

# *Impostor, Impostor*

a short collection of poetry



**ELISABETH M. CLAYTOR**

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## *On Life and Choice*

### *Part 1*

I did not choose birth -  
to be thrown into this world  
with no power over my guardians,  
my genetic donors,  
my nurturers.  
I did not choose existence  
in that moment,  
so I screamed,  
and I cried,  
protesting the life  
I did not choose.

### *Part 2*

I did not choose this skin -  
stretched over these bones  
without my input.  
I did not choose it,  
and yet I am judged because of it -  
mocked by those who do not know me,  
assumptions made by those  
who have never spoken to me  
because of a skin I did not choose.  
So I burn myself to change it,  
and I cover my flesh with make-up  
to conceal this skin  
I did not choose

*Part 3*

I did not choose this gender  
curves and breasts displayed,  
gathering stares and whistles  
because of parts I did not choose.

So, I hang my head  
and slouch my shoulders;  
I stare at the ground  
and hide in the shadows,  
ashamed of my body - this sex  
I did not choose.

*Part 4*

I did not choose birth.  
I did not choose existence.  
I did not choose this life.  
And yet -- I choose to live it

*The Other [Woman]*

I am the Other  
Your eyes let me know  
I am not like you  
I am made  
for you.

*Author Unknown*

Who authors these pages?  
What name shall I assign  
To the hand that scribes my thoughts  
And inner streams.  
Is this the same name given to me  
As a child? A wife?  
Who fills these books with words?  
What word fills this body?  
Whom shall I say is speaking?

## *The Voice*

Is this my ego speaking -  
Writing for results, acclaim,  
Reward, recognition?

Is this my inner voice  
Bursting to be heard  
Needing an outlet of expression  
To say, "I'm here"?

Is this my unconscious -  
Making itself conscious  
To heal what pain is submerged?

Is this my soul, speaking  
In my spirit - expressing  
Meaning to my body and mind?

Is this my creativity  
Flowing uninhibited  
Splattering imagery to the page?

Is this my stream of consciousness -  
My endless chattering mind -  
Exploding in a written display?

Is this me? Is this all there is?  
This voice that echoes in my mind -  
Unheard but unquestionably  
Loud and clear inside.

## *Impostor, Impostor*

Each word feels judged  
Before it is born

What will be thought of us?  
Words from the hand of a  
Poet(ess), they scoff  
Who does she think she is?

Who do I think I am?

If my art, my words, my musings  
Are without worth and value -  
Am I, too, worthless?  
Am I my thoughts?  
Am I my art?  
Art that is so harshly judged  
By haughty standards of technique & form -  
Just as my body is held to  
Standards that remove the beauty of  
Truth and life.

## *Saying No*

I carry shame between my legs  
So I keep them crossed (like a lady)  
Saying no to pleasure  
Saying no to pain

*Like a Lady*

Quiet rage.  
Ranting violently  
Inside the soundproof  
Walls of my chest  
Caged behind breasts, bra  
And blouse  
Modestly buttoned.  
Up to  
Here.

## *Unbuttoned*

Opening up  
Revealing my words  
Written pieces of my soul –  
Like tearing off my clothes  
In a public space  
My nudity  
For the world to judge  
Inspect.  
Whispering. Glances.  
Who am I to share  
My words? My naked soul?  
My conscious drippings.

## *Audience*

Suddenly the words have a platform  
And they are robbed of meaning  
The awareness of eyes and ears -  
Judgment.  
Corrupting, editing  
Forcing censorship of my pen.  
The constant struggle  
For authentic expression  
On a platform of judgment.  
Your eyes influence  
My words, my thoughts, my choices  
My life colored by the anticipated perception  
Of an unseen crowd.  
As if I am shamed, less than, unworthy -  
My voice struggling to be.  
Simply struggling to be.

## *Avoidance*

It is amazing how small I can feel  
In a moment  
How can I create anything  
of worth  
How can I think I have any right  
To proclaim my words  
Silence seems preferable  
to questioning my value  
Second-guessing every word  
Remaining voiceless,  
An empty shell  
Avoiding  
the vulnerability  
of creation

## *Keep Your Women Silent*

*Keep your women silent*

(it says, with authority)

As if my tongue is another's responsibility,

A property to be controlled

*Keep your women silent*

(and I have been silent)

My voice unwanted, unworthy

My written words tucked away

In hidden, secret stacks

*Keep your women silent*

(Is it any wonder that)

My voice trembles when I speak

And I choke on my words,

Strangled by a grip unseen

*Keep your women silent*

(Is it any wonder that)

I wrestle quietly with fears

And thoughts

Who am I to speak

Who am I to write

*Keep your women silent*

(it says, with authority)

But I will speak

Even when my voice shakes

I will speak.

I will write.

*I will not be silent.*

(I say, with authority)

I am awake. I am free.

And I will be heard.

