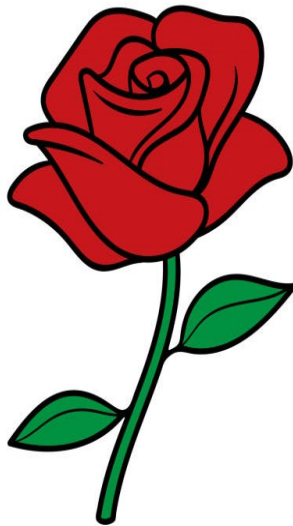


On the Left Bank

A St Paul Socialist Lit Mag

Edited by David Ackos & Cory Cole



Vol. 2

September, 2022

We need more socialist lit! Submit
your writing at leftbankmag@proton.me

Thanks to everyone who has continued to make this project possible, especially Twin Cities DSA for providing printing and labor.

Editors & Curators were David Ackos and Cory Cole; copy editing by Max Mastin.

We need more hopeful leftist lit to weave a better future! Interested in submitting your writing or joining the Left Bank Mag's editorial board?

Contact us at leftbankmag@proton.me to submit writing or set up an interview to join the editorial board!

Contents:

Like Last Year in Minneapolis – Lukas Alan	Page 2
Ghost of Glass and Steel – Valentine Seebart	Page 3
Lite – Andy Crawford	Page 4
Moving to Canada – Josie Wren Browning	Page 6
A Eulogy to the Red Maple – Emmett Doyle	Page 8
Rent Stabilization – Benjamin Werner	Page 10
Self Care stops at the Barricades – Lukas Alan	Page 11
A Young Man's Winter Reflection – Benjamin Werner	Page 12
Gender Outlaw – David Ackos	Page 14
Gender Outlaw – AI Art by Emma Gilbertson & Clare McNulty	Page 15
Midsummer Beseeching – David Ackos	Page 16
We Human – Esther Marcella Hoffmann	Page 17

'like that last year in Minneapolis"

**like that last year in Minneapolis,
cussing for justice
against
benevolent dictator
who
harkens helicopter'
to
deliver tribune
against
those who voted for him
and u**

Ghosts of Glass and Steel

Valentine Seebart

Architecture—the embodiment,
of living human desire,
into nonliving form.

The boundaries will vanish,
to mechanical sinews,
shared composition.

Property is nothing,
mutilation,
of monumentalized desire.

Masters of our own alienation,
self-manipulation,
before only susceptible to
history.

Humanity constructed its gods,
in its own image,
the final synthesis
—realization of power.

That which it has possessed,
since the inception,
of its consciousness!

Lite
By Andy Crawford



Non-binary people aren't just watered-down versions of our assigned genders. Queer identity is a completely different experience (and it's MUCH more interesting).

I've been out as non-binary for seven years now and am still treated as a woman- not just by strangers, but just as often by those close to me. As beautiful as this whole unknowable identity thing is, it also truly sucks.

It's heartbreaking that people are so eager to put us into one of two boxes because they think it helps them to better understand us; doing so does just the opposite.



Moving to Canada
Josie Wren Browning

I had a nightmare. Not a big deal, I always have nightmares. But since I went to bed so early and only ate once today, I decided to get up and make a sandwich. While I did, a song by Cloud Cult, Moving to Canada, came on my shuffle. It's a song from 2005 about leaving the crumbling remains of America for the safe harbor of another country.

I got to thinking about a conversation I had on a lovely date last friday. This person was considering moving to Australia or New Zealand to escape America. I understood, and was even impressed that they were brave enough to try. I have nothing but admiration for people looking to escape this dystopia. But I got to wondering why I have never considered it, not even briefly.

I say "Minneapolis is just my home" which is true but that's by no means the whole story. With becoming disabled, the past several years have been increasingly difficult. The winters here are brutal and we take pride in weathering them, but they can be impossible for those of us with mobility issues. It's not uncommon for disabled people to spend the entire winter inside because they literally cannot leave. Living somewhere that isn't 2 feet in snow would definitely be a good idea, but I just don't think about it.

In the past, I've come to the conclusion that I don't consider moving somewhere else because I'm comfortable where I am- and that I wouldn't be of use anywhere else, which is true to an extent. Given my circumstances, I have damn comfortable living, and I wouldn't want to leave my mom, my friends, everything I know, to try again somewhere new. Plus, I have no skills to offer a new community I might move to. And yet, that isn't the full reason.

