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Missy: LGBTQ+ Literary Magazine

Writing and Rhetoric

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## Missy, issue 1 (2021)

Greg Parker

*University of Mississippi*

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*M i s s y :*

*LGBTQ+ Literary Magazine  
at the University of  
Mississippi*





## **The Story of Missy: UM's First Publication By/For LGBTQ+ Students & Community Allies**

After a 2019 TCW panel on community writing, Greg Parker had the idea to start an LGBTQ+ publication for UM students. He and a team of student editors spent the next few months working on Missy: writing & art by UM's LGBTQ+ students & allies. Missy seeks to publish writing, art, and digital compositions created by current and former University of Mississippi students who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community or as allies to that community. Send submissions to [MissySubmissions@gmail.com](mailto:MissySubmissions@gmail.com)



### **Managing Editor**

**Greg Parker** is currently a 7th-Grade English teacher. He graduated from the University of Mississippi in 2020 as an English Education major. During college, he worked as a writing tutor at the university's Writing Center and served as the Vice President (2018-19) then Co-President (2019-20) of the UM Pride Network.



### **Associate Editors**

**Grace Marion** is a junior print and broadcast journalism major at the University of Mississippi, minoring in Spanish. She's written for at least 12 publications, been mentioned by at least 32, been on staff at five, and been an editor at two (three!).

**Michael Martella** is a former biology and environmental science teacher from Brandon, Mississippi. He is an MFA candidate studying poetry at the University of Mississippi. His writing focuses on the intersections of identity and environment and can be found in Rust+Moth and the forthcoming anthology, Queer Nature.



### **Outreach Coordinator**

**Emily Stewart** is an undergraduate International Studies and Arabic major at the University of Mississippi. She works as a Community Assistant in Student Housing.



### **Art Editor**

**Liz Parks** is an undergraduate Psychology student at the University of Mississippi. Her current aim beyond graduation is to pursue counseling and eventually work in the area of queer mental health. She loves people and is always looking for ways to be involved and support her LGBTQ+ community.



### **Faculty Advisor**

**Tyler Gillespie** teaches first-year writing in UM's FASTrack program. His writing can be found in Rolling Stone, The Guardian, and GQ. He's the author of Florida Man: Poems and the nonfiction collection The Thing About Florida: Exploring a Misunderstood State.

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*By Hooper Schultz*

The image of the abject queer in the South – someone who is oppressed, violently subjugated, and eager to escape – is a common trope in terms of LGBTQ representation in the United States.

I push back against that framing. My hope through this portrait series is to give a sense of how LGBTQ+ Mississippians are controlling their own narrative, their own identity formation, how they are existing in Mississippi not as abject subjects of repressive scripts, but as individuals who have power and see themselves as a dynamic part of the landscape of the Deep South.

These photographs show friends and acquaintances in positions of confidence and power, in their places of work, leisure, or activism. The images are meant to be collaborative, to give the individuals featured control over their selves, their belonging, and their world. I encourage viewers to discuss with each other their own interpretation of their portrait, the series, and their sense of Holding Space here in Mississippi.

Holding Space, an ongoing portraiture series of LGBTQ+ individuals in the greater Oxford, Mississippi area, began as a project for Southern Studies 598, "Photographing Place in the American South."

*Prints are for sale! 100% of proceeds will go towards the collaborators featured in the photo.*





*This project was made possible by collaboration with: Aiden Breaux, Nehemiah Walls, Mtta Abron, Jessica Cogar, Kate Vana, Sarah Heying, Jeffrey Grimes, Kayla Patterson, Maddie Shapple, Dixie Grimes, Jaime Harker, Jana Entrekin, Deja Samuel, Michael Martella, and August Foster.*













