

*Identity: Under reconstruction*  
by Navi Brar

Sometimes I drink too much vodka on once,  
or eat 3 servings of mac&cheese in 1 sitting,  
but the most unhealthy habit I have,  
is comparing myself to others,  
never quite seeing the beauty I hold as enough.  
Broken and beyond repair,  
no silver lining to being second choice,  
in this world that believes the opinions,  
of others is of higher importance,  
than the opinion you have of yourself.  
Trying to undo the works,  
of the impossibly high beauty standards.  
I can only try to love the rough edges and flaws,  
that make me entirely me.

Navi Brar is a South Asian first generation Indo-Canadian residing in Vancouver. She is very passionate about the representation of people of colour in the arts, and hopes to inspire others that despite tough times creating a beautiful life is possible. Through her writing, she hopes to raise more awareness about issues like domestic abuse, social injustice, and mental health. Poetry is her way of creating space, taking up space and helping others do the same.  
You can find her sharing her work on social media @ageetfeelings



*Buttercup*  
by Chloe Gorman

He calls her buttercup.  
And like a buttercup, she stands proud,  
Uninvited.

He is the sun that basks her in light,  
She, a garish reflection.  
A beacon, brazen in yellow,  
Petals spread. Come inside.

Temptation tastes like nectar.

He says buttercups are the prettiest flowers.  
I say they are weeds.

Chloe Gorman is a copywriter, poet & aspiring author. Her poetry & fiction lean towards romantic, dark & gothic themes. She has an MA in Professional Writing from Falmouth University for which she received a distinction. She has poems published in *Black Bough*, *MoochyChick* & *Ravens in the Attic*, with poems forthcoming in *Fevers of the Mind* & *Three Drops From A Cauldron*.

*Call Me Grass*  
by Chloe Gorman

Do not call me flower,  
For I am stronger  
Than their delicate petals.

Even the rose,  
With blood red blooms,  
And thorny stems,  
Is easily crushed  
In brutish hands.

No. Call me grass.  
For grass may be burnt,  
And grass may be frozen,  
Grass may be trampled,  
And grass may be torn,  
But still it grows.  
Breaking, unapologetic, through cracks in concrete.  
So do not call me flower,  
Delicate and sweet.  
Call me grass,  
For I will keep growing, always,  
In spite of you.



*Sometimes it's Just A Pointy Hat*  
by Richaundra Thursday

Sometimes I just wanna Be,  
Not have your layers under my  
Skin like rune tattoos,  
Nor wear your agenda like woad.  
I should not always need to  
Fight the Patriarchy for you,  
Your shining beacon  
(Rising martyrs bright as pyres),  
I do not need your  
Repressive progressivism  
To applaud a sexual freedom  
I may or may not choose to advertise.  
Your words in my mouth,  
White liberal possession:  
I exorcise you, my very existence  
Should make you step up,  
But still put it all on me.  
You stole me  
Like a condiment,  
Like a country,  
From folk browner than you.  
All that sage  
Smudging your eyes:  
Free range black and brownface  
Applied by dry stick brushes,  
Repackaged, relabeled,  
Sold at markup,  
Made reactive.  
A balm, an avenger.  
I hope the packaged incense  
Lights up your suburban houses  
And I know a thing or two about burning.  
Don't misunderstand,  
I will lend you all my strength.  
The world will need all our strength.  
But you don't decide what  
Collects in my pot nor  
What tongues speak my spells.  
I can be more or less than a symbol,  
Than a storm, than a prayer.  
Sometimes it is just a pointy hat.



*A Kaleidoscope of Me*  
by Srishti Uppal

I grew up watching Final Destination,  
with my sister yelling at the gory parts  
I grew up writing poems,  
and I still can't stand when they don't rhyme  
Rhyming schemes, alliterations  
and the act of stripping myself of pride on paper imbued me  
I grew up naked- in soul and in paper.  
When I was five, I broke my right leg  
A motorcyclist rode over it  
The sound of my own tongue telling me I'm worthless  
is louder than that of bones cracking underneath me  
A friend once asked me  
roughly how many people I hated  
I said  
"all of them"  
People scare me.  
They'll put your hope health happiness in a straitjacket  
and when all that's left in your skin is pain  
they'll creep up to your ears and ask "why so serious?"  
I think thinking about the purpose of life is philosophical suicide  
We live in a faithless world  
and anyone's who's the least bit different  
is fed to the wolves to be ravaged  
I was, too.  
My sister and I once shared the same favourite show  
all we share now is mutual ignorance of each other  
My only friend was my aunt  
everyone else who ever met me thought I was a bloody lunatic  
(I am)  
My self-esteem fluctuates faster than the weather  
the extremes range from judgmental to suicidal  
I believe the greatest way I can punish those who hurt me  
is by making myself inaccessible to them  
When I was five, I broke my leg  
I didn't cry, not even a little  
When I was fifteen, I broke my heart/  
I've been heartless ever since.



*Praying for the Past Tense at the  
Center of the Universe*

by Juliette Sebeck

I used to have a habit of losing best friends  
(maybe used to, maybe have),  
usually after a city-side bus ride  
(was it something I said?).  
I've wondered if there's something in the smog  
that makes these friendships end  
(something in the sheer thought of being friends?).  
I've wondered whether the friendships were just meant to end  
(maybe all [my] friendships are meant to fall to pieces).  
I wonder if it's worth being hurt again  
(when will I lose them?).

Srishti Uppal is an eighteen-year old poet, essayist, and blogger from New Delhi. Her works have been published by *The Paper Trains Literary Journal* and *The Mystic Blue Review*. Her most treasured talents include her madly detailed knowledge of Ariana Grande lyrics and outdated vines. You can read her work here. She is the Founder, Creative Manager, and Editor-in-Chief of *Teen Belle Magazine*.