

*"A great story is as truthful as one can bear... and then a little more."*

~modified from James Baldwin

These words resonate with me in regard to my passion for delving into the rich history of the lives of others—real and imagined—and the complex context woven by time and space, across a diverse range of cultures spanning the globe.

Currently the Content Marketing Specialist for Taliesin Preservation (a UNESCO World Heritage site and the home, studio, school, and 800-acre estate of Frank Lloyd Wright), I am also 2019 guest faculty at The Highlights Foundation and Hugo House, plus a 2018 *We Need Diverse Books* mentorship finalist.

I believe each individual helps to create a small piece of the society we live in. And my passion for sustainable agriculture is what launched my freelance writing career seven years ago. I recently transitioned out of my role as the digital editor of *BRAVA*, a Wisconsin-based magazine created by women for women and subsidiary of Nei-Turner Media Group. In particular, I adored overseeing the culinary, arts, fashion and beauty coverage in those past roles and I have also previously contributed print, photography and video content for other media outlets around the country such as *BLK+GRN*, *Madison Magazine*, *Big Life*, *Spectrum* and *Hobby Farms Magazine*—all while maintaining side gigs as a fitness pro, a 2016-2017 national cycling WomenRide4Change Ambassador and 2017 World Food Championships Top Ten Finalist judge.

I also was one of four expert panelists for local organization Social Media Breakfast's LIVE Social Media Audit in June 2017 and a solo presenter on how to build a personal brand online during the October 2018 event. In addition, I developed a freelance writing workshop series at Arts and Literature Laboratory (a Madison nonprofit arts incubator), which has also now been offered through the Madison Public Library system for almost two years. And thanks in part to the popularity and success of my writing series, I was asked to be a mentor for the 2018 Madison Public Library Takeover Program—helping to support a novice programming team develop and launch a community event at one of the public library branches. Plus I was 1 of 50 poets this Spring to have a poem selected and transformed into a public artwork by Edgewood College Graphic Arts for display along a Madison Metro Transit Route via Madison Metro Bus Line Poetry Project .

The Madison Arts Commission (via Arts & Literature) also funded a one-day digital branding training facilitated by me for "creativepreneurs" in May 2019. I'm also excited to have become a volunteer program assistant this summer for *We Need Diverse Books* (<https://diversebooks.org/about-wndb/>) and am very much looking forward to teaching a "Marketing for Writers" online course for Hugo House ([hugohouse.org/](http://hugohouse.org/)) in October.

In addition, I consider one of my greatest successes as a writer thus far to be the fact I've become a respected digital marketing strategist for writers and other creatives. In fact thus far in 2019, I've taught at 3 different writers conferences and/or retreats (The Highlights Foundation; University of Wisconsin Madison's Writers Institute; "Write to Publish" at Ooligan

Press/Portland State University) —and will be teaching at *Wordsmith* (hosted by The Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis) this November. So even though I do not have a full collection of my poetry published yet, it's affirming to still be recognized as a social media and online promotion expert by novice writers, established authors and other publishing professionals.

I'm excited to submit this application for consideration to become Madison's next Poet Laureate. Thank you for continuing to create opportunities which reflect diverse narratives and inclusion in our city!



~Rachel Werner  
Rachel.werner@ymail.com

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### AUTHOR PLATFORM

- **March 2019-Present:** Content Marketing Specialist for Taliesin Preservation (UNESCO World Heritage Site)
- **January 2019-Present:** Guest Faculty, The Highlights Foundation & Hugo House
  - Digital Branding for Writers: <https://www.highlightsfoundation.org/12051/guest-post-rachel-werner-digital-branding/>
  - Marketing for Writers: <https://hugohouse.org/three-steps-for-selling-your-next-book-by-rachel-werner/>
- **2017-Present:** Creator and instructor for an “Intro to Freelance Writing” workshop at Arts and Literature Laboratory (a nonprofit arts incubator located in Madison, WI) and the Madison Public Library system. The Madison Arts Commission also funded a one-day digital branding training facilitated by me for arts-based entrepreneurs in May 2019.
- **Present:** Monthly guest blogger for **BLK+GRN**, an all-natural marketplace by all Black artisans that connects women with natural lifestyles to quality Black-owned toxic-free products with 61k+ followers on Instagram
- **2019:** *Madison Metro Bus Line Poetry Project*

1 of 50 poets to have work selected and transformed into a public artwork by Edgewood College Graphic Arts for display along a Madison Metro Transit Route

- **November 2019:** Workshop presenter at The Loft Literary Center's Wordsmith Conference in Minneapolis on digital marketing and social media strategy for writers.
- **April 2019:** Presented workshops on social media marketing for writers at the *UW Writers' Institute* and during "*Write to Publish*," a one-day conference hosted by Ooligan Press at Portland State University.