## Reminder

*August Foster*

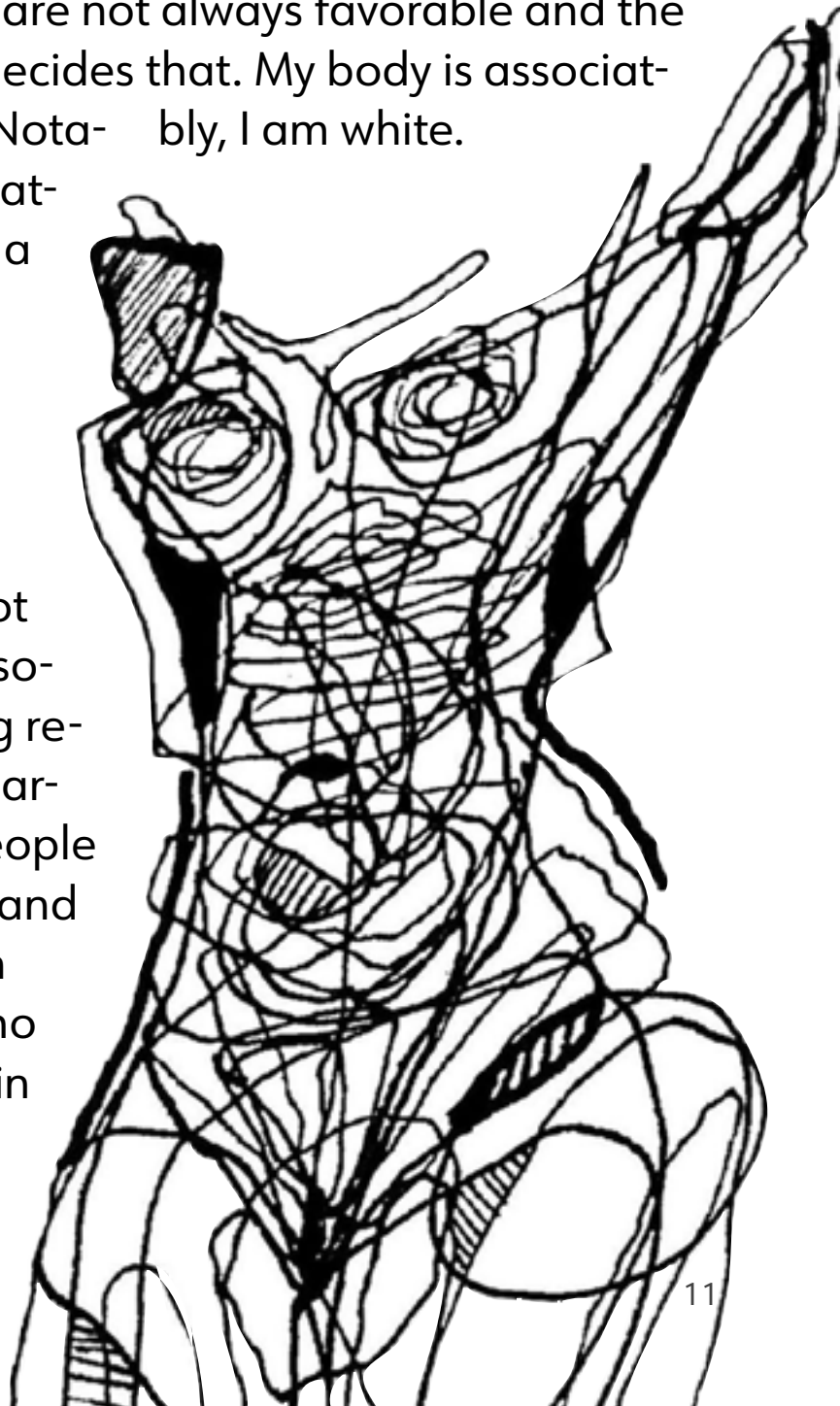
When you stand too close to a chain and look through one of the links - you forget about the chain altogether. You forget that the links comprise something larger. You must note the importance of the chain in its entirety to understand the importance of a single link. You, as an individual, must not forget about your community - about the people that comprise your world. You are significant. Not because you stand alone but because you stand together - linked inextricably.

