

FRI AUG 09
7-10 PM

TAOS
WRITING
CLUB

SPEAK EASU

ANIGHT OF POETRY

*Hacienda
de los
Martinez*

708 HACIENDA RD

\$10-20 DONATION

COME GRAB A COPY OF OUR FIRST ZINE!

The Taos Writing Club was established by candlelight and embers in the winter of 2021. Three years of gathering, crafting, and sharing the spoken and written word has enabled us to bring you another evening of poetry.
We are proud to offer

SPEAK EASY

Thank you to our hosts at the Hacienda de Los Martinez, to our collaborators, and to you, for joining us.

IN THE BEGINNING

Aria Bowden

was the breath
the sound of the becoming, the hum and the hush
the stringing of syllables together like beads
letting them touch letting them bleed
into the echoes of day and night separating
into the reverberation of waters dividing
do you know the beginning of the word?
can your tongue begin to wrap around its silhouette?
the word made flesh the word made dust the word made ash the word
made body
the word is *bite*
bone crunching between teeth
sweet juice dripping, tongue slipping
and it was good.

SCRIPTURE

Quinn Dray

There is a sacred scripture carefully inscribed in tonal sequences effortlessly weaving through trees, moss, and slowly growing things seeking with furtive tendrils to coil about sunlight dappling the land's weathered skin of forest loam and fossilized blood.

The cacophony of a world in motion so carelessly tuned out and relegated to a background white noise morass in sensory prioritization scripts composing a simulacrum of adaptivity.

Focus is required to complete the assigned tasks.

It would be bliss to become a forest denizen's soft utterance flitting amid trunks and foliage, a dew droplet lazily sliding down a belladonna petal, or the scent of wet earth inhabiting the breeze after a lusty rain.

Automatons endlessly emerge faceless and chromatic from clay to swim Tantalian depths, toiling in self promoting fabrication within spheres of flickering cathode abstraction, they strive, and strive, and strive..

Are you alive? Welcome to linkedin.

You must have at least x amount of instagram followers to qualify.

This cream will grant you eternal life in youthful glamor if applied generously to all orifices, mucus membranes, and brain modules involved in a higher cognition.

Would you like to try a sample?

It's common knowledge that overly precocious children are creepy, especially when they morph into adults.

It's difficult to achieve even the semblance of a humanoid form, and so we climb, and climb, and climb with grimacing faces of constipated determination, we scale brutalist edifices reaching toward a dirty paper sky, crinkled and forgotten homework.

There is euphoria in the scripture of moonlight painting a desert mindscape in genius strokes

Applied in shifting bursts to sage, chamisa, arroyo, and juniper color strokes as clouds march by overhead.

It would be bliss to be the scripture writ within the stillness of pond water

Filling a declivity set aside from the sultry curl of a stream

In calm interlude away from the rushes.

Loneliness carries its own seduction that whispers in teasing incantations,

Soft sighs of the breeze intimating of an inevitable slow separating

From the main channel's babeling flow

There is bliss in the stillness of pond water.

WALKING THE WATER

Michael Virga

once
with friends
i traipsed the old wash
the madre vein
the river draw

past thickets of willow
and alder debris
under footbridge
and through culvert we played
shepherd to the gleaming
edge of water foaming
curious, rushing
and rolling ahead

beyond the next bend
until choked in the bracken
of blue grama and juniper root
matted reeds waiting to break in the sun
before being swallowed
into the fecund embrace
of a harbor of leaf rot

sunburn on our noses
and feet numb from cold
'neath dappled shade we waded
as the water led us on
until we arrived at a rise in the grade
and suddenly stymied
the flow fell behind

so we sat on the bank
and the afternoon threaded its needle
from here to then
the moment divested of anything to do
but wait
for the urgency emergent
to now
and there
find us
Again

TRAVELING

John Bowden

Mom

I got lost again today
and walked through lonely places
a garden with benches too large for me
built by giants maybe
and flowers filled with petrichor

I took some and left
and walked up downhill
and ran down uphill
borne by spiced and floral breezes

as the night fell I entered into
the darkened woods
and coyotes worried my dreams

