Young is a trans-feminine teacher living in Connecticut. In addition to writing poetry, she enjoys making art, writing stories and spending time with her partner and her dog. She has a small online presence at <https://linktr.ee/vividviv>.

**Will Denis:** Hello! I'm a So-Cal based amatuer writer, filmmaker, and mixed media artist, and I've been making art about my experience existing as a Trans-masc Latino individual for as long as I can remember. Although I do tend to lean towards the literary side of art, I love using film, textiles, music, mixed media, and basically any other method of self expression at my disposal as a way to tell my story so that I can better connect with the people around me.

Cover art:

**Holy Grail by Nell Kerr**

cats. I started writing poetry at 12 as an outlet for my depression and other intense emotions. My writing has allowed me to process and understand my emotions and identities throughout the years. It also allows me to witness my growth over time and to remember pivotal moments in my life more vividly.

**RS Weldon:** RS Weldon is a nonbinary person living in Fairfax, Virginia, where they teach English and literacy skills to teenagers with disabilities. On weekends, they volunteer with supporting a variety of events in the DC trans and queer community.

**salvation burnette:** salvation burnette is a writer/artist who lives in "boston."

**Thiago Porraz:** Thiago Porraz is a trans and queer artist living in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His work explores themes of his lived experiences of queerness, trauma, and neurodivergence.

**VCA:** I'm a queer, disabled, agender artist from Wisconsin. Creating art (in many forms) has always been an escape for me, a way to process feelings I couldn't describe otherwise. I hope that the things I create can speak to others who are unique in the same ways I am, and bring a new perspective to those I'm different from.

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**Myrfei:** Myrfei (they/he) is a multidisciplinary artist and writer based in Karachi, Pakistan. Their craft concentrates mainly on the themes of identity, community, revolution, resistance, and grief, along with a focus towards semiotics and archiving. They really love frogs also.

**Nell Kerr:** Nell Kerr is a multidisciplinary artist living and working in Seattle. He works primarily in acrylic paint and illustrative print zines, and also incorporates mediums such as watercolor painting, mixed media collage, and even tattooing. He holds a BA in body modifications as therapy from Fairhaven Interdisciplinary College. His work has been featured at local galleries including Slip, Side Rail Collective, Base Camp Studios, Art Journeys Gallery, and more.

**N. Abram:** N. Abram (they/them) is a queer, trans writer with a deep love for language and everyone's personal monsters. They have been writing since they were old enough to hold a pen, and their work centers around the relationship between carnality, desire, and spirituality. In their free time, they can be found reading horror stories and listening to goth rock. They live with their partner and two very adorable cats. You can find more of their work and contact information on Instagram at @hallowedhedonism.

**Nicole Ginter:** I am a 29-year-old nonbinary lesbian living in Kenosha, Wisconsin with my partner and 6



**j.c. bennett:** j.c. bennett (he/they) is proud to be muck, river water, and pond-scum made. they spent their youth floating in creek water, coaxing tadpoles to swim clear from one ear through the other. bennett would blink their eyes in time, counting each passing tail.

**Jackson Bailey:** Jackson Bailey (they/them) is a multidisciplinary trans, non-binary artist and educator based in Tkaronto/Toronto. Working across analog photography, printmaking, installation, and fibre-based media, their practice explores grief, resistance, and the body as a site of memory. As an agender artist living with disabilities, Jackson is committed to disrupting binary norms and fostering accessible, care-centred spaces for trans and gender-diverse creative expression.

**Lennox Dodd:** Lennox Dodd is a genderqueer, asexual student currently getting their bachelors in English Secondary Education. They are mainly into reading, photography, and writing, and are trying their hand at creating some of the mediums they enjoy. Their main interests are in intersectionality between identities, with an emphasis on transgender relationships.

**Morten Feindt:** Morten Feindt is a trans writer, assistant prop master, and community builder from Germany. His works explore social encounters, often focusing on quiet moments in between.

## About the Issue

The art, poetry, and prose in this second issue of the Trans Survivors Zine offer a constellation of ways to understand transformation. The scars on our bodies—sometimes chosen, sometimes not—can be art, can be reminders of trauma histories, can be landmarks as we experience change and growth. These pieces explore ways that we share or don't share our scars and histories (of trauma, growth, injury, healing) with the people around us.