# The Body

*August Foster*

The body is the threshold between your life - singular and unique - and the shared narrative of society. Those who steer the narrative of society are in control of the narrative of the body. Your body is the signifier of discrimination. It signifies race, gender, class, sexuality, and so on. Even when the body signifies incorrectly - it continues to do so without your permission. Fat. Skinny. Blemished. Paraplegic. Dark complexion. Hooded eyes. The established narratives associated with these qualities are not always favorable and the owner of the body rarely ever decides that. My body is associated with a privileged narrative. Notably, I am white.

I am also male-perceived. The latter (however fortunate) carries a narrative that has always been at odds with my true history. I loved to dance as a kid. I loved dresses. I loved humility and passion, together. For whatever reason, this narrative was not meant for my body and yet I resonated with it most. This drawing resembles the body that fits my narrative. It is the body of those people who danced and wore dresses and were humble and passionate in their actions. It's hard to say who exactly - but the body remains in my mind. My own body always in stark contrast. We share something deeper.



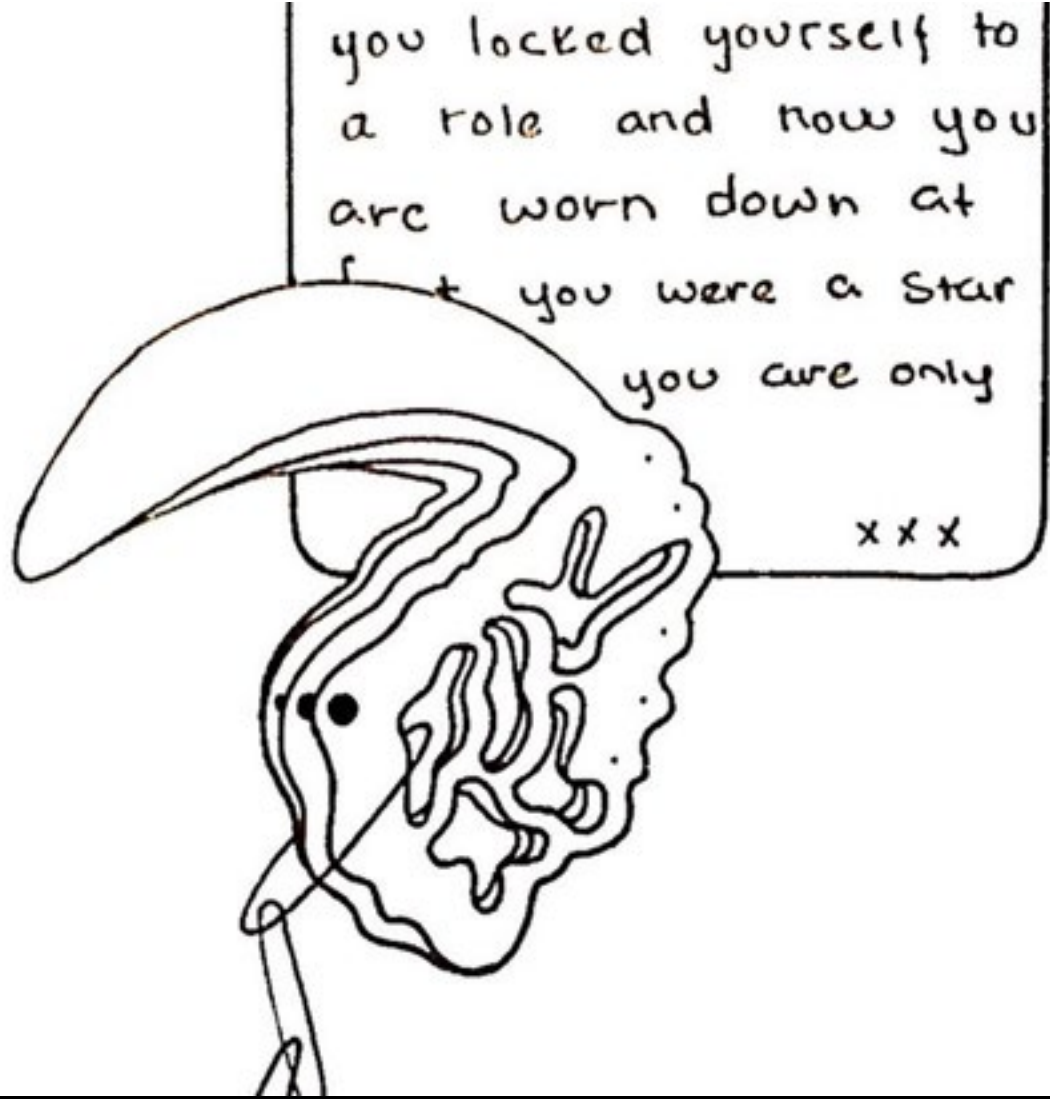
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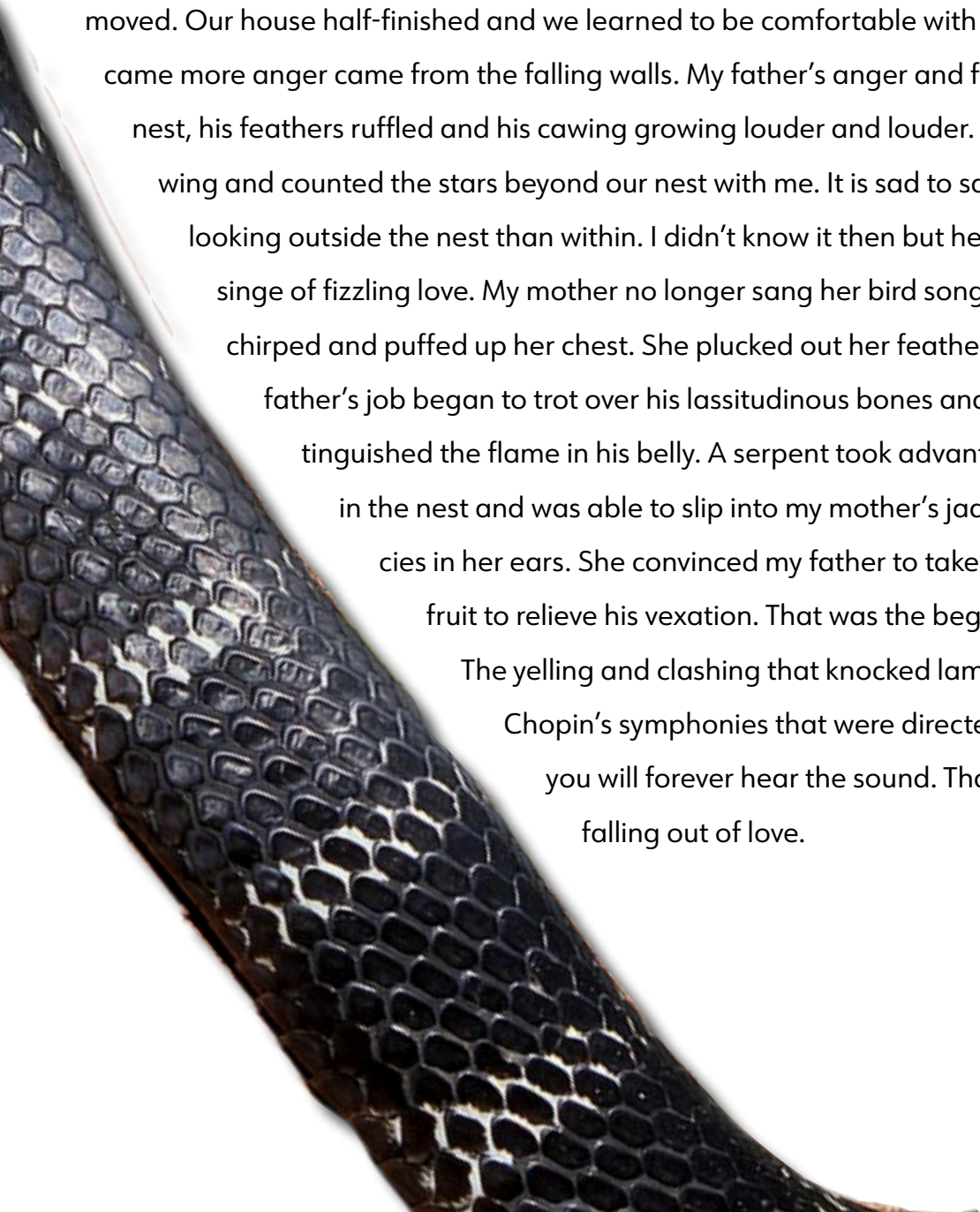
## Transformation