- **2018: Artist In Residency Scholarship**

Awarded from The Highlights Foundation

- **2017: We Need Diverse Books Mentorship**

Submitted manuscript a finalist for the We Need Diverse Books™ Mentorship Program.

- **2017: World Food Championship Top 10 Round Judge**

Spotlighted as one of 20 best food writers and bloggers in the country, thus selected as a member of its 2017 Media Summit and final Top 10 Round

- **2016: Women Ride4Change Ambassador**

One of 12 American and Canadian women chosen by Girl Bike Love and GT Bicycles to represent both countries in a North American initiative to publicly strive to encourage more women and girls to engage more in cycling for recreation, competitive sport and transportation.

## **COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP & VOLUNTEER ROLES**

2018-present Board of Directors, **Madison Reading Project & Children's Theater of Madison**

- Serve on Fundraising Committee
- Advise on event promotion strategy
- Help increase mission awareness online and as an active community liaison

2018-present Advisory Council, **Capital City Theater**

2017-present Food Access Community Member, **FairshareCSA Coalition**

- Help maintain and guide the scope of the PartnerShares Program, thereby assisting low-income families receive annual supplemental assistance to acquire traditional CSA and market-CSA shares at a significantly-reduced cost.





**The Fallacy of Grace**

Bled from past,  
Perched upon future.  
Present's paradox,  
Merely a life,  
—reimagined—  
Within these walls.

Words foraged.  
Then...  
    Stolen.  
        Silenced.  
            Severed.

A body savaged,  
By inner voices,  
Much too strong.

Soul abides faith.  
And men torture.  
Yet—for woman,  
Agony is breath.

A house filled.  
    A womb barren.  
Madness enters—  
Graciously ushered in.

An awaited lover,  
Past the appointed hour.  
High on unrepented sin.

I too...  
    Failed.  
        Faltered.  
            Fell.  
Into oblivion.

Chained by acceptance,  
Awaiting judgement,  
Before Conformity's altar.

Abandoned.  
Condemned.

Extinguished.

Impaled upon a stake,  
In Lust's stained field.  
Filled with splinters  
—named after us all.

## **FORSAKEN**

Paradise.  
Not gained,  
like hope,  
Is never lost.

Only cast aside—  
To bear the bruises  
of sanity.

My body ravaged  
Beneath you.  
Longing for escape,  
Yet fearing abandon.

In mercy.

And in torment.

Prisoner turned master.

Souls relinquished.  
After one furtive kiss,  
strangled by lies,  
we crafted.

\_\_\_\_\_ **LIVES MATTER**

Why I had to be a color?  
(Merely seen as *not* being you.)

Why couldn't you just hear—  
the brown person,  
the girl,  
—or the queer?  
(And stop pressing mute.)

The questions no one answers.  
With our lives on the line.

**JESUS' LAMENT**

Those were my people—  
The lost,  
the hungry,  
the abandoned.

Fixtures on the streets,  
Like gravel under feet.

The invisible.  
the infamous.  
the *minority*  
—and my lifeline.

Bodies on the curb,  
beneath damp cardboard.

A child's furtive glance.  
an outstretched hand.  
Daily greetings ignored  
—on the subway platform.

Taught to respect existence.  
Yet hardened for resistance.

Bended knees bartered,

For God's broken ear.  
'Though it seems y'all forgotten  
—I was ever here.

### **Celeb's Curse**

I am anorexic and I am going to die...  
But whose really to blame?  
You—or I?

Beauty comes at a price,  
Chimes the looking glass  
Discarded that first July.  
Scales seemingly balanced  
Upon my life.

I am anorexic and I am going to die.

Pennies for pounds—  
a pact sealed in blood.  
A game of chance,  
stacked against me,  
before it's even begun.

Reveals the mockingbird,  
turned serpent  
Beneath my feet.  
As I carefully avoided  
The apple I no longer  
Intended to eat.

Thin is revered,  
And pretty pays the bills.  
Success is a noose,  
drawing closer ever still.

Seduced by fame,  
Sins masked as "likes,"  
Fearful of what lies,  
beyond another bite.

I am anorexic and I am going to die.

How soon I've forgotten  
An offense shall bear

its own punishment.

Chronic, terminal...

Where do I fit in?

Here I stand...

    Bruised.

        Battered.

            Broken.

Bones jutting out,  
sharp as pins.

Tell me, tell me—  
Is this really the end?

I am anorexic and I am going to die.

