

anatomy lesson for the bare knuckle boxer

for my brother

Jonathan Kinsman

press your cheek to my cupped palm and know comfort resides there, your pulse snoring softly beneath the flesh, its rhythm unbroken, sleep undisturbed even as the skin purples, swelling as if this tide has at last come in to break against the air.

if i understand anything, it is that this body harbours prisoners and you are its jailor:
anxiety coiled in the jaw, concern in the brow, bitterness in the spine, desperation creaking in the knees,
panic in the chest, knotted about the lungs, pulling ever tighter with each breath. i have allowed
some imposter to screw my calves tight at night so fear won't
seep into my waking. regret has leaked from my lips to that sliver of skin between
another's sock and trouser leg. grief moves through vein and artery not as a draft
through the open doors of a house but as an insomniac in those long, lonely hours of dark.
these anatomies cannot be taught, though they will try. they will tell you lies. they will tell you
courage is a fist; anger is a fist; passion is a fist; love is a fist;
they will hold *man* so tight the word shatters in their grip. they will call this strength;
let the blood drip; watch their reddened faces in the fragments, think it pride, unable
to see themselves whole; break and break and break;
crush the bones of others to dust underfoot. know better. know that
love is a shoulder, a breast, lips and yes, a fist, folded about another. there is gentleness in those
fingers and thumbs, softness in their pads, kindness in their immense span.

come morning the boxer is relieved of his gloves, trusted to the nurse's hands that will stitch every wound closed, tend each bruise. pundits promise pain is of the body, that it throbs in a black eye or a split lip or a broken nose; declare a loser while the paramedics stand on call to say enough is enough, pull them away as they carve a name for themselves in your skin.

what i mean is nobody wins, but you can grin. you didn't bring anything to a fistfight.



Jonathan Kinsman is a poet from “The North” and they’re a hardy breed any further upwards than London. I first met them in Manchester at The Word War Final (a now, sadly defunct, poetry competition) where they beat me fair and square, not in a fist fight as you might expect from someone who channels the spirit of a pugilist chimney sweep from Victorian Britain, but by being far better at words than me.

I’d first heard of them through their Magazine Riggwelter Press. They were one of the first people to ever publish me and as a result I owe them a debt of gratitude similar to that of a Ronin or Samurai. I have yet to find ways to make it up to them but I’m getting there.

With a background in theological study they live their life marrying their spirituality and their sexuality their work explores radical reimaginings of the Bible as well as gentler, more personal topics. As well as being Founding Editor of Riggwelter Press and Associate Editor of Three Drops From A Cauldron, they are also a slam finalist. Their debut pamphlet & was joint-winner of the Indigo Dreams Pamphlet Prize 2017 and their new collection is coming out with Burning Eye later this year. A friendly face known to most of the poetry world throughout the UK and beyond, many have tried to defeat Jonathan but he currently rules with an iron fist. A lot of this bio is tongue in cheek because Jonathan is a very close friend of mine, but most of it is also true too.

The Ballad of The Butterfly and the Moth

Robert Garnham

Said the moth to the butterfly
Every time you flutter by
I feel I have to stop a while
Look my best and give you a smile
And hope that you're a mothophile
So we can be together.

Said the butterfly to the moth,
Why don't you bugger off?
You moths are all the same
Your wings are brown and plain
And you're always drawn to a flame
Like me, for I am hot.

Said the moth to the butterfly,
I'd like to give that a try.

I feel my heart go boom
You add colour to every room.
I love you more than the moon.
Or a lightbulb.

Said the butterfly to the moth.
You've now incurred my wrath.
I know I am a gorgeous sight
My colours are pretty, I need the light
I can't be with someone who's out all night,
I deserve to be seen.

Said the moth to the butterfly
I wouldn't want to nullify
Your propensity to brag
I have cans of paint in my bag
Decorate me, I can go in drag
And then I'd look just like you.