As I made my sandwich listening to Moving to Canada, thinking back to my date on Friday, it all came together.

After my date, I came home and looked at my phone to see that Roe v. Wade had been overturned. Since then everything has been that all too familiar “is this really happening? Is it really getting this bad?”. It’s a blizzard we’ve been trudging through for years but, like I said, Minnesotans take pride in braving the elements.

For the past several years, I’ve had nightmares every night. I don’t wake up in a sweat anymore or scream; I recently described it as “normal dreams for normal people but terrible things happen in them”. Occasionally I will start to wake from them- I will be aware that I am asleep in my bed, that I am dreaming and I could pull myself into the waking world, but I stay. I stay in the dream because I need to fix it. I never can fix it. If anything, I lose more control over what’s happening in the dream. Still, every time, I feel the need to go back in to fix it.

Living here is like my nightmares. Not Hollywood dramatic night terrors that the main character starkly sits up in bed from. No, America is my nightly “normal dreams but terrible things happen”. The kind I wake from not entirely sure where I am, sigh, and wipe the memory of the personalized Cronenberg movie from my thoughts. And that’s why I never think about leaving. Because I need to fix it. I can’t fix it. When I try, I freeze. At best I can yell with my arms bound about how these horrors aren’t what they should be, that there is another way, that just on the other side is a better way to be.

I’m not sure if those in my nightmares can hear me when I “go back in” but there’s been a few times when it seemed like they could almost see the waking world before the dream ended.

A Eulogy to the red maple
Emmett Doyle

*A eulogy to the red maple of pine bend
Who grew in the boggy patch
Of beaver chewed stumps
Trunk hugging vines
And tall marsh grass matted down
By the tired bellies and haunches
Of white tailed deer
Who grew by the shattered rings of her trunk
Some half century
And if older, for we could not tell in passing,
Was luckily spared the tramping boot
Of the Army Corps surveyors
In the great Nine Foot Channel project
She grew back from the river
But the river came, as rivers do at the bends
Eating away inch by earth-dark, crumbling inch
The bank held back by roots that drank the very water that
would topple them
And make snags of them Until it was her turn*

*We came to her at her post, holding back the bend
And eight times around we wrapped the thick Poly Ds
Like a water logged necklace on her trunk
And its pendant three tires A length of chain Thirty five feet of
steel cable And a jug
Her trunk bent and groaned
Like the backs of the deckhands
Who hauled her wire on kevels and timberhead
Five barges into Pine Bend
Ammonia to make the soil rich again
The soil flowed by in suspension
From tile drains on the Minnesota
From fields plowed to the strip by the stream
Past the grain docks
Grain prices so low for four years
The farmers are selling off the land
Grain prices so low since 84
The farmers are working on the docks
To keep the farm
To grow the ever flooding grain*

*Ammonia to make the soil rich again
A man crashed an anhydrous ammonia truck
Coming out of Pine Bend
He never stood a chance*

*We took the chains off her neck
And hooked them to a ratchet, and thirty five more feet of cable
And another ratchet, chains
Eight wraps of Poly D
On the trunk of another maple
Younger, stronger, and farther back from the bank*

*She hung dead over the river bank
No Jones Act suits to file,
No unseaworthiness, no negligence to claim
Until one night the captain
Wanting to stretch out his watch
Because the grain was so cheap there was hardly enough to haul
Decided she was a navigation obstruction
I held the grab hook line on shore
To keep the jug from being buried in her
As the push pads rammed her limbs and trunk
And the bank turned over
All her roots and all the soil they held
Naked to the river But her one strong root
Standing as tall as the Texas deck still clung to the shore wire
Refusing to accept redundancy
Until we wrapped the wire on the H bit
And broke it free
Her one strong root broke in two
And she lay shorn, girdled, bare
Hanging halfway in the water
Like a victim from the Sultana
Like the body of poor James Whalen
Like another one from the High Bridge
Then heave by shuddering tow knee heave
We pushed her back on shore
Laid her off, and thanked her for her service*

Rent Stabilization
Benjamin Werner

I rapped at the door.

“Who is it?”

“I’m trying to stop the landlord from raising the rent!”

The door swung open

I caught a glimpse

Of two air mattresses in the living room

Which reminded me

Of how I used to sleep

On a mattress

In the living room

“Rent stabilization?”