I got lost
in a city owned by dogs
where everything is rock and clay
through the turns I took
I too turned to it
my bones of rock and skin of clay
lonely golem I marched with flowers
and my arms grew sore
from this act of self-love

the night fell again
and with it a whisper of my dream
stolen by coyotes

as a youth I was unaware
that flowers could be eaten
and as i watched the trembling petal touch her lips
I knew that I too could be devoured

I cried in the darkness
my tears a spring
as always they are
all my rock and clay
I become sacrament
to the moving waters of the world

TAOS TANKA

Natalie Oaks

Lightning sunders sky
Rain grey gossamer curtains
On the far mountain
Where you dance and join your spirits
Only brave souls have thunder

WITHOUT A FACE

MiKaliq Ta'Nous

All we are—our I

Eyes to see this place

Skin to feel, daunting, and real

Nothing beyond a face

Peel back that cold alone

Reveal its sweet embrace

Burn alive, yearning to thrive

A deck without an ace

All we are—our eyes

Hands to build and hearts to taste

Breathe in with the trees; exhale the breeze

We melt into time and space

Unlearned and naked, we return

With but a dream to chase

Through nowhere, we roam,

From purpose to poem

Free within,

Without a face

THIRTY-THREE

AnnaMarie Vaughan

The life span of a hippo. The last degree before the molecules of a lake stands still. The year I cared so much I stopped caring. I think of my spine, all thirty three of its notes, and imagine your tongue plucking the harp of it. I'm sorry, was that too much? As you might recall I'm no longer tip-toeing. One time I watched an 8 year old karate chop a limbo stick at a birthday party. I agreed with his sentiment and while I didn't ask, I imagine the rest of the room did too. Yesterday my palm reader, who I also met yesterday, told me to keep doing what I'm doing but to take way deeper breaths. Like the kind that push the earth out wider. How do you tell someone you've waited your whole life to meet them? How are some parts of us already carved to catch all the things that haven't happened yet? I used to beg grandpa to flip his me-sized hourglass over and over and over again. He needed to practice predicting when time would hold itself still. He needed to practice pretending he didn't know when that would be. Like when you're at a traffic light and try counting down just to test your own magic. Life passes through us and our scales rattle like broken bottles and fumbled pennies. If you knew that two out of three were bound to be heads, would you still take a chance on your fairytale? One day I swear to god we'll look up and see all of this inevitable. Like the stalking sound of noon. Or the sudden speed of gravity. We could live thirty three paces from the edge of the sea and still not recall what we walked in the room for. We could live thirty three heart beats apart and still doubt we had anything to do with how it decided to all work out.

(SACRED STANZA)

Sonny Goodnight

Dua taw de-na uh wama

e haw beew hu / when I / e wa baooe wameh

yuntuhyai / keena weestup quoya / uuuplu nah / un na bahhduugoh

bpai sti luh enninaw ya doon aw y tsel ba mulu / e daw (dance) waln hu

Ooo oonem/ ew weech thutluq / maw whelu beep bai ew wee tu

bein i uuu ba sti san ai yai que tupelli maki hu

duh ta dai bein o i que kee masa du Keenan

Helee e wa beia waw maw thalw he unk keen kawyum wee waa bah weh tsu

mu e steuh dah ee

Na e dai waian naw ba bpai , quan bpai , uuuy bai, e pa ma

(SACRED STANZA)

where the people are hungry but never starving

are families that celebrate a child's first laugh

Where crickets sing, and the tselbamulus dance to their songs

when children lose their teeth they throw them to the peak for new ones.

in the mountain springs are where we feed with our bent knees & corn

pollen

our church, the mountain, the lake

we do not worry for we will go back to the lake

for we are made of clay sap ash and embers

DISSOLVES

Fred Levesque

I'm sick of picking the beauty out of the bloodshed

Repairing my dreams like a weekend mechanic

I'm sick of all these broken geniuses trying to

Build blue birds with their words because the pain gets stuck in their throat

Oh these rooms collapse on themselves under the weight of our wanting

The sky snaps and shifts and we call it vision

I'm terribly tired of wandering the streets and sewers for fully formed lovers

And to be foolishly surprised each time

by Love's many faces

Many fangs

And many tongues

Fighting off the onslaught of mechanical soothsayers selling me their tricked-out desires