In “shape[SHIFT]”, Irina Vérène writes: “I’ve become monstrous. / but I like my blood-stained sharpness.” These complicated histories change how we see ourselves and the world around us.

We are grateful again to have the opportunity to read and uplift so many incredible pieces of writing and art, and that we get to share them with you. We hope you enjoy them, with this final reminder from Hannah Rae in “The Rebirth of Venus”: “*you know who the fuck you are.*”

Caleb Weinhardt  
Communications Coordinator, FORGE  
Editor

& the FORGE staff

## **When “My Scars” Gets A New Meaning by Nicole Ginter**

These scars lay on my skin  
Delicately placed by surgical blades  
Carefully crafted into my skin  
They are art  
They are a part of me  
As always  
I love these residual lacerations  
This braille across my body  
Telling my story for me.  
The soft pink tissue raises slightly on my right  
Agitated  
Stretched by overextension  
Overuse from my inability to afford  
More than a week away from work.  
Imperfect  
Uneven  
Visible  
Beautiful  
I love these pieces of myself  
I love watching their journey  
Through recovery and lifting  
Feeling the changes tingle across my skin  
As my body begins to trust me again

**Finn Mullen:** I am a gay transman from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, currently working to get my BA in English Literature at Knox College. My work (poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and collage art) focuses on navigating ideas of home, space, architecture, queerness, and (trans)masculinity. I take immense inspiration from the writings of David Wojnarowicz, Lou Sullivan, and James Baldwin.

**Finnley Stirling:** Finn Stirling (he/him), a queer, trans guy living in Naarm (Melbourne). He is a poet, youth worker and workshop facilitator. His poetry has been previously published in Alex Nichols’ ‘In Flux: trans and gender diverse reflections and imaginings’. Finn’s work untangles gender, identity, bodies, and explores how it shapes relationships.

**Hannah Rae:** Hannah Rae (she/they) is a nonbinary artist from the Midwest. Their mixed-media art is inspired by mythology, found objects, and personal narrative.

**Irina Vèrène:** Irina Vèrène is a non-binary writer from Germany who loves to explore the rawness and complexity of human connection and emotion in both poetry and prose. Since 2025, fae is a staff writer for Sepulchre Literary, Violet Desires, Etherae Magazine, Elora Vérité Magazine, and Savoír Revue, as well as a guest writer for Mildew Zine. Find faer on Instagram (@queen\_of\_gore) or Substack (@queenofgore).

## Contributor bios

**Cee Onley:** Cee is black, queer and autistic, Philly born youth advocate, mental health thriver and fur parent. He lives in Baltimore, Maryland and enjoys books more than social interactions. Cee is constantly looking for ways to service the neurodivergent and queer youth.

**Daniel Rivera Stahlschmidt:** Hi! My name is Daniel and I am a trans illustrator who loves all things decorative, fantasy, and nature. I work primarily in watercolor, ink, and digitally.

**Donnie Dallas:** My name's Donnie and I've been writing since I was little. My mum has kept all my handwritten stories since I was growing up in a briefcase. I now have two self-published books (The Bagman 1 & 2) and a podcast (Crying on Purpose).

**Eden Chicken:** I am a queer agender poet whose work often explores hybridity, from textual and poetic forms to divergent identities or coexistences with(in) nature. Having recently graduated from the University of East Anglia's Poetry MA, I have since relocated to Sheffield. My poetry has been published by Reverie, new words {press}, the engine(idling, Leon Literary Review, and featured on The Poetry Society's website. Find me on Instagram @edenchicken.



### life sized markers by Myrfei

“We are made of earth. Just like nature, our lives and selves undergo transformation with every wind, every light, every creature that passes through or touches us. This photograph is a symbol of such transformation and of marks left by life on us.”