*August Foster*

This two-piece is a sort of comment on how I and many queer people in my generation (especially in Mississippi) were forced to suppress our natural personalities and expressiveness from a very young age in favor of a sort of artificial identity that had been imposed on us - primarily heteronormative, gendered, and overwhelmingly artificial. Then, through the final stretches of the queer liberation movement that ultimately peaked with the legalization of same sex marriage in 2015, queerness was made legitimate - by and in power. Queer validation followed. Us queer youth of the time began deconstructing our imposed identities and reconstructing a self that was more organic and liberating. Queer people know it more than most that identity is a tough frontier - a great deal of who we are and who we've been has been socially constructed and then deconstructed and reconstructed and on and on. This is especially known for many marginalized identities. In my eyes, it is the greatest gift of society - endless growth and transformation. When we are in control of our own transformations - as opposed to being subject to currents of oppressive tides - we embody ourselves entirely and unapologetically.

# Destruction of Eden

by Alex G.



My Father was up before the birds had the chance to sing. His spirit was made of brass and blood for the hard days that he pathed. His calloused fingers working diligently each day. I have witnessed what he puts his hands through when he comes home each night, shoulders limp and eyes weary. He constantly worked in a state of a black and blue cold. No one ever thanked him but what did I know of lonely offices? Every weekend he built Eden which would be our permanent nest. His cracked hands aching from the labor of the weeks that would never end, continuing to push the rocks up the hill beside Sisyphus. There came a point where there was no more splintering wood being moved. Our house half-finished and we learned to be comfortable with that. With each passing year came more anger came from the falling walls. My father's anger and frustration projected in the nest, his feathers ruffled and his cawing growing louder and louder. My brother took me under his wing and counted the stars beyond our nest with me. It is sad to say that I have spent more time looking outside the nest than within. I didn't know it then but he was protecting me from the singe of fizzling love. My mother no longer sang her bird songs to us. She screeched and chirped and puffed up her chest. She plucked out her feathers to bare with the stress. My father's job began to trot over his lassitudinous bones and downtrodden soul that extinguished the flame in his belly. A serpent took advantage of the chaos that stirred in the nest and was able to slip into my mother's jaded heart and whisper fallacies in her ears. She convinced my father to take a bite out of the forbidden fruit to relieve his vexation. That was the beginning of the end of Eden.

The yelling and clashing that knocked lamps to the ground sounded like Chopin's symphonies that were directed by children. A train wreck, you will forever hear the sound. That was the sound of people falling out of love.

# Revival

By Greg Parker

A ringing cries  
for me not to be late  
as cars already whoosh  
past my curbside window.  
I don't want to be awake today,  
but the sun's lips have puckered  
and peck my wrinkled,  
tear-stained skin.

The sun  
is what wakes me,  
what loves me.  
The sun bleeds  
orange, for me,  
so the sky looks  
like juice and reminds  
me to eat.

My white hair is pressed tightly,  
greasy, against my scalp,  
My bladder screams for help.  
He reminds me I must wash  
my hair, and always sculpt  
it with high shine gels so he reflects  
off my head.  
I still look like a greaser.

