

## **Emanuel Xavier**

### **Born This Way**

I want to breathe Rimbaud's last breath

I want to shower in Bukowski's golden piss

I want to wrap my legs around the sun and fuck it blind

I want to read Walt Whitman to the waves at Coney Island beach

I want to challenge the constraints of Catholics

I want to swim through Madonna's hair  
come out changed and reinvented

I want to run out to the rooftop and roll on broken glass  
lying there bloodied looking skyward

I want to foretell the future from clouds  
reaching out to touch God's naked body

I want to hang out with trannie hookers  
opening their homes and hearts as freely as their legs  
sleeping on floors surrounded by bitten off corners of condom packages

I want my Muse to make love to me  
pounding me hard with his hands at my wrist  
leaving me breathless and inspired to concentrate my faith

I want to hear him say, "I see Lorca in your eyes"

I want to love him like a little child  
trodding unafraid thru the heaven of his soul  
with whispers gone before nightfall

I want to hitchhike through the heart of America  
but the cars keep passing by

## Negative

Because they saved my life, I tell my boyfriend when he asks why I still have a box of condoms in the bottom drawer

next to my bed. There is no real answer. I have never given them much thought as his face becomes suspicious.

That is not the right response, he replies. You are supposed to say you will just get rid of them, searching my eyes

for reassurance. Aware that he has reason to be upset — some were saved from a slot machine in a Buenos Aires

bathroom, some were gifts from foreign men I had met before him — I never realized how much they meant.

I dated a few men who were positive and rubbers were necessary expressions of our love — impressed at any

chance of a relationship for a retired hustler. No matter what I do, everything goes back to that period of my life.

I gave them to my friend the next day.

## The Death of Art

*"Reading well is one of the great pleasures that solitude can afford you."  
— critic Harold Bloom, who first called slam poetry "the death of art."*

I am not a poet. I want to be rich and buy things for my family.  
Besides, I am sort of popular and can honestly say I've had a great sex life.

I am not a poet. Georgia O' Keefe paintings do absolutely nothing for me. I do not feel  
oppressed or depressed and no longer have anything to say about the President.

I am not a poet. I do not like being called an "activist" because it takes away from those  
that are out on the streets protesting and fighting for our rights.

I am not a poet. I eat poultry and fish and suck way too much dick to be considered a  
vegetarian.

I am not a poet. I would most likely give my ass up in prison before trying to save it with  
poetry . . . and I'd like it! Heck, I'd probably be inspired.

I am not a poet. I may value peace but I will not simply use a pen to unleash my anger. I  
would fuck somebody up if I had to.

I am not a poet. I may have been abused and had a difficult life but I don't want pity. I  
believe laughter and love heal.

I am not a poet. I am not dying. I write a lot about AIDS and how it has affected my life  
but, despite the rumors, I am not positive. Believe it or not, weight loss amongst sexually  
active gay men could still be a choice.

I am not a poet. I do not get Kerouac or honestly care much for Bukowski.

I am not a poet. I don't spend my weekends reading and writing. I like to go out and  
party. I like to have a few cocktails but I do not have a drinking problem regardless of  
what borough, city or state I may wake up in.

I am not a poet. I don't need drugs to open up my imagination. I've been a dealer and  
had a really bad habit but that was long before I started writing.

I am not a poet. I can seriously only tolerate about half an hour of spoken word before I  
start tuning out and thinking about my grocery list or what my cats are up to.

I am not a poet. I only do poetry events if I know there will be cute guys there and I  
always carry business cards.

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I am not a poet according to the scholars and academics and Harold Bloom. I only write to masturbate my mind. After all, fucking yourself is one of the great pleasures that solitude can afford you.

I am not a poet. I am only trying to get attention and convince myself that poetry can save lives when my words simply and proudly contribute to “the death of art.”

**Walking with Angels**  
*for Lindsay*

AIDS

knows the condom wrapped penetration  
of strangers and lovers, deep inside  
only a tear away from risk

knows bare minimum t-cell level counts,  
replacing intoxicating cocktails  
with jagged little pills

knows how to avoid a cure thanks to war  
how to keep pharmaceutical corporations  
and doctors in business

AIDS

knows the weight loss desired by supermodels,  
knows the fearless meaning of a friend's genuine kiss or hug  
converts non-believers to religion and spirituality

comprehends loneliness  
values the support of luminaries  
smiles at the solidarity  
of single red ribbons

knows to dim the lights  
to elude detection  
how to shame someone into hiding  
from the rest of the world  
to be grateful for the gift of clothing and shelter,  
to remain silent,  
holding back the anger and frustration

AIDS

knows that time on earth  
is limited for all of us  
that using lemons to make lemonade is better than drinking the Kool-Aid  
but no matter how much you drink  
you are always left dehydrated

knows working extensive hours  
to pay hospital bills,  
the choice of survival  
or taking pleasure in what is left of life

knows the solid white walls  
you want to crash through and tear down  
the thoughts of suicide  
in the back of your head

#### AIDS

knows the prosperous  
could be doing more with their wealth  
and that everyone still thinks it is a deserving fate-  
for gays, drug addicts, prostitutes,  
and the unfortunate children of such  
born into a merciless world  
of posh handbags and designer jewelry

knows how to be used as another percentage  
to profit politicians  
knows it doesn't only affect humans  
but animals too, without bias  
— providing fodder for art  
and something to be left behind

if there is a God  
he has disregarded our prayers  
left his angels behind to journey along with us  
— none of us knowing exactly  
where we are headed

## What I Never Told You about Prostitution

That my mentor was Jay, an HIV positive hustler,  
known for his big, uncut Puerto Rican dick  
featured with a sense of humor in his tight Speedos  
who looked out for me and loved me like a kid brother

That I used to get picked up regularly by a pedophile  
who would drive me around in his car  
sharing stories about how he fucked his daughters  
Never asking me to do anything  
just listen while he parked and jerked off

That I would sometimes sleep underneath these cars  
at the West Side Highway piers when it rained  
using a tee shirt I bought with my first hustler money  
with an image of Dorothy in New York City saying, "Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas  
anymore!"  
as a bundled up pillow to rest my head and dream on

That a married, closeted man with children  
turned to cry and wouldn't let me touch him  
as he stood with his back to me in his underwear  
making me feel disgusting about myself

That a trick once peed in my mouth  
and made me swallow  
before making me lick his boots  
and held me tenderly in his arms all night

That an older man with a huge cock  
(then again, I was sixteen so they were all older)  
fucked me bareback in a tiny booth at a bookstore —  
left me sore and bleeding with hemorrhoids  
unable to get it up the ass and hustle for weeks

That I once picked up a trick  
who thought he was a vampire  
bit my cheeks, tore into the skin until they bled  
and sent me back to the piers — bruised and swollen  
forced to wear bandages with no health insurance  
went back to visit my mother on Mother's Day  
told her I had been jumped and broke her heart

That once, in '88, a stoned black man  
stood staring at me early one morning for hours

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never approaching me with the sorrow in his eyes  
Days later, his picture all over newspaper covers —  
he had been Jean-Michel Basquiat, a famous artist  
who speedballed to death

That sometimes I actually fell for these men  
imagined them being my savior  
with nothing more than a comfortable bed to sleep in,  
a good breakfast in the morning, a grateful smile  
and a few dead Presidents in my pocket

That these were my fucked up formative years  
and these men stood in for my father figures

I propose a toast to every single one of them  
because none of us ever imagined  
that I would be writing about them someday  
full of love, life and laughter