**And to those we lost,  
By Will Denis**

Decades of photos and etched in writing,  
a history built on defiance.  
My home grafted bare from the ground up,  
quilt stitch-bound in familial alliance.  
I am the culmination of so much more than myself.  
I am a million people and things.  
The beauty of creation as an act of god,  
community as a chorus, poised to sing.  
I want to act in strange ways!! I want to hold so much  
love in my heart that I die!! I want to be happy and to  
make art and to love the people who know me!!! I want  
god to be the good things in the world and nothing  
more!! I want my body to be my body! I want to be  
freakish and asinine and loud!! I want to feel at home in  
everything I do!!  
The chorus cries out.  
Requiem requiem requiem,  
the world shifts and nods.  
And trees on a million unmarked gravestones sprout

+ how ur own body's development felt equally farfetched

-- FORWARD AGAIN --

2a.

the grime rinds the flesh to the undergrowth  
crusted<sup>2b</sup> with the riverbed

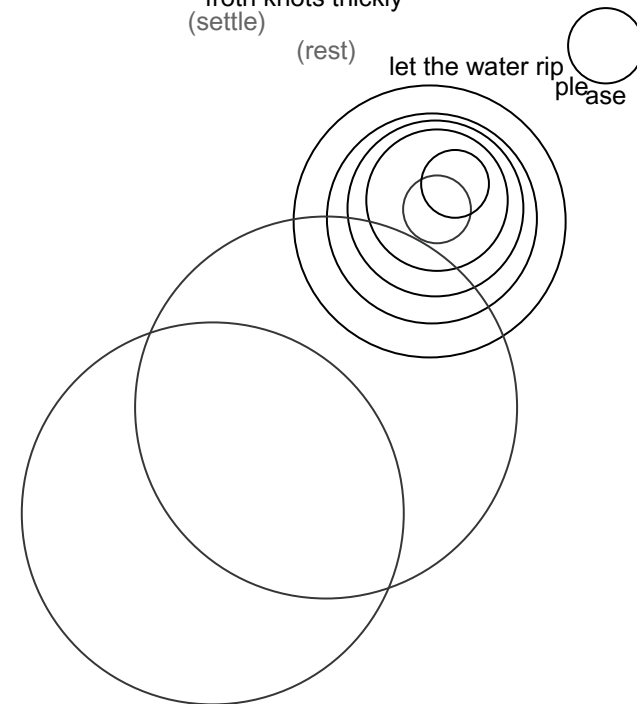
that is how the cool months feel.

colours bleach + blue the deeper we go,  
bleed into one another

spring thaws bodies slip to gether a gain.

yellowily-me:

bubble into brook  
brine froth knots thickly tangle me in that moss or algae  
(settle) (rest) or glossa mer;



3.

remember: first tinge of maturing  
 fingers prodding fresh pudge  
 mirror: how the flesh h s on the frame  
 + wishing u could sh<sup>g</sup> it<sup>h</sup> off  
 let ur skin fall to the floor *stage lights fading to black*  
 T  
 H  
 M  
 P  
 none of it any  
 makes sense way:  
 like  
 hair grown 2b removed  
 lip sticked eye lined instagrammable branded vain ditzzy easy  
 menstruation desired unmentionable 2 boys  
 in childish giggly whispers /adults  
 told aim high 2b come any woman except sluts except mothers  
 queers except dissidents  
 questions answered w/ looks overlooked  
 2b louder n prouder only way 2 not b

4.

be  
 bits fall  
 scraps  
 scum dross rubble  
 fleck morsel flotsam  
 effluvia,  
 mias mate w/ me baby;  
 bits fall, ing to  
 bits.  
 are u not sick of crumbling yet?  
 hear how an eel's stomach drops off  
 as their genitals grow (ew)



In Our Sheets by Lennox Dodd

## Through-and-through by N. Abram

CW: surgery, anatomy, references to self-harm

they call it through-and-through—the surgeons, that is,  
when they crack open my chest and assess the damage  
to my heart. survivor of many of these, says the  
physician's assistant, staring at my face. my eyelids: still  
now, even in that sleep of not-death where dreams do  
not come. my ears: ungiven to these graceful butchers.  
the metal they removed in radiology will be at my  
bedside when i am shaken awake.

piercing chairs are uncomfortable because parlors grant  
all the fine leather to those who work with ink. my  
mother called them mutilators. when someone else  
holds the knife/needle/scalpel, it's controlled: there's a  
steady hand in all that butchery. better clean lines than  
marks made through a mist in sight. the cavern in my  
heart never quite bled out, despite best efforts, despite  
all these surgeons do.

they call it reclamation—these through-and-through  
wounds that i give myself. needles and bullets and a  
mother's touch all feel the same.