“They just raised my rent by 200 dollars”

Or 300

Or 400

I even heard 650

I knocked again.

“Baby, who is it?”.

A child’s voice answered

“A policeman mommy!”.

“No! I’m not a policeman!” I said.

Knock, knock

I trespassed into dozens of apartment buildings

Most of the time

The locks were broken on the front door

And nobody stopped me

Self Care Stops at the Barricades

Lucas Alan

self care stops at barricades
it is good the call out brigades
only exercise will through
hands coming out the internet
what chaos that fascist band
of hooligans would wrought?
in other time lands they
have “marxist-leninist” as purity suffix
identity individuals ego signs
of anti-timed lines
expressed in liberatory narcissism
Death to Mediocrity!
only “you” in Youth
expounded in narcissism
refute to being background noise
extras in your own life supernumeraries!

A Young Man's Winter Reflection

Benjamin Werner

Do you ever wonder
What your life will be like?
Then watch it all flash
Before your eyes

Everything planned
Went not as predicted
Yet all was well

//

My breath clouded in front of me as I stood watching the snowflakes fall. The yellow light of street lamps illuminated the whiteness before me with an orange glow.

I began to walk, and soon the crunch of my feet on the snow was the only sound separating me from my thoughts.

My long coat was a hand me down left over from my grandfather who passed away a year after I was born. Oh if he could see me now, what might he think? On the other side of the world from the war-torn Poland he sailed away from. Still trudging through the same snow he and I both shoveled nearly a century apart.

How did he see his life as a young man? What was it like for him to hold my mother in his arms as I hold my daughter in mine? What was it like to quit

smoking cigarettes when he found out they caused cancer? What was it like to sip vodka and play pinochle with his friends? What was it like to experience America through Polish eyes, work his machinist's lathe, shaping metal and fixing the tracks of the New York Subway line? What was it like for him to laugh? What was it like for him to die?

And how do I honor his legacy? Marching through the winter snow.

Gender Outlaw
David Ackos

High noon
you can't look away
I'm in a cute dress
off the shoulder

I was enjoying the wind
tickling my broad shoulders
And hairy thick calves
But you're staring

I look back. Stand up
we walk to the middle of the mainstreet
ten paces
spin
draw, punk

you break eye contact
yeah you better look away
I'm a gender outlaw

I hope this sundress
doesn't get me shot
another grumpy old asshole

are you jealous or are you fascist
or do you just think it looks cute
either way I'm on edge
trying to decide if I should say something

or if that will end with us both
reaching for our sixguns in the street
It would be nice to be able to wear
a sundress to my neighborhood coffee shop
without worrying I'll end up gunned down,

in the dirt,
by a pervy old geezer
like you



Gender Outlaw – AI Art by Emma J. Gilbertson and Clare McNulty

Midsummer Beseeching

keys of plastic / dark of night
gods of love and enby hearts
ancestors comrades spirits all
help us build a life of love
a family and a castle and a
little village proud
a garden and a workshop
and some urchins meek and loud

an enby's prayer / an enby's hope
I thus sing to the wind
and if you chance to hear it
beloved spirits mine
bear it with you to your kingdoms
sing with me / a loving future
as we dream it / so let it be

– D. Ackos

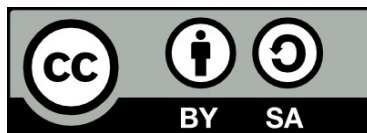
We Human
Esther Marcella Hoffmann

We human, evict each dystopia,
live beyond legends. Mystify the myth
of "powerless to system." Only worship
the temples we are breathing. Leave
newsfeeds un-fed, eat new fruit.
Heathen our blood. Be powerful not safe.
We jump the gates of internet thief-dom.
Avert avatar, reclaim life force, un-brand,
pronounce names as heartbeats.
Pounce on paradigms,
tear them with ancestor teeth.
No longer wallow in
shallow-puddle ideologies
that distract from chest swell
of oceanic truth.
Do not cancel our shadows,
nor create projectiles to hurl
at human mirrors, we integrate
this guidance to soul-brilliance.
In defiance of advertisements, we
experience bodies as Gaia's gift to spirits.
We cleave the globe and exult the world.

A Production of Twin Cities DSA



opinions or views expressed here DO NOT necessarily reflect the positions held by Twin Cities DSA, or national DSA.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.