

THE WHITNEY REVIEW of New Writing ISSUE 007 SPRING/SUMMER 2026

FEATURE INTERVIEWS 1 LISA CARVER by ESRA PADGETT 4 CHRISTINA CATHERINE MARTINEZ by ARIANA REINES 6 DARIUS JAMES by TAYLOR LEWANDOWSKI SPECIAL ESSAYS 9 HOLY HOLE by SAVANNAH KNOOP 10 CARE AT THE END by MANUEL ARTURO ABREU 13 DOROTHY IS MISSING by CRISTINE BRACHE 17 POETRY by PRECIOUS OKOYOMON 18 REVIEWS 42 RANT by LARS BYRRESEN PETERSEN 42 MISS PIGGY FAN SPECIAL with BONNIE ERICKSON and SOPHIE BECKER

FOUNDING EDITOR: WHITNEY MALLET FOUNDING EDITOR: IMMANUEL YANG ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER: MICHAEL BULLOCK EXECUTIVE EDITOR: MEKALA RAJAGOPAL SENIOR EDITOR: MORGAN BECKER ASSOCIATE EDITOR: FABIANA LACAU EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS: NIAMH HENCHY, FERN PALTROW, JACOB YOUNG

EDITOR'S NOTE THIS ISSUE IS ABOUT FREEDOM, MAGIC, IMAGE, AND INTERFERENCE. — Whitney Mallett

PUBLISHED BY THE WHITNEY REVIEW LLC, 2026

LISA CARVER in conversation with ESRA PADGETT

LISA CARVER writes raw and curious. For three and a half decades, she's shared wholehearted confessions and revelations, a public diary practice recording a life centered on performing. A fixture of the 90s underground, CARVER is infamous for her band Suckdog and her *Rollerderby* zine. Out on her own since 16 and gigging around Europe in the post-punk scene, she returned to her New Hampshire hometown in 1990 and waitressed at a Friendly's to launch what would become an era-defining publication. Over the next decade her trash princess serial won over 5,000 subscribers and featured contemporaries like GG Allin, Vaginal Davis, and Courtney Love. Writing as "Lisa Suckdog," CARVER leveraged Xerox-shop publishing to boost the operatic shock-jock chaos act she fronted with Jean-Louis Costes (the first of her four husbands). CARVER's 15 books include multiple memoirs, *Drugs Are Nice* (Soft Skull, 2005) being the most definitive, but also a reconsideration of Yoko Ono, a collection of interviews with the 25 most unusual people she could find, and mostly recently, a book of essays, *Lover of Leaving* (Pig Roast, 2025). ESRA PADGETT is also a musician and writer. She performs (with Mark Iosifescu) as the duo Angels in America and solo as Chicklette. She studies the sex industry with a book on the male porn star to be published by Astra House in 2027.

ESRA PADGETT Do you want to start by introducing yourself?

LISA CARVER I'm Lisa Carver.

EP What's your, like, self-description if you had to give one?

LC No one's ever asked me how I would describe myself. I really... wouldn't? I don't think any writer would describe herself, because they're so concerned with what they're describing.

EP [Laughs] I am someone who writes about other people, I have that feeling where I'm like, "It's not about me."

LC I write about myself constantly, and I have for 40 years, but it's never about me. When I write about me, I'm writing about what I would be in that moment with that person, on that day, in that place—if I were a person, you know? It's like I'm spying on the humans through myself. I know I'm a person. But my relationship with the world is one where I am kind of floating.

EP I love that about your writing. We actually met once.

LC I thought you looked familiar!

EP I went to your show in Oakland years ago.

I bought this and you signed it. It says: "To Esra, you're really beautiful. I always say that, but this time, it's really true."

[Laughs] Don't let the other people hear that!

EP That voice that you've developed over so many years, it's very girl-coded. Rereading all this stuff, like the writings in *Rollerderby*—it feels so contemporary and current. Now the internet is filled with girls who auto-describe in a way that's similar. I don't know if that's in your awareness at all. And not to say that they're ripping you off. But I imagine, when you started, that your voice was very singular.

LC Yeah, I didn't know anybody writing, or *being*, like me. I write to women. I write to girls. I don't write to men. If they want to read it, it's okay, but I don't care about them. I mean, I fall in love

with them. But I don't care if they read what I write. I don't care if they like it, I don't care if they relate to it. Because they have the money, women think that we have to write to them. But I don't need money. Anyway, the less you care about them, the more money they give you. [Laughs] When I look at TikTok, I see so many women who even say, "This is to the girlsies." I just love it. It's probably part of why I left my husband, because all these other women were like, "You don't need that garbage."

EP I work in the porn industry and the sex industry, and I recently did this interview with this big OnlyFans star named Ari Kyttsya. Her brand and her voice is kind of like, "I'm super hot, but I'm also gross and disgusting. I'm funny and I'm sexy." That, to me, is so much in your writing. In one of your books, there's something you wrote about growing up: "We hid in our closets to do disgusting things like masturbate with a pine cone or chew the boobs off Barbie."

LC [Laughs] Now we're out of the closet!

EP Your writings embodied that persona in the 90s, and these girls on TikTok that are doing the same thing now, talking about the way their pussy smells or whatever.

LC There's just a joy in discovering that you can be a funny little monkey. And the patriarchy still tells you you can't, but it rewards you for being yourself. It's such a pleasure to realize you're good enough. You don't have to aspire.

EP I feel like a big theme in your work is girl muses. Are your friendships with other women, like, muse relationships?

LC No, we just encourage each other. We don't inspire each other. I think men use women as muses, but women, we collaborate. With muses, the man takes over the woman. With girlfriends, we tell each other our crazy ideas and then we say, "Yes,

MATTHEW GASDA
**WRITER'S
DIARY**

Rose Books, 2025
200 pages

In *Writer's Diary*, playwright Matthew Gasda argues that our world (the boundaries of which are varying planet Earth, the United States, and downtown New York) has become sleepy, automated, de-eroticized, deromanticized, nullified, normalized, and bourgeoisified. Words

book in the same way that Gasda advises approaching Nietzsche: "The right dosage is important... Too little, and you don't get it. Too much, and you start to take it too seriously."
—GEORGIE MCKEON

with enough affixes to make George Orwell spin in his grave. In this collection of Gasda's philosophical ponderings, culled from his public diary on Substack, he proclaims that life should be as close to a work of art as possible, and that we should embrace pain and discomfort as signs of being alive. *Easy for you to say*, I think.

I don't go in for male geniuses and will not, without flinching, receive aphorisms from someone born in 1989. By the second sentence ("I have to bury myself in books again, like that foolish knight, Don Quixote") I was ready to hurl my copy, its cover the color of a white rose petal and its air just as incorruptible, onto the subway tracks.

Gasda's ideals are lofty, and challenging. This can feel simultaneously hostile and inspiring. His desire for purity and romanticism often leads to statements that are, at best, out of touch and, at worst, unempathetic. Yet, his belief in taking risks for art and his strong stance on the antisocial impact of tech really galvanized me. That he arrived at these convictions through diary-keeping (albeit publicly) persuaded me that he is in earnest. While this book is a tightly controlled, highly curated "lie" (in the way that all writing about oneself is self-invention), it is the diary of a writer, full of contradiction and doubt. Its attempts at profundity, followed by uncertainty, are honest, and endearing.

By the end of its 200 pages, I felt like a reluctant convert finally falling under the spell of a charismatic preacher. I had gone from scrawling "APHORISMS WITHOUT AUTHORITY" in the margins to drawing little hearts next to sentences like, "Thinking, poetry, and beauty should all be products of one another."