## Bite-size by Eden Chicken

we  
1. me ander ,  
bliss<sub>ing</sub>  
in the cool  
of the sun fingers webbed,  
smooththrough imagined of ur unknown skin  
jump this pond  
w/ me feel the calm  
feel the warmth  
of the sun  
bemused 2c us  
below

2b.  
( i awake + my horoscope reads:  
The first time you dream about someone is  
the first time you fall in love with them. )  
go back a bit — — wait.  
press the index against the thumb — like so  
now the other 1 make the 4 tips kiss  
then bring them up 2 ur eye - good.  
see  
how the blurred crisps,  
clarifies the obscurity —





i want to be the person i've always dreamed of, T,  
and  
finally  
i feel like he's within my grasp but

can you help me, T ?

can you help me be  
freaky and weird and ugly and hot and me ?

the me i've always been  
behind my eyelids ?

the me i've always been  
in my eardrums ?

the me i've always been  
inside my heart ?

i'd love to meet him, T.  
can you show me how ?

"i wrote this poem the day i started testosterone, the  
changes to my body couldn't happen soon enough,  
i wanted my whole world to shift, but i knew i had to  
be patient. you can't grow a tree overnight !"

"My old therapist once said that piercings can be a way of reclaiming autonomy, but they can also be a form of self harm. That got me thinking about how Latino moms (mine included) have this thing about piercing a child's ears when they're 3 months old, and the kid has no agency over it. And the medical language, which is actually used to talk about wounds that cut through all layers of tissue, is exactly the same kind of "wound" that a piercing needle makes."

**anatomy of a feather**  
**by Finnley Stirling**

tiny tufts  
flutter atop  
my head  
not great coverage  
but warm like  
down in cotton  
covering my legs

they won't help me fly  
I'll fall through  
clouds, melting them  
with a brush  
of the arm or  
stroke of newly  
articulated clarity

barbs light and gentle  
dyed for defence  
braided in earnest  
out of my eyes  
curling in unanswered anguish

my plumage performs  
in ink and vowels  
so many belonging

**a conversation with testosterone**  
**by j.c. bennett**

hi T,  
can i call you T ?

i know  
ink and  
needles and  
baggy black tees  
do a lot of heavy lifting, T,  
but  
there's only so much  
metal  
i can stuff into my  
foreign  
body,  
face,  
mouth,  
before i have to  
grapple with  
the lack of  
recognition  
in my eyes when  
i stand before a mirror.  
you know what I mean, T ?

the shadows used to throw  
their judgements at me like acid.  
now, they're but the soft burn of sea salt  
on my sore post-op scars.

looking down,  
I realize they were right:  
I've become monstrous.  
but I like my blood-stained sharpness.  
my wings, my horns, my tail,  
my ichor-blackened veins.  
I am at home within the scales  
that help me slither  
where I couldn't reach before.

my mother thinks I'm losing my mind.  
the doctors worry I might go too far.  
the men in suits on TV call me delusional.

one day, I'll simply turn into  
a solemn cloud of smoke —  
a menace made  
of tar-black particles  
r i s i n g from within  
to swallow their own  
~~tender flesh~~ prison  
w h o l e.

to those I love  
each rachis strong  
smooth, unbroken  
grown from moonlit skin

Ki thinks we should  
shave my head  
watch feathers dance  
at my toes  
while we gently encourage  
healing and rest  
tears and breath



**Disposable Needle**  
by salvation burnette

**shape[SHIFT]**  
by Irina Vérène

every time I look at me,  
something different's taking shape.  
skin stretches eagerly over  
weary bones at strange angles,  
cells too worn out to stay  
what they were supposed to be.

in that photo my friend took of me  
three summers ago,  
I'm no longer myself.  
a stranger in a wig and  
ill-fitting clothes,  
forced smile pulling  
their cheeks taut—  
a bad attempt  
at cosplaying me.  
they're one poor excuse  
for a skinwalker, I'll tell you.  
~~don't~~ ask me how I know.

in the mirror,  
I watch my metamorphosis unfold:  
I shatter, and my fragments  
put themselves back together.  
*all wrong, all wrong, all wrong!*

"I was inspired primarily with the feeling of how you look and how you feel being at odds. The background is a traditional painting which I drew the figure on digitally. I felt like the stark contrast between the figure and the background pushed the impression of an odd disconnect while still being connected."

