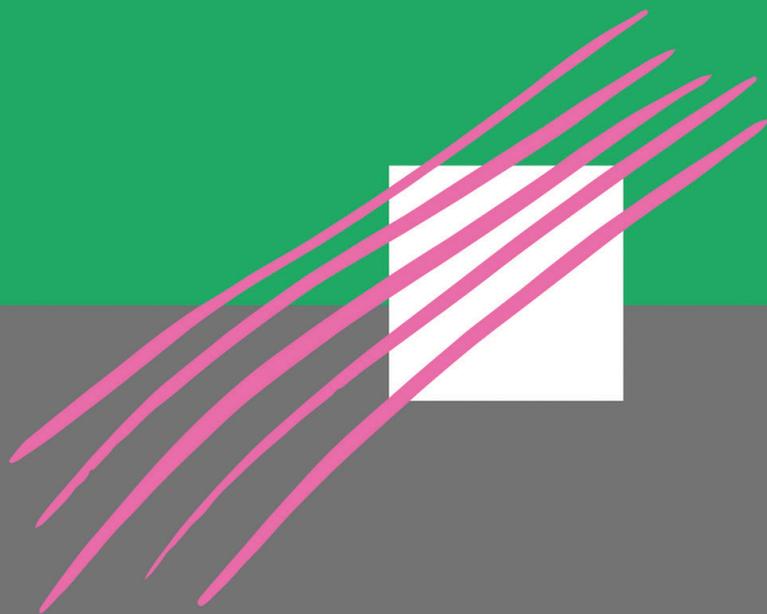


# NEW WRITING NORTH



YOUNG  
WRITERS  
18-25

NEW WRITING  
NORTH

**YOUNG WRITERS**

This zine is a collection of work from the New Writing North Young Writers 18-25 Development Group. This group supports writers to develop their own writing practices and professional careers in the arts.

**Contributors:**

Henry Ashton  
Lauren Aspery  
Yasmine Bridge  
Quinn Clark  
Jessica Leoni Henderson  
Amy Langdown

With thanks to Group Leader,  
Emily Wiseman

Front cover by Lauren Aspery  
Design & layout by Carys Vickers

Bite back, kitty-cat  
Tear apart his snapback  
If he makes a move: you murder mice and frat boys who chit-chat  
I'll forget the broken knick-knacks  
And cut your claws with some slack  
If you tear down pictures of the prick affixed with natty Blue-tac  
You've earned yourself a light snack  
For your atavistic attacks  
That mark a smack and crimson track of blue eyes turned to  
blood-black  
God, that's a lot to unpack  
How's that for unflattering feedback?  
You've stole my heart where he broke mine like a furry  
kleptomaniac  
On healing, know I know jack  
And of trauma tales, I pack stacks  
And yet your tail never fails to mail a serotonin hijack  
Perhaps I'll procure a six-pack  
Of friendly feline pussycats  
That'll caterwaul each time I fall for a cruel and crusty fleabag  
You're the one who'll end the flashbacks  
And existence as a sad-sack;  
Your yells and yowls will wrench me down like we're rolling  
round a cul-de-sac  
And yet I know deep in my soul  
You can never fix these setbacks  
But for now the fourth Vietnamese symbol in the Zodiac  
Is how I'll draw my comfort close  
While hoping to stay comatose  
Alongside the purring predator with tiny, little bean-toes.

# KITTY CORN

*by Quinn Clark*





# THE ETHER

*by Amy Langdown*

This building was, once, luxury at its finest. All who entered knew that they could never belong among such finery, such regality; all who entered felt that feeling of shrinking, like Alice trying to reach the key atop the table on her way to Wonderland.

Somebody had to have owned the building at one time or another, but nobody seemed to be able to recall who that person was. It didn't matter. The engraved arches and the adorning regalia spoke for themselves.

A grand piano stood, pride of place in the centre of what was, some time ago, a drawing room – lid up as to allow the full force of the hand cut keys and the hand carved hammers and pedals to emit melodies that would have flowed through every single room in turn.

I can't help but wonder what was played on those ivories – was it a sturdy and well-balanced Rachmaninov or Mozart? Or was it wild, loosely chorded jazz improv? I daren't guess.

The clues are all gone; they've been ripped out and shredded, torn away and broken. There is no suggestion, not even a whisper, of life left here. All that is left are bits of something that could have been some things, some time ago.

But, as I say, it's hard to imagine this barren hole ever having been home to life or joy or wildness. Even the old regal piano is shattered and collapsed, all the teeth of its mouth plucked and all the tendons of its limbs snapped.

I don't know much of what this place used to be – but I do know that now this place is the ether.

