



**SYMPOSIUM**

**Issue 5**



## Symposium (Issue 5)

*“If your writing were to cross-dress, what would it wear?”*

**William Doreski:** “If my writing were to cross-dress it would wear faux fur, steel-toed alligator loafers, and a beanie with a propeller.”

**Christine Brandel:** “My work is female -- possibly because a female wrote it or maybe because the voice tends to be female. I prefer to think it was just born that way and leave it at that. However, I don't think my work would ever try to dress as male, whether in disguise, out of curiosity, or for sexual reasons. However, in some of my work, including 'Lifeline' and 'Martyrdom,' the line is not drawn between genders but between doctor and patient, expert and illness. So to shake things up a bit, my work might cross that boundary, by wearing a white lab coat with a stethoscope around her neck. All the while, she'd be safe, of course, in the knowledge that whatever clothes cover her body, she's the only one able to write the book of her disease.”

**Raymond Gibson:** “Narrative Prose”

**Nicole Rollender:** “All black, lots of leather bombers, black eye liner, over-the-knee boots, silver rings on every finger, and purple feathers on the undersides of her hair.”

**Laura Madeline Wiseman:** “My writing would wear a mermaid suit, a skull mask, a pair of three-fingered gloves, a black shawl, a blue woman's beard, a red satin bra, mummy's wrappings, and a jeweled headpiece. It would also carry a bucket for bottles, a picket sign, a fashion magazine, and an apple to bite.”

**Amy Foster Myer:** “My first impression in terms of “cross-dressing” is to revert this interesting personification back to genre and the ways in which we separate writing into one category or another. I write fiction, thus, to cross-dress would be to garb myself in the saran-wrap transparency of memoir, the many-colored dream coat of poetry, or the happy-horrid rictus mask of drama. And actually, I’d say that my fiction is pretty much always cross-dressing. Though my works are fiction, they wear the bra and panties of autobiography. The piece which appears in this issue is based on some distinct facts about my house: I work from an upstairs home-office, the windows of which look out upon the corrugated plastic roof that connects my back porch to my garage. I have frequent feline visitors from the neighborhood who like to skulk around my roof. An apricot tree spreads its branches over these roofs but never bothers to produce much beside leaves that clutter the gutters. And the first summer that my wife and I lived in our house, we found handfuls of marbles buried in the dirt of our yard, along with half a dozen mangled plastic soldiers still waiting to find a home in another story. I cannot write without these specific details which are threaded so intimately into my own life. And I’ve found that the more my fiction adheres to the truths of my experience, so too are readers better able to enter that fictional world as a reality. I could not write fiction if I weren’t always conscious that under my clothes, the realities and truths of my own life alternate between the silk of a satin slip and the chafe of a hair shirt.”

**Kalisha Buckhanon:** “I often think I am a writer because of, among other things I am sure, my mother’s routine habit of reading our small town’s local newspaper every day after work or on Sundays. She was most often a silent reader. But she occasionally narrated and commented on the stories: usually senseless incidents, unusual events and even criminal activity of relatives and acquaintances printed up in the newspaper’s “Blotter” section. This familiar activity reinforced itself in the choice of entertainment on television: *Cold Case Files*, *Unsolved Mysteries* and other crime-driven docudrama anesthetizing us to human tragedy and evil.

In this stew of habits and narratives and background noise, questions arose only to be answered by the end of the stories: “Who?” “What?” “When?” “Where” “Why?” I could never argue with answers to the first four questions; they were facts, proven and clear. It was the “Why” answers the journalists and newscasters and tv hosts presented which troubled me. They were not good enough, too clinical or legal, too

neatly explained and crafted. As a reader and writer I don't like mysteries and secrets or flowery waits along the way to answering those first four questions. I want to know all that upfront, and then experience the "Why" for myself as one human being trying my hardest to know others.

If my literary and women's fiction were to cross-dress according to my secret fantasy rock star author self, it would wear Columboesque detective and crime novels where we know the answers to "Who?" "What" "When" and "Where" from the moment the first word speaks. And then the "Why" would sashay about in a Burberry London trench coat bought on consignment, a floppy tan fedora and shirt pockets wide enough for a gumshoe's tiny notebook."

**Rhonda Parrish:** "I don't know what my writing would wear if it were to cross-dress, because I'm not sure what gender/species it is to begin with. However, with Halloween just now becoming a memory, I am reminded of costumes, and dressing in those. I can tell you what my writing would dress as for Halloween, if it could. It would be a sweet-looking little girl in a checkered dress on a red tricycle. She'd have shiny patent shoes, blonde ringlets and a big lollipop, the kind with rainbow swirls of color. But she'd never blink, and when she smiled... when she smiled her mouth would open impossibly wide and be filled with row upon row of triangular serrated teeth, like a shark."

**Hannah Harlow:** "I think my writing already does cross dress. So I think if my writing were to cross dress its cross-dressing, it would look very nondescript, like someone you wouldn't notice when you passed on the street. I imagine it would have brown hair, medium length and combed carefully each morning, its clothing a uniform worn by thousands of others, and on its feet, very practical shoes. It would be the guy the aliens would photocopy in order to infiltrate our ranks and take over the world."

**Sarah Ghoshal:** "It would be a study of extremes: Pressed suit with thigh high platform boots, large hoop earrings and my grandmother's pearls, half drag queen, half MBA."

**Kayla Pongrac:** “My writing would look fantastic cross-dressed in a sleek, fitted suit that screamed, “Look at me! I want to make an impression!” This suit would come complete with a pair of fancy shoes—shiny black shoes, to be precise, because my writing wants readers to see their own reflections. To complete the outfit, I’d pin a carnation on my writing’s left lapel as a tribute to Oscar Wilde.

This, my friends, is what my writing would wear if it were to cross-dress. This is how it would want to present itself. Also, this is what my writing would want passersby to stop and say: “Wow. That piece of writing really put some time and effort into her outfit. She paid attention to every detail. And look! Do you see how comfortable she appears?”

To which my writing would politely reply, “Well, if you dig this outfit, you should see what I usually wear.” My writing, you see, recognizes how important it is to keep people endlessly intrigued.”

**Robert Vivian:** “If my writing were to cross dress, I guess it would don a simple yellow summer dress redolent of jasmine or lavender or some other scent evocative of paradise--or probably, to be truer, it would wear nothing at all and in its nakedness be unashamed but also fragile and innocent, a flower.”

**Daniel Romo:** “My writing would wear garters. Fabric fitted to limbs, supporting sheerness. Cupping skin like gentle touch or subtle lust. And when layers are peeled away words are revealed: sexy, sleek, something like virgin sunrise.”

**Marilyn Brownstein:** “If my writing were to cross dress, first choice would be John Waters’ hot pink chenille sports coat, just the right weight for the supermarket in produce of course where it is always cool, proper attire for seeking swagger *à trois* with Allen and his lost and lonely “old courage-teacher,” Walt, eternally asking directions and pinching the fruits for inspiration.”

**David Olimpio:** “Let's see, I'm not sure of my writing's gender, so I'm not sure which way he/she would cross-dress if she/he were to cross-dress. That said, I am absolutely positive he/she would cross-dress at the earliest opportunity. I feel like cowboy boots would be a safe bet, either way. Crocodile skin, I think. And a grapefruit kimono, worn over some salmon underthings. Just that and a cigarette holder.”

*The End*