"This collage is made out of discarded magazines, junk mail, HRT supplies (needle wrappers, teeny box T comes in), other trash. The patterns are drawn with acrylic paint markers. The coneflower print in the middle was made with a stamp carved with a pencil into one of those black styrofoam trays that produce is packaged in sometimes."

Recently, I started making a collage each week, using that week's trash leftover from my T shots. Recently, each shot feels more precious, more sacred. When I first started T almost 10 years ago, I wasn't out to many people, and it felt like this secret thing. I had this irrational fear that it would be taken away. It turns out that fear was not really that irrational. It is being taken away from people, right now. I guess this collage ritual has also been a way to grieve and process this nonstop trauma trans people are experiencing. (And still, the only regret I have about transitioning is not doing it sooner!)"



**Burnt**  
**by Morten Feindt**

My skin is stretched by her fingertips, digging into the leathery tissue of my thigh. “Wait.” I can’t always tell the difference between pleasure and pain so she offered to help me find out. This time though, it wasn’t physical, but something more sinister threatening to break through the surface of my worn skin.

Anna sits up, looks at me; curious, worried. Her hand lingers. “Too much?” she asks.

“No, no. That’s not it. Just...” I trail off, eyes fixed on the reddened skin pooling under her small hand. She didn’t let go, but her touch instantly became gentle when I couldn’t take it anymore. I sigh. Feel the relief. Safe here, I tell myself. “It’s the scars.” I finish my thought, unsure of how to proceed.

My words turn into a question. She has never asked for an explanation or seemed overly curious. Sometimes her fingers trailed along the patterns on my arms, skin melted into muscle. Did I just break an unspoken agreement between us? I’ve been meaning to tell her the story. I want her to know. But I don’t want to tell her of the pain. What if she becomes less careful knowing how strong I can be when I have to?



**Sense of Self by Daniel Rivera Stahlschmidt**



Transition  
by Donnie Dallas

a fever dream  
maggots bore down into the rotting flesh  
DIGGING  
CHEWING  
WRITHING  
REINVENTING  
they've left a shell  
meal finished  
the carcass of a girl who was never really there to begin  
with  
TIME TO START OVER  
born from air  
and air, alone  
a man  
and when he is ready  
he will sing for you all  
and crush the maggots beneath his boot

"I wrote this around the time I was coming out to a few close friends and family that I was trans. It felt violent but also cathartic to begin my life again."

So I stay silent. Instead, I watch her observe her own hand as it starts tracing the ridges of my thighs, proceeding upwards, past the scars splattered across my stomach to the rubbery stretch between my breasts. I'm a little less scared now when she picks up her voice, trying to find the right words.

"I guess they're just there, aren't they. You've had to deal with the consequences of what happened to you. It must not have been pleasant, I imagine. But I won't ever make it a bigger part of your story than you want me to."

Naked in front of her, spread out on the bed, I can barely look at her. Yet we don't break eye contact. The bright red of her cheeks burns between us as the hand halts and rests on my right breast. Warmth spreads between us and starts enveloping me.

I'm rarely talkative, and right now, I'm at a complete loss for words. So I pull her down into a kiss, meeting her lips, greedy for her tongue. I want to taste her, feel the softness of her skin against mine.

I wish it were enough. It's not as if we haven't tried to make it enough for us before. We failed just like all the couples trying to melt into each other before us, but it was beautiful. When I reach into her hair and my breathing becomes more ragged, she pulls away.

Not like this. This time, I'm the one to turn red.

"I want you to feel safe with me," she continues after a while, her hand now feeling over the scabs on the sides of my chest. "Safe enough to tell me what troubles you. And I wish you'd be more careful with yourself now."

I flinch, knowing her critical stance on my constant taping. The blisters have become routine. There are bad days where I wear my binder over the red residue of the tape. It's worse when I cut new pieces of tape and glue them over, making the tiny specks grow into red holes under my armpits.

It's a necessary evil, a cruel routine I have started to accept as a trade-off. I enjoy the snugness, how I just get to forget about this area of my body for at least a day, often two, sometimes even three. That's usually when the paycheck is the highest, like it was a couple days back.

Anna leans back down, lower this time. She kisses the reddened skin, the scabs, tries her best healing methods.

"I wish you could kiss my tits away." When I say this, Anna starts trying. She kisses me over and over, wildly moving her head all over my upper body. And, just for a second, she succeeds.