The story of a million.  
A spark,  
A flame,  
A connection,  
*All I did was fall in love.*  
A disservice I know,  
Like when Eve bit the apple.  
A forbidden desire,  
A forbidden love,  
*All I did was fall in love.*

As you pushed further, the shame rose.  
Hidden deep within,  
As I the ugly butterfly morphed further from your  
expectations.  
A thing of beauty, and promise.  
Hints of grace and splendour which you so carefully  
sprinkled as I grew.  
*All I did was fall in love.*

Pressure. Perfection. Suppress.  
Pressure. Perfection. Suppress.  
PRESSURE. PERFECTION. SUPPRESS.  
Keep it buried, keep it concealed.  
A secret untold – never to be shared or halved.

Your hurt reflected and contained within me.  
I never meant to hurt you.  
But I see you,  
Waiting.  
Waiting for the burning embers to fade,  
For the flame to be unsparked,  
For the connection to disconnect,  
And your perfect creation to return to you.  
Damaged wings ready to be healed.

# ALL I DID WAS FALL IN LOVE

by Jessica Leoni  
Henderson

I'm sorry.  
My disappointing you,  
My truth,  
And the confusion that it has caused,  
The disruption,  
That wasn't meant to happen.  
*All I did was fall in love.*

But, if it soothes your suffering,  
Please know that I am paying.  
I'm in debt to your expectations,  
And myself,  
For daring to dream that this ballerina could stray, from the  
designated path of which she must stay.  
*All I did was fall in love,*  
And now I'm engulfed,  
In an unrelenting fog of self hatred,  
Of longing for belonging.  
To be me.  
To be free.  
An acceptance that my only sin is that of hiding my light,  
For fear of being dimmed,  
Or switched off.

But alas,  
The tree and it's wisdom holds the secrets you wouldn't  
allow me to share.  
For I am me,  
You are you,  
They are them,  
Ant the tree stands encompassing them all,  
Stories of a million standing wide and tall.  
The only shadow to be cast,  
Is the one on the ground,  
Allowing me to be *free* – when no one else is around.



# A LATTE- NIGHT PLAYROOM SOIRÉE

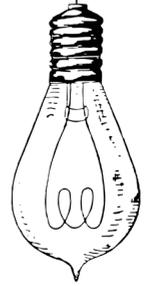
by Lauren Aspery

Sitting  
cross-legged  
on the blue carpet  
under the glow  
of the bare yellow bulb.  
Sipping water  
from a tiny wine glass,  
plastic,  
also yellow.  
Small enough  
for the fist  
of a seven-year-old girl.

Intoxicated  
between notes of melamine  
and the glare  
of the lime green walls.  
Drunk in my make-believe kitchen,  
drinking from my make-believe cup,  
wine straight from the bathroom tap.

I turn to the radio and press play.  
“MY TITANIC CD!” starts to spin  
and from inside the metallic soundbox  
*My Heart Will Go On* emerges.

I lie on the floor,  
kicking the pink office chair  
from underneath  
so it turns  
*Near*  
and turns  
*Far*  
and turns  
*Wherever you are*  
to the sound of Celine Dion.



She hovers over the keys  
with anxious anticipation,  
Scans the ivories with her eyes and  
Inhales the possibilities –

Dare She?

Right foot loiters above the pedals and  
sways above one and then  
Another.  
But which to trust?

She knows that the music  
could be sublime if she only

Dared

To let the fingers fall and  
flutter, making melodies  
And letting hammers nudge  
the unhit strings, but –

Dare She?

She played the piano once before –  
A duet, outstanding.  
But a hand strayed,  
skimmed the wrong notes and  
the stave came crumbling down over  
her poised knuckles.

She had dared.

She wished she had not.  
But, once more, with arched wrists now  
Composed,  
she sits and contemplates  
the sharps and the flats. And –

She dares.

# THE PIANIST

*by Amy Langdown*



Reflections –  
Broken fragments,  
Clambered together to form a mosaic hollow shell.  
Reflected is light,  
A warm breeze,  
The soft smile of naivety.  
All feels safe,  
Secure.  
Yet tragically,  
Reflections aren't formed in the mirror,  
Or a puddle.  
They're put out to the world,  
On a shiny silver display platter.  
Bent and twisted,  
Woven in,  
Until,  
All eyes are on you,  
And,  
Cold, stark reality hits in.  
And you realise,  
That your sense of reality has no foundational basis.  
You're a collection of false truths,  
And flaws.

**by Jessica Leoni  
Henderson**

# REFLECTIONS

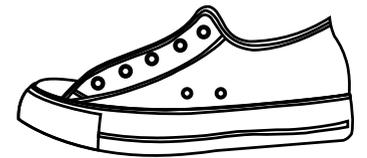
Your own reality is distorted.  
Unsure of itself,  
Out of place,  
Like a crooked china cup in a pristine tea set,  
Held together with a delicate glue and withering handle.  
A double sided glass,  
Presenting to the world,  
Keeping protection over what lies beneath,  
Knowing that if destabilised or confronted,  
The cracked mosaic casing would collapse.  
Glitter blue,  
Glitter black,  
Glitter over what you lack.  
Keep it *sparkly*,  
Keep it *nice*,  
Be everything you think they'll like.  
And they will never see under,  
Under the battered armour,  
Concealing your hauntings  
Which tear your soul,  
Till all that is left of your weakened spark  
Is the gentle pop and crackle of a lone firework,  
Dissolving into the black of the horizon.