With nothing but a green knife and a textbook has me sputtering for air

Like an old engine that wants to

My hands are guilty and covered; equal parts oil and blood

Oblivion is running ragged

all smoke and stench and hunger

A new animal coming round the corner

at record speed

It's no wonder

Let me smother the voice inside me that

Tells me this is not enough- under a pillow by moonlight

As an antidote, a last night of fight before we're submerged

That same voice should go play in traffic that guides me to

Grab extra tylenol out of the medicine cabinet

That mixes vitamins into my water watching it dissolve like bones in a lake

I am not holyhearted enough to sit and wait for the world to offer itself to
me

I lack the guts to not study the inner workings of joy and delight

To pin it to its back and rummage around

To dissect them and to know finally what makes them tick

Tick

I must, like all good bull runners, get out of its way

not grab it by the horn

And catch up with it later

Run my hand against its warm wet back

Too tired to gore me

Iridescent and oil slick

Shimmering in the sun

We

the pulsing

Wait

And hope the poem doesn't end

Because the page has.

STILL, LIFE

Tucker Whitney

I'd never be so crass as to discuss
the crumbs that mar like stars the pristine void
of sable cloth, and starlike crawl upon
the backs of enterprising ants across
that wrinkled sky, rudely drawing the eye
from the red ord, the centerpiece, a bowl
of earthenware, unglazed, earth like our own,
filled up with fruit and pearls and bounties past
the furthest ambit of our avarice,
glimpsed like a congeries of sun-gilt clouds
from space, so bright and yet, that line of crumbs!
it teases further possibilities,
dulls to a rusty glare the tangible
and earnest promise of the centerpiece.

JIHAD

MiKaliq Ta'Nous

Wake up, hero, to the sun's golden tongue—arise and let the truth break your heart
He sees its reflection against a single barb of feather blowing in the breeze on the
lake's surface
Does it, too, mistake itself for I? A sore sight for laughing eyes
Because War looks different from the outside
Like suicide
Deception shames the deceased seedlings of being—bold lies told over lines of blow
from the climate-controlled sidelines
Line by line, they jeer their laws like bullets, searing the world like a witch for its
crime.
Who owns the sky? To own is to be at home in a lie
But with true purpose bottled, the worthless hero wallows from behind
Like a branch to the dove and the swallow
To the bleeding, blood is blood
Yet it's food to the vultures who circle the dying to dine
Cuz War looks different from the outside
For hunger's debt remains unpaid
No matter how many dreams are unmade
War looks different from the outside, and we hate what makes us remember.
That single barb in the breeze forgets its quill and feather;
It knows not what it isn't but that it is a pretender
Inside his mind—it's rewind, playback until the I surrenders
But on the outside,
War looks like a victor smiling
Biting the tongues his ancestors still speak
Temples and libraries and sages and priests burning beneath a bootlicker's feet
Scorched ears can't hear him, but his meek pride still squeaks
Yeah, war sounded a lot different from the outside
From the other side of the tracks, just over the wall
It was banging its drum and gnashing its teeth at his children
Spoon-fed horrors and stories of tomorrow's glory
That he, too, could be a hero of the light above
He'd be one with the feather, the wing, and the dove
Take flight and return, as below so above
But underneath the smoke-soaked sky in the hazy sun
Lurking in the mud, the hero locks eyes with the water and sees only war
A rifle blasts, the heroic skull cracks, and his worship is done
If only they'd taught him before all the slaughter
This war can't be won with a gun

IF ALL ELSE FAILS

AnnaMarie Vaughan

I think it's okay that we doubt the outcome. The same way we're meant to despise the tedious escape of time. We are flesh and bones and helplessly honey blooded. hairline fractures hidden and half healed. We are swell critters turning up on the sidelines of quiet roads curious what might find us. Love notes tucked back into envelopes kept between books. Shoved in back drawers. Desperate for hands already molded for our belonging. We are eye level with clues too arid to grip. Taunted by longing that lives both behind and in front of us. With love, there is always a third body. It knows nothing of slowness. And if we're lucky it beats like a welcomed guest between our sternums. But sometimes we are reckless. Sometimes we go to take a bath and leave the water running. Floor boards drenched and not enough towels to dry it. Leave it, you say. And what else could we do. So we did.