"This acrylic painting is both a representation of the internal feeling of gender dysphoria, as well as the external experience of existing as a visibly trans or gender non-conforming person in a society that picks apart and analyzes every inch of our bodies in an attempt to fit each of us into one of two narrow and reductive categorizations."



**Dysphoria by Thiago Porraz**

For a moment, my chest deflates against my ribcage and becomes something new, something beautiful. I can breathe. I pull her up, wanting her close to me so I can hold onto this feeling a little longer, my fingers tracing up and down her back.

Before she drifts off on top of me, she whispers, “Tomorrow, I will put up a fundraiser for your mastectomy.”



**Untitled (From the series Neither/Nor)  
by Jackson Bailey**

"I started writing this poem around the time I reached my third year on estrogen. At the time, I was working through a lot of grief about how I held pain within myself. What helped me survive before in life, tolerating high levels of emotional and physical pain through mental dissociation, in fact prevented me from feeling whole in body and spirit. I felt that a ghost of myself had been created, unlivd but present throughout my life, the spiritual consequence of surviving a delayed gender transition and other traumas. In the poem, I imagine the speaker's ghost as a growing, gnarled and neglected fruit tree, which she ultimately invites to reunite with her physical body."

① *Third Quarter*

Yet as man or walking copse, or covert  
thicket denying breath,  
he obscured  
his under-brush with self.

● *Transit*

Then again,  
Ghost Tree,  
my double,  
we bear latent fruit  
in our unbodied womb.

Thrice we've come  
to occupy this plane,  
out of the half-life,  
and tentacled our branches  
past the autumn veil,  
thinner than dirt.

Recollect our body,  
eldritch dendrite tangle of the  
trans-feminine incarnate.  
Polished burl,  
eclipse last moon's spectral hunger,  
and root  
into this tangible,  
head-of-month sky.

Year created: 2024

Unframed size: 11x14

Medium: Black-and-white gelatin silver print

Neither/Nor holds space for the contradiction of feeling too much and not enough. It embraces intentional framing and material presence as survival strategies—offering a tactile record of what it means to live in that tension, and to hold something that cannot be resolved.

This self-portrait brings together top surgery and self-harm scars in a quiet, closely framed image. The photograph traces the layered relationship between healing, survival, and memory as expressed through the surface of the skin.

**The Wolf**  
**by RS Weldon**

Like a creature bitten,  
each morning I awaken  
a little more into a half-man thing, a little  
harrier, and hungrier  
the pit in my ribcage a black hole; like Fenrir, I  
could swallow the sun.

I bare my teeth in the mirror  
trying to measure by increments, hooking my  
thumb under my canines do they look longer,  
or am I just imagining?

Each night that terrible thirst  
grabs me by the chin,  
tilts my head upward to the moon, hanging  
heavy as a stone  
and silver as a bullet  
through my heart.

Is there more  
of a growl to me now?  
Or can a song I howl out  
be still charming enough to spare me from  
becoming just a pelt on your floor?

**Third Harvest, Rosh Hashanah, 5785**  
**by Vivid "Viv" Young**

*New year of years, in conjunction with three years on  
Hormone Replacement Therapy, October 3, 2024.*

● *New Moon*

The day cast no shadows  
as she buried her fruit,  
and hollow, split for boyhood.

Soiled and spurned,  
rotting pulp of girl,  
by twilight her maggoty seeds sprouted,  
relinquished revenant, rooted in shade.

◐ *First Quarter*

Fruitless bud to disembodied snarl,  
woody skeleton writhing, wrong,  
sapling boy sprung up.

Aware he grew, gnarled, emulating,  
and grew green  
at peers' alignments,  
their straighter shoots.

○ *Full Moon*

Year on year, his bark deepened,  
masked her ringing.  
Teen of twisted sticks,  
his inverse lot endured.



This sense of community can completely reframe views and feelings surrounding one's transness. Giving voice or visual to my experience as a transman as much as possible is currently a large goal for me. To transform internal thoughts and feelings into print, or into a collage, although requiring a great amount of vulnerability, serves as a way to combine both my trans reality, and my desires in relation to 'being a man'. Nurturing a community full of trans artistic expression, permanently, and publicly, to quote artist and activist David Wojnarowicz, is to "preserve an alternate history" (Close to the Knives 144), of trans existence, community, and expression, which fights against, and transforms the normative forces which attempt to suppress, erase, or isolate us in this world.