No longer am I,  
The fairest of them all.  
Merely a wasted body  
Awaiting death's call.  
The clock striking midnight,  
Signaling my final fall  
Before the martyr stripped bare  
In the mirror on the wall.

Heroine—*and* villain,  
Of this tragic tale.  
Trapped forever in Wonderland.  
A private whimsical hell.  
Yes, the hour has come  
Invisible demons devouring  
This star's fading light...

I am anorexic and I am going to die.

## **RELATIVE DIRECTION**

### **Left.**

    Time empties.  
And returns.

Drained of meaning.

**Forward.**

Fate arrives.  
And fades.

Choked beneath curiosity.

**Me.**

Ardency weakens.  
And transfigures.

Vanquished from memory.

**You.**

Duty beckons.  
And imprisons.

Exiled to falsity.

**Backward.**

Hope recedes.  
And hardens.  
Deadened with depravity.

**Right.**

Truth lingers.  
And multiplies.

Distorted by history.

**Round Robin**

Reading made me owner,  
of a corner, of this book.

I would blame the writer.  
But I never can find him.  
So the artist is next to see.

Her drawings are riddles.  
Within she is hidden,  
Shaping COLOR into dreams.

Pictures floating back  
—on words—to me.

### **Queen Bees**

Black and brown.

Glow outside the rainbow,  
shining their light.

These deep roots

are my truth—

Protection from lies.

I KNOW my skin is beautiful.

And your praise false,

fallen on deaf ears.

My skin may be darker.

I have one parent—not two.

Yet you are blinded,

choosing not to see,

The glory surrounding me.

I am royalty.

Born of a queen bee.

Magnificent...

....radiant

...shimmering.

She and I.

Our words drip like honey.

Our smiles cause a stir.

Our hive —MY WORLD—is full...

Of blossoms,

beauty,

buzz.

Through her fingers,

life blooms.

The same magic I carry in me.

And release, wherever I roam.

We fly—

spreading color,

breathing hope,

pouring bliss...

Onto friends—and foes.

So keep your pity,

I'll cling to joy.

Bred to rise from ashes,

I soar toward the skies.

September 30, 2019

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to recommend Rachel Werner to be Madison's next poet laureate.

Rachel is an enthusiastic supporter of literature, art and community.

As a board member and volunteer at the Madison Ballet, Free Bikes 4 Kidz, Capitol City Theatre, Madison Reading Project, and Literacy Network, Rachel has proven herself a powerful ambassador of the arts and community partnerships to improve lives.

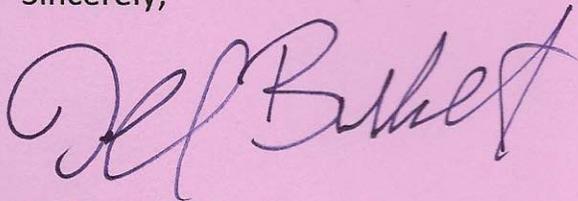
Rachel is a talented writer and committed community activist. She would be an ideal mentor for an Emerging Poet Laureate.

Rachel is a wonderful creative thinker, generating great ideas for involving people in the arts, and encouraging them to be involved in our community. She will be a great advocate in the media for the Bus Lines project and is certain to do an excellent job of promoting various initiatives.

Additionally, Rachel is one of the most positive and energetic people I know. She has infectious positivity and is always happy to connect with people.

I'd be more than happy to discuss Rachel and her qualifications for this position.

Sincerely,



Jeff Burkhart



Attn: Madison Arts Commission  
Re: Madison Poet Laureate Nomination

To Whom It May Concern,

I am pleased to recommend Rachel Werner for Madison Poet Laureate. Rachel is one of the most involved community members I have ever met, and one of the most creative. Rachel is committed to fostering the arts in Madison, and has supported organizations including The Literary Network, Madison Reading Project, and Children's Theater of Madison by donating time and expertise to their efforts.

Rachel is also a mentor for other writers in the Madison community where she hosts workshops and creates panels in partnership with The Bubbler, the Madison Public Library System, and the Wisconsin Writer's Institute, among others. She is always willing to create and collaborate on programs that encourage writing and foster creative and relevant discussions about the writing communities in Madison.

In addition to all of the support and teaching she provides the community, she also creates art herself and has performed in The Moth, and other storytelling projects in the community as well as writing for numerous local publications.

Rachel would excel as Poet Laureate not only because of her endless energy and passion for all things writing, but also because of her dynamic personality as a speaker and teacher. She will inspire!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MM', with a stylized, cursive script.

Mary Morgan  
Director, Reading Group Choices  
[www.ReadingGroupChoices.com](http://www.ReadingGroupChoices.com)