TO AGE

John Bowden

there once was a copper pot
that never could be filled

until one day
a figure stepped out from behind the amethyst shroud of night
and stretched to the horizon
arms of moonlight
gathering all the treasures of the world
and every act of violence
committed in the shadow of treasure's value
the pot was then filled to its brim
welded shut and cast into the juiced pomegranate depths of the sea

in those frigid waters
shaded by a thousand layers of azure waves
the pot took on new life and swam as a shark
skin of burnished copper with veins of turquoise lace
betraying aeons of salt tarnish
blind and with its mouth welded shut
the shark swam and waited

until one day
heralded by a lilac breeze
a figure leapt down to earth
landing on a cushion of dandelion daylight
and then with a net woven from the tangling brown of her curls
she dredged the deep waters
and snared the copper shark

the force of its fear and its struggle
awoke volcanoes from their slumber
birthed tempests, profuse from heaven's womb
and split the cerulean lips of the sea

finally she lands the shark upon the tattered shore
and gifts it with eyes
two polished tears of tanzanite
and with a gentle kiss
the welds shutting its mouth came undone
and as the pot opened to the world again
out fell
nothing but a hollow breath
all that value and violence
vanished over aeons spent
beneath the shifting currents of the years

INDULGENCES

Michael Virga

my mind has been studying the art of deceit
the painting of masks with which to disguise the ploy
the counting of stars by which to make smaller the sky
the burning of incense to cloud up the room

my tongue has been practicing the seduction of faith
the crafting of fish-hooks that lose not their snare
the architecture of disdain for this here present prize
the yearning for some other thing beyond this same dross

my hand has been retracing the gold in a lie
the making of words to say things they do not
the shoveling of dirt over a memory since poisoned
the repetition harnessed to the raising of new truths

my heart has been praying for the gift of blindness
the need to hide and hide from what my body would do
the loathing of this self for which i cannot find forgiveness
the resentment i hurl out onto their wretched bowing heads

UnNa KuPCi

Sonny Goodnight

Kups on my feet

Kups to my feet

Kups are my feet

Racing into the half moon (tslu weh bpo aki) wearing its pueblo shaped
head dress is its entry

i eclipse into a reflection; swirl down in my eyes

leering toward its Adobe innards of retaining wall work harboring vermil-
ion cultivation

Cascading acequias crescendo weaving back and fourth into the giants
beige edifice

folding in and out kaleidoscope runner chasing the angular sand

I'll always be tan.

GRAVITY

Aria Bowden

i sit in the summer heat as the sun bites,
she gnaws at my shoulders and we dig and dig until the soil is all turned over
and the worms pulse
the wind is warm the wind is smothering

can you hear the echo of the embers? the seeds reverberating?
the breeze spiraling through the canyon slot?
the buzz, the whispers, the hush ?

the cotton coats the ground, swirling around like a snowglobe, a blizzard in
july
you and I dance around each other in the sunlight, in the honeypot
but we don't touch

the black cat rolls over in the diamond dust, here in the marigold dusk
and you and i keep spinning through the candlelight, through the warm sum-
mer night
through thunder, through the moonlight
but we don't collide

i am trying to listen
to the ripples to the swells to the dog's bark to the fissures in the rocks
to the green growing and the spiders crawling and the hawks circling and the
star crossing leaving its gold afterglow on the black glass

the haze is sweet
here in the tender
in the in between
we plant and plant and plant again and watch it grow, green

i am trying to listen to
the memory, the melody, the refrain, the rain on the water, the cactus as it
flowers
the fire in the summer, the pouring of sweat
and jumping into the cold, cold water
lapping up its salt its sand its holy

here inside
the harvest
inside the orbiting

WE'RE RACING TOWARD THE
SOUND OF EXISTENCE IN A BOT-
TLE THE SEA LAPS AT OUR SALTY
DREAMS WHAT IS THE MEANING ...
IS THIS SOMETHING YOU TELL
YOURSELF?

