

FM REVIEW 2018 33 COMMENTS

COMMENTS TO EDITOR: There was some disagreement among reviewers about this poem. All of them had varying degrees of difficulty in understanding what it was about (experiencing sexual assault as a child). To me, it was pretty clear. I think with some light editing it should make an excellent addition to the journal.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR: This is a troubling and brave poem about experiencing sexual assault as a child. As an editor, I especially appreciate the way it references and builds on Amanda Kost's essay "Ill Go First." We have a few fairly minor recommendations which could strengthen the work.

All three reviewers had varying degrees of difficulty in figuring out what the poem was about. In my mind, its ambiguity is part of its strength, and reminds me of the terrible difficulty most women still have in giving voice to such stories. Nevertheless, per reviewer 2's suggestion, is there some sort of hint you could integrate early on?

Reviewer 3 felt the hope you expressed in the concluding stanzas was too abstract, but I found the image of liberation you create to be uplifting. However, this part of the poem could probably be tightened a bit.

Overall, I liked the way you worked within the circus metaphor. I was a little confused that the master of ceremonies was also the clown. Might it be better to stick with one of these roles in describing the abuser, or at least integrating the imagery?

We need to share these stories, tell them and hear them. Thank you for being willing to raise your voice.

COMMENTS TO EDITOR II: With a few deft word changes, this accomplished physician-poet has made this poem about her sexual assault as a child clearer and more accessible without compromising the confusion and ambiguity that lie at the heart of this experience. Although not all recommended changes were made, it is evident the author thought long and deeply about the work. I also had a follow-up phone conversation with her to discuss the writing from a craft perspective. My read is that the author has done what she can and is willing to do with the poem. It is up to us to accept or reject, and I favor acceptance.

COMMENTS TO AUTHOR II: Thank you for these small, but deft changes, which made this poem about the sexual assault of a child clearer and more accessible without compromising the confusion and ambiguity that lie at the heart of this experience. Although not all recommended changes were made, it is evident that you thought long and deeply about the work. The word "trickster" adds a hint for those readers still uncertain, and the final image remains uplifting and hopeful. Thank you for the courage you've shown in sharing this event in a way that brings us all closer to understanding the uncertainty and even opacity that can accompany assault as well as the value of speaking out against such despicable acts.