Said the butterfly to the moth,
You're a bit like nature's goth.
I'm demure and somewhat dinky.
And you're odious and stinky,
To be honest it sounds a bit kinky.

You know what? Let's do it.

Said the moth in bed to the butterfly

**Shall I sing you a lullaby?
In films we are always told
We'll find somebody to hold
No! Don't turn on that bulb!**



Who is Robert Garnham?

He's a revved up raved up rocket propelled Poundland Pam Ayres, a randy raunchy rhyming buy one get one free bargain bucket Alan Bennett, Professor of Whimsy, consumer of biscuits, spoken word artist and comedy poet! Robert Garnham has been performing all over the UK for the best part of the last ten years, at fringes and festivals, poetry nights and comedy cabarets, bringing his own brand of LGBT whimsy and humour to audiences anew.

Acclaimed as having one of the funniest one liners of the 2018 Edinburgh Fringe, Robert has recently been seen in adverts for a certain building society on ITV. Robert has supported John Hegley, Arthur Smith and Paul Sinha, among others. His two books, Nice, and Zebra, were published by Burning Eye Books, His shows Static, Juicy, In the Glare of the Neon Yak, toured extensively, and his new show Spout, which is all about tea, is touring in 2019 and 2020.

I don't know when I first met him, it's like he's always been there, like a glorious flamingo hovering on the periphery of my life.

We are not doormats, We are Warriors

Laura Kestrel

**We are not mats by the door
Just the weaker sex, and little more
Than words sprawled on empty page
Despite sacrifices long ago made
Deep-see divers, scarred survivors
WE ARE THEM ALL.**

**We are not a skirt to be grasped
Lewd remarks in a sweaty clasp
Social wallflowers in lonely gardens
Time is a sculptor, who made us harden
Nightshades in nightdresses, great gallant Goddesses
WE ARE THEM ALL.**

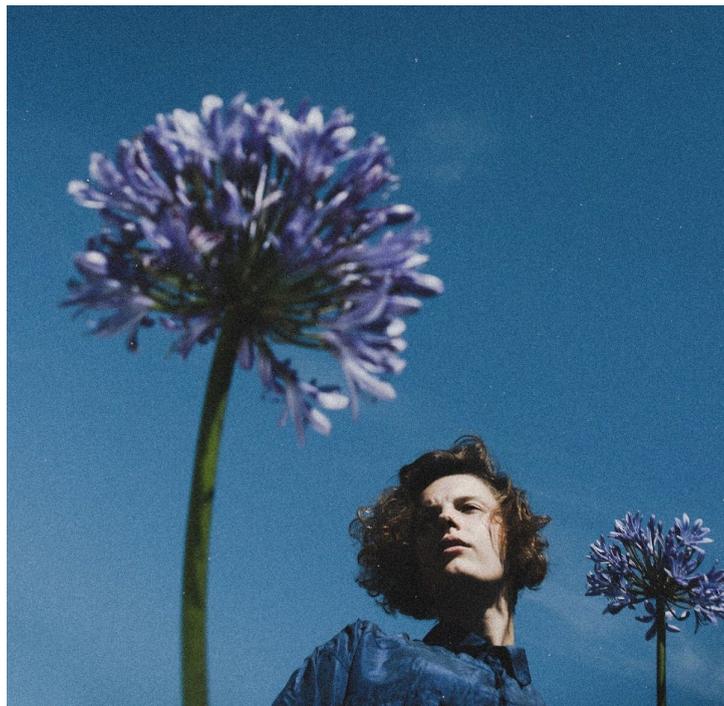
**We are not pomegranates broiled
Feeling small, sick or spoiled
Minds damaged, an aching hole
Worn-out shoes, but we've got soul
Rising against the current, a ferocious torrent
WE ARE THEM ALL.**

**We are not there for Public consumption
A cameo in mass-production
Blinded by lights once thought starry
Are trains veining onwards to the quarry
Chipped away at the surface, but inside a blazing furnace
WE ARE THEM ALL.**

