



Dear Readers,

Like many writers, I am an introvert, at ease on the outskirts of social situations—in fact, more at ease alone in my room *imagining* social situations. I started writing poetry to translate my own interior life but also to figure out and frame the world that discomfited me. That’s why I started, but it’s not why I *kept* at it, and it’s not because of the money or an adoring public or prizes of renown (wink wink)—but because of the community that writing gives me access to, the mentorships, the friendships, the love.

SWING was born out of my appreciation of the power and necessity of community. I had worked for nearly twelve years at the *Sewanee Review* with George Core, the last of a breed who patterned themselves after editors from the golden age of American literary magazines: John Crowe Ransom at the *Kenyon Review*; Allen Tate, also at the *Sewanee Review*; even George Plimpton at the *Paris Review*. These iconoclastic editors of the mid- to late twentieth century saw themselves as gatekeepers of taste, and literary magazines were—as Monroe Spears, a former *SR* editor called them—the “hothouses of civilization,” where the rare orchids of great fiction, criticism, and poetry could survive. Mr. Core was an incredible editor, giving me everything I needed to create SWING, and I wish he were still here to argue this next point with (or against) me. I contend that this insular approach to publishing, especially in magazines by writers early in their careers, is founded on two fallacies:

1) the hierarchy of low and high art, and 2) a refusal to acknowledge that the readership of a healthy magazine should be an active mixture of readers and writers who primarily want to be in conversation with the art, rather than improved by it.

First fallacy, real quick: It’s like I say to my kids, “I don’t love your dad more than you, just in a different way.” There’s room for all kinds writing: the erudite, silly, bawdy, atmospheric, demagogue-ish; it’s up to the writer to find the right pathway to their audience.

The second fallacy will be more of a long and winding road. I am thrilled with the fantastic poetry, fiction, essays, and comics in this spring/summer issue. As many times as I’ve read these pieces, they still command my full attention and repay that attention with a jolt of surprise and recognition.



I dearly hope they do the same for you, but I do not believe you need to be edified by the contents therein.

Rather than conclaves, magazines like SWING are conduits to a sense of shared identity. The readers, writers, and audiences of SWING want to be part of something larger. Glance at the table of contents and you'll see these titles: "Are You Like Me?" (essay); "Where Are You From?" (fiction); and "Where Have You Been" (poetry). Flip through these pages and experience the comic "Accents," about how where we choose to live changes who we are; and another comic, "Empty Hands," that, together with several poems here, asks honestly, What good is art? There are fathers all over this issue and just about as many sons; girls and women at the crossroads; and, as usual—it is the South after all—a spread like you wouldn't believe: papaya, gnocchi, pierogis, halushki, hot fried fish, mezcals, tater tots, rum and Coke, ras malai, and hand-churned ice cream.

Counteracting the narratives that an open discussion of identity will fracture and weaken our towns, schools, and nation, the community of SWING and its publisher The Porch want to celebrate how others see the world. We'd much rather spend time with you in a community garden than in a hot-house. Welcome to our fourth issue—by the people, of the people, and for the people.

Yours,  
Leigh Anne Couch