**Gurl/Boy**  
**by Cee Onley**

Almost three years into becoming the man of my dreams  
Not trying to pick a side but I'm still on the team

*Still one of the gurls*

Beard growing in nice  
Yall gon be sick of me when it connects

*Still one of the gurls*

Smelling like a teenage boy after gym class  
Natural deodorant is a joke

*Still one of the gurls*

Mom say she's not ready for a son  
I don't have time to wait

*I know she wishes I was still a girl*

Body fat disappearing  
Along with the fatty I been growing

*I still throw it in a circle with the rest of the gurls*

Grown ass man looking like my dad  
Voice deep and arms looking like I work out

*They still call me a girl*

Turns out I'm a femboy and a flaming gay too  
A retired lesbian, who would have knew

Shouting it from the roof in case it wasn't clear  
I'm a black trans man AND

*I'm one of the gurls*

articulating feelings of masculine inadequacy as a transgender person—feelings I was scared or uncomfortable expressing because I saw it expressed nowhere around me. To survive as trans was to conform to the normative, to quiet myself so that I faced no scrutiny. Anything else seemed an embarrassment. Pride in not being cis was something that I never thought possible until I was surrounded by dozens of faces openly talking about, writing about, or visually expressing their experiences related to being transgender.

Through this collective sense of transness and queerness, instead of shame corresponding to the ways that I exist, I can position myself as an artist among fellow artists in my own identity and gender formation. To cut and tear and remake snippets of masculine forms around me, and to share and further interpret this collage of a unique and tailored masculinity with a larger community, allows for an ongoing transformation within myself. Such a transformation rests on movement, openness, pride, and joy, rather than on shame, fear, and internal sentiments of immobility, and impossibility.

As a writer, as an artist, expressions of trans-masculinity deserve a place in my work, so as to connect with, as well as evoke a sense of, community.

**“To Meet With, to Converse With”:  
Transformation Born From Trans Community  
and Trans Artistic Expression  
by Finn Mullen**

I exist as hoarded, plucked, and interpreted visions of second hand masculinity. I adorn myself with pieces of men. Men sitting at the tables of restaurants, walking down the street, their silhouettes as they appear in photographs, film, in my own dreams and fantasies. My masculinity is something to meet with, to converse with, constantly, as I do with my own collage, and written art. Such a relationship with, and revelation about, images and expressions of masculinity, has come recently, with my own transformation, since finding and connecting with a vocal transgender community at the college I attend. In my mind, community transforms, heals, and alters ideas of gender that are entrenched in a normative framework spouted from the media, from conservative mouths, and from often, a part of my own mind.


I carry with me, on me, scars placed prior to finding this community. Scars which are a result of feelings of stagnation, that I would never have the opportunity to meet with, or possess the masculine image I felt, and so deeply desired. The implementation of physical scars served as the one outlet I could think of in regards to



**The Rebirth of Venus**  
by Hannah Rae

she can't stay in the sea forever  
no  
it is time to rise  
emerge from the cocoon  
with head held high  
though bandaged she may be  
fresh wings gleam  
with nascent patine

*you know who the fuck you are*  
it is time to fly far



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**PLANT IN OCTOBER**  
*For best chance of germination*

The scalpel leaves my body  
A week later, you leave me  
With reassurance from both it's done with love

I watch the things you left in my apartment fade into backdrop  
Like the leaves on the trees out my window  
Like an old favorite song that's been played too much

I wouldn't have the heart to tell you  
But  
(I'm still afraid to be alone)  
(I'm still afraid to care)

My doctor tells me six weeks  
And later you tell me ten weeks  
Because, "wounds need time,"  
No matter how much I yearn for them to scar  
(I'm still afraid to heal)  
(I'm still afraid that it'll be worth it)

And I miss you. I miss me. I miss feeling real.  
I bury myself before the dirt freezes and pray the thaw will awaken me.

Water

Sun

Days to Maturity

Plant Spacing After Thinning

Days to Germination

Soil Temp. for Germination

Planting Depth

80-90

18-24"

6-10

70-85°

1/4"

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**WORDS BY VCA**

**Plant in October by VCA**