**We are not a suitcase, an unlicensed vehicle
But specks of stardust, anatomical miracle
Not an experiment, or unexpected anomaly
But powerful, remarkable, brilliant beauty
In despair and repressed, in repair, a work-in-progress
WE ARE THEM ALL.**

**We are not what we are told to be
It is our choice, individual and free
Paper-chain girls holding hands all around the World
Athenas made from diamonds and pearls
Fighting fears daily, mountains of bravery
WE ARE THEM ALL.**

**Forget the contents of our abdomen
We unite in showing the world our sternum
For we are NOT wretched women.
We are wondrous warriors, breaking barriers.**



We're really happy to welcome back Laura to these pages, with this beautiful piece of resistance and protest. Today's picture has been bought to you by the colour blue and the letter never sent you. Despite teaching EFL by day, Laura still manages to keep busy and has been filling the internet with their lovely words throughout lockdown, appearing with Whiskey and Beards Winchester Fest, an online Poetry Extravaganza reading their work, facilitating events and showcasing other poets and generally keeping everyone feeling safe in the knowledge that poetry will continue and inspiring us all.

A Promise

Joshua Jones

A Promise — I did not keep.
Tinned pears for breakfast — Again —
Sugary — Sweet — kept Pristine.
I promised to share with you —

I bite the inside — my cheek —
Wash the split skin with the juice —
Attentive — to the Silence —
That follows — the Crunch —

Mum says to me — you should not keep
Open tins in the fridge — the Rust
Can dissolve — into the fruit — and
Give it a metallic taste — like Blood —

Brother Apples

Brother Apples at the bottom of the Gardens —
On both sides of the wall — One thrives —
While One dies — both have been there —
My whole life. The Neighbour has grown

Taller — every year — He's been here longer
Than I — A Lifetime — to him a Day —
He'll live here longer than I ever could —
His Brother lies at the bottom of the path

— That killed him — when We
Poured concrete on his roots.
My own Brother — too young to remember —
When our Apple Tree stood tall —

The landscape of our Garden — in His
Lifetime — has never changed — while
The World — outside the Garden wall —
Has never looked so Different.



Joshua is another returner to our pages so you know all about him already. He's been following NaPoWriMo which is a challenge for the month of April where you have to write one poem per day, often based on a prompt. It's no easy feat to achieve and watching him has been like watching Sylvester Stallone in the montages of his popular hit movie Rocky, only lifting verses and metaphors instead of punching cow bodies in freezers. Joshua stays in shape, poetry wise by being part of Apple and Snakes 2020 Poetry platform and going to gigs (when not locked down) and recording the weird and wonderful world that goes on in his head and outside of it.

TIGER TIGER

Myriam San Marco (originally Published in Sakura - Burning Eye Books 2018)

This I remembered.

I chose to ride the tiger.

Told myself: this is not a tiger.

This I chose. I knew it would hurt.

**I counted the hours, the days, the weeks, the months
after the times when I could no longer picture your face.**

I walked down streets to find myself lost in the desert.

The place where pain is. It's in my steps and the grit

in my teeth. It's in my hands and the way my arms fold.

It's in the letters unopened, the emails unread, the no

I'm busy I can't make it tonight, the staring the phone to silence

when it rings. Sometimes it's in the smiling too much and laughing

too much and drinking too much and fucking

too many people too much. Sometimes.

This I remember.

I choose to ride the tiger.

I tell myself this is not a tiger.

I tell myself I don't care if it hurts.

I choose to sit close from shoulder to arm to fingers

touching each other to hip, leg and feet moving

together. I choose talking for hours, watching

the stars till the sun rises pink, when one last fag

becomes ten or twenty. I choose

the long silent eye contact, the slow burn

and did you actually kiss me last night?

You smile-shrug yes. Today I'm awake

with they feel of your lips. We kiss.

I learn your tiger ways. Our laughter falls

from walls like a thin child's fists.