I keep my blinds open  
because this is the sun's home,  
too. I have to sit by  
the window so the one thing,  
my sun,  
that never leaves  
stays to revitalize  
the man I used to be.

Its tears soak  
the sky purple; I'm as worried  
as he that the earth may halt  
its rotation. So we weep,  
together, until tomorrow  
when he'll revive  
my skin with his gleaming  
glow.



# My Hair

By Emily Stewart

I've wanted a pixie cut since middle school. I remember being in seventh or eighth grade, and fearfully asking my mom if I could "cut my hair short". "How short?" she wanted to know. She wasn't thrilled with the answer. But I don't blame her. Looking back, I don't think my thirteen year old self could style short hair in a way that didn't look like a prepubescent boy, so I'm thankful for her decision, but I still wanted a pixie cut.

My hair is a dark brown; it's almost impossible to dye without bleach. In high school, my mom was also against me bleaching my hair. "If you can dye your hair a different color, without bleaching, then go ahead," she'd say. And unless I wanted to dye my hair black, I couldn't really do much with it.

Again, I don't blame my mom for these rules. She wanted to keep my hair healthy and my teenage photos free of cringe and regret. But once I graduated high school, anything was game.

I'm an Arabic major at Ole Miss, and through my program, I started college three months early. Two weeks in, I dyed my hair bright pink.

Pink hair was an endeavor I embarked on with my summer roommate. I'd soon learn that one of the best ways to bond with college friends is in a dorm room, covered in hair dye, recording a dramatic transformation. I loved this hair. It was my first real time away from home; the first time I felt I could truly express myself.

By the time the fall semester started, I had cut my hair into a bob, let the pink fade, and dyed a slightly darker color over it. But it made me feel... bleh. The color my hair had turned into wasn't intentional, and I just didn't know what to do with it because I definitely wasn't able to get it back to my original brown.

This is where the next round of pink comes in. Sitting with my friends in a Waffle House booth feeling bleh, I decided my hair needed to

be pink again. So we made a pit stop at Sally Beauty, and suddenly, my hair was a vibrant pink. Way pinker than before.

The love I associated with pink hair disappeared. It was just so... pink. I felt self conscious everywhere I went, feeling like everyone was staring at me. I got a tattoo a few weeks into this hair, too. The hair, the tattoo, and my interesting sense of style became a little much for me. I had to tone myself down. So I dyed my hair back to brown.

I had forgotten how much I liked my dark hair. But I didn't have it for long. Brown hair dye on top of pink hair dye on top of completely bleached hair fades very quickly, unsurprisingly. Soon, my hair reached an interesting reddish/orange, almost auburn, color, and I knew I had to change it again.

Over Christmas break, I finally got a pixie cut. Since a) I had wanted one for years and b) I was tired of having dyed hair and wanted to press the reset button, I knew it was the right time to make the jump. I'm so happy I did. It's been over two months now, and I still love my hair. I don't have any urges to change it, either (which is big for me). Honestly, it was a well needed change. Adjusting to college was more difficult than I thought it would be, and you could definitely tell by my hair. But now, life has slowed down a bit, I'm used to college life, and I feel like my hair reflects the more mature person that I've become. My friends tell me that this hair makes sense, too. It wasn't an adjustment to see my hair this way; there were no double takes. It was as if my hair was supposed to be this way all along.



**August Foster** (they/them) is a studying social theorist and uses art to comment on social and personal crises. August identities as gender fluid and queer as well as an authority critic born and raised in Mississippi within the context of a poor, working-class family.

**Hooper Schultz** (he/him/his) is a PhD student in History at UNC. Previously, he was a graduate student at the University of Mississippi, where he received his MA and MFA from the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. He helped to begin the Mississippi Queer Oral History Project, and his MFA work explored representations of LGBTQ+ southerners in photography and documentary work. At UNC, he works on the Story of Us, an LGBTQ+ history of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His current dissertation project looks at social movements on college campuses in the South by focusing on gay liberation movement organizing in the 1970s.