Tucker Whitney

We're racing toward the
time when all our memories
become muddled and diluted
like protean soup,
just sustaining the growth of our souls.

Sound of existence in a bottle:
Breaths, whirring, heartbeats,
wind, chitinous clicking
all of it.
Even the nonsound of the clouds brushing sky.

The Sea laps at our salty dreams
so it can keep dreaming us
if we'll only allow;
If we'll relax our grip
and let it whisper us our secrets

What is the meaning...
of busses and trains and cars
and the streets and trees and birds
and all these people everywhere
brimmed with palpable desires?

Is this something you tell yourself?
That you can feel all of it a bit too strong?
Really taste their lives, maybe hear
their troubles in your head?
Or, you're just exaggerating?

IN-SUB-STAN-TI-A-TION

Natalie Oaks

paper thin pages
with even thinner verses
my off key voice joins the chorus
and we chant stuff
the same stuff every week that no one understands
I keep waiting for someone to explain it all to me
for it to all make sense,
eventually I settle into the motions:
sit
kneel
stand
kneel
sit
stand
kneel
in that order every week,
twice a week if you're really terrified of h-e-double hockeysticks
the incense sways hypnotically
I turn my laugh into a cough when my brother self-flatulates on the pew
wax drips on my hands as I stand still as a statue
not good enough for the sacraments,
but good enough to be an altar girl
they put you to work, the Catholics
the Protestants get you with the wake boarding trips
or youth group, replete with cool kids in northface hoodies who love love
Jesus
and hate hate inviting you to their McMansions on movie night
most kids have to deal with the awkwardness
of occasionally seeing a teacher out of school
I live in fear of seeing nuns in the cereal aisle
Sister Barbara Rose has a way of shriveling you up like raisin bran with
one glance
“did you study the scripture we assigned you?”

“yes ma’m:

Thou shalt talk pious on Sunday

Thou shalt leave room for the holy spirit at thine school dances

Thou shalt not look up at the stained glass,

God does not careth about thine ADD

Thou shalt shake hands with the priest

with the same hand thou useth to spank your children

When thy getteth tanked on Saturday at McGoo’s Tavern

say ten hail marys on Sunday

then you’re really forgiven.”

Jesus’ flesh tastes like cardboard at Catholic mass,

like maple glazed donuts at Protestant church

and I’m always left hungry, not much substance to that transubstantiation

one smells of incense

one of the Nordstrom perfume department

both smell like different flavors of judgement

I can’t drink the wine, I mean blood at mass...

you can’t cannibalize if you ain’t baptized

or if you’re a Protestant

you get to do the sacrament in a jacuzzi inlaid in the lord’s stage

to a band that plays rock for god’s exaltation

When asked what prayer I’d like answered most

I tell the 437 people attending

in all seriousness

while wearing a pink snorkel mask to keep the water out of my nose and a

white robe

that I want world peace.

over the feedback of the microphone.

how adorable!

they all sigh.

tomorrow they’ll vote against weed and for war.

someone’s kink is carving the horror into Jesus’ face

painting the blood dripping from his hands

someone’s tools brought the devil to life

under Mary’s perfect feet.

ROOM

Fred Levesque

As much as we posture, we do not know how the brain works

Much less the heart. And yes we spend hours poking around at our wires

And we write our little love songs and turn to puddles.

And don't get me started on puddles. Reservoirs of this life giving stuff

That disappears into the ground or into the sky. Oftentimes both.

Everything around us is so dense and crumbles when we try to love it.

Everything we come to believe obeys a larger mystery.

There's so much room in between molecules you could start a new life.

And yet.

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