# MY FIRST PAIR

*by Lauren Aspery*

My first pair were patent red  
with pink laces and fluffy lining –  
the only thing to remind everyone  
that I was a girl and not a boy.  
I'd wear them proudly in my pushchair,  
not ready to christen the ground just yet,  
and kick them off with every tantrum.  
Now they sit in a box in the loft  
gathering dust among finger paintings,  
school photos and glittery pasta,  
ten sizes too small.



Keep the home fires burning,  
Your heart, it lies in there.  
But when the flames engulf you –  
Be careful, though you care.

Don't let blood guilt ensnare you,  
Don't let your life be ruled  
By those whose blood runs in you –  
Don't let yourself be fooled.

The memories are in the walls,  
The floors, the air you breathe.  
Home and drenched, you'll find a way –  
Hide heart beneath your sleeve.

The home truths are on show now,  
And all the bones lay bare.  
Make sure you make your own home –  
And lay your heart, then, there.



# STEAL YOUR OWN HEART

*by Amy Langdown*



# PLAYING OUT

*by Lauren Aspery*

With the neighbours' kids after school,  
beck-jumping between back fields  
buried behind housing estates.  
Waiting for the farmer to fire  
his make-believe gun, or  
release the imaginary staffy  
that rumours had forged into life.  
The imaginary staffy who, they say,  
chases trespassing children.

Or sitting in the Spider Tree,  
listening to the latest number one  
on someone's second-hand Sony Ericsson  
passed down from Mam or Dad or Big Brother.  
Taking turns swinging on the blue rope tarzee –  
the leftovers of the boy who suddenly moved away  
around the time, they say, his parents stopped sharing a bed.

Building a den, furnished with a deflated  
space hopper that reeked of piss,  
empty bottles of pop, soggy gingernuts stashed in bushes,  
claimed by initials carved into the nearest trunk  
and empty promises to be home before it gets dark.

**ME**



**GRANDDAD**

**HAD AN**

**ALLOTMENT**

*by Amy Langdown*

I don't have the same connection to the ground that me  
grandad had –  
I live in a mining town,  
In a place named after the pit  
Whose seams run beneath our home –

But me grandad had an allotment:  
Spent years beneath the ground,  
Taking from it.  
He felt a connection to the earth I'll never understand –  
It kept him safe.

And so he decided,  
In his retirement years,  
He would put back into it.

He knew it was a slow process –  
One none of us will be around to see the end of –  
But he knew eventually the marrows and the  
Lettuce  
And the peas and the  
Plums he planted will  
Seep below the surface and  
Create more  
Coal for man to  
Take.

He relied on the ground  
And then later the ground relied on him.

# THE DANCING CLOWN

*by Henry Ashton*



You're living on a cocktail of alcohol and nicotine,  
You're drowning in supreme and,  
Other drugs.

You're flying high,  
You touch the sky,  
Till all your friends they fall and fade,  
In the grimness of the dark new day.

You fall and stumble to the halls,  
You fuck your lovers in the shopping malls.  
You sneer and judge,  
You fall in love,  
Your name is dragged through rotten mud.

You sing the songs you've known before,  
You lay on the cold and dirty floor  
And all the girls, they haunt you now  
And knock gently on your bolted door.

You let them in,  
They can see now,  
You're nothing but a dancing clown,  
All smoke and mirrors,  
Lies and ice,  
You drown in dust, your paradise.

Truth – Medicine keeps us alive. Humanities give us life.

STEMmed from its stigma,  
fast-tracked priority,  
respect the high and mighty degree.

Why work on life, if life not be left,  
selective memory, of those far removed,  
for what we turn to, they shun too.

Unavoidable if senses remain,  
the Ballerina consumes our every walk.  
But cyber calls, and expression falls  
the boss man indulges covert.

Making excuses, reasons for choices,  
justifying a study (our).  
The graph of the grapple, used,  
lacked recognition.  
As they turn, turn, continue to turn, whilst,  
to them, on their paper,  
our existence doth burn.



# WRITING TRUTH

*by Yasmine Bridge*





New Writing North supports the development of writing in the North of England. We introduce young people to creative writing through our Young Writers Groups and our long-term programmes in school. For details on this and our other programmes for young writers, please visit our website: [www.nwnyoungwriters.com](http://www.nwnyoungwriters.com)

Our 18-25 Development Group supports writers to develop their own writing practices and professional careers in the arts. If you or someone you know is interested in joining as a Young Writer, please contact us at: [youngwriters@newwritingnorth.com](mailto:youngwriters@newwritingnorth.com)

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