## *In Bloom*

I bloom from the tip of a fountain pen  
Bursting through brittle soil  
I emerge with spilled ink,  
Nurtured by blank pages,  
I blossom with written words,  
Opening up as truth drips  
Freely to the page.  
I marvel at my beauty,  
My strength, my journey  
And as my petals wilt  
And my roots grow weak  
*The ink continues changing me.*

*I Cannot Stop the Flow*

I cannot stop the flow  
It bubbles and boils like a kettle  
On a red eye

## *Unveiled*

My life is documented  
In composition notebooks  
20 years of words –  
Internal arguments  
Philosophy  
Love, lovers, heartbreak  
Gushing from heart, mind  
And soul  
Staining the pages with  
The ink of each moment  
The doodles, the large angry letters,  
The ink smeared by tear drops  
All unseen  
My internal streams  
Of consciousness  
And implicit streams  
Of unconsciousness  
Hidden between decorated covers  
Marked “private”  
My never-to-be-seen-nor-heard world  
Mine and mine alone  
My shame.  
My freedom.  
My art.

Tear open the years of shame  
The words that collect dust  
The life I have tried to bury  
In private pages  
And bring new life –  
A light to yellowed paper

Open up to truth  
Without shame  
Freedom, at last  
My life breathes –  
Unashamed  
In the open  
Here is my past  
And my now.  
Here I am.

## *Tiny Commas*

Tears fall like tiny commas  
Punctuating pain  
With lists of regrets and what-ifs  
Connecting past, present, future -  
Uniting suffering across time.

*Echo*

I am a single drop in a vast sea  
A tiny ripple  
Echoing the past  
An effect  
From a cause unseen

## *(Re)Programming*

Here it goes  
A flow of uninhibited language  
A splattering of programming  
And dusty brainwashing  
A childhood by design  
And here we are  
Filtering through our programs  
Trying to decipher just *who*  
We really are and just what  
We really think  
Our minds, an impressionable wasteland  
Confused and imprinted by culture,  
Authority, experience, trauma, pain,  
Belief and the unexplained  
Trying to make sense of anything  
And everything  
Trying to discover what lies beneath  
The programming of our souls

## *Rabbit Trails*

I hear my thoughts race  
Rapidly, bouncing from  
Pen to page - like rabbits  
Cottontails, bouncing  
Through green  
Grassy hills  
Sniffing the flowers  
Chewing the grass  
Wiggling and wagging  
Running in circles -  
Unsure of where the path leads  
But always back  
to the same place  
Revisiting the same  
Grassy hill - trying  
Desperately to break  
The loop.  
Always returning.  
Like an unavoidable prison  
A false sense of freedom  
One more bounce  
And I'll be gone  
In a new place  
But here we are again  
The same grassy hill we've visited all our lives.

## *Passion of Thought*

Thoughts are thoughts.  
Not facts, they say.  
Thoughts are clouds  
Passing by.  
Thoughts are powerful to be simply  
Clouds, though.  
To be untruths - "just thoughts"

Thoughts are strong and fragile.  
A paradox.  
Thoughts destroy and give hope.  
Conscious. And unconscious.  
Fleeting. Yet impossible to get rid of.

Thoughts. These abstract  
Strings of language  
Knit our worlds as a strange tapestry  
And weave our responses and reactions --  
These powerful strings of our subjective experiences.  
To tug at a loose thread in our reality  
May unravel a tightly wound cord,  
Tattering our tapestries -  
Thinning our blankets of truth and security

Thoughts.  
Thoughts.  
Tearing away thoughts.  
Disputing thoughts.  
New thoughts.  
New beliefs - New strings  
Weaving new life. New perspectives.

All is changeable.  
As clouds pass by – changing, moving  
Never moving the sky above  
Or the earth below.

Thoughts are powerful and weak.  
A paradox of the mind.

## *The Seams*

A blanket  
Heard from an  
Overcoat of dreams  
The seams -  
The seams -  
Tattered, it seems.  
Tatter the seams.  
She wore  
an overcoat. To protect  
her arms from his wrath.  
Like the whipping  
Of the wind.  
Whipping & whipping  
Tattering the seams.  
The seams.  
The seams.  
It's tattered,  
it seems.

## *Unknowing*

It is the unknown  
That is so unsettling  
A terrifying black hole of  
Questions  
A million possibilities  
None certain – all equally possible  
All scenarios have already happened  
In my mind  
There is.  
And there is not.  
Both are true  
Until one is untrue.  
An endless hole to fall into  
Never knowing when or  
If there is an end.

*Flow*

Such wild instability  
Vibrating my cells  
Like tiny colorful earthquakes  
Paint splattering through my veins  
A rainbow of life  
Tie-dyed flesh  
Stretched over Technicolor organs.

## *Blocked*

It feels forced  
These words – an obligation  
Or obsession?  
A need to feel creative & accomplished  
And quickly  
The juices are strained  
Afraid, agitated by the demand  
They cannot be squeezed as an orange.

Allow. Respect.  
Gently without rush.  
And it will bubble as a spring  
From dry dust.

*Pebbles and Twine*

I have nothing to say  
But I keep writing  
The words, meaningless  
Empty -  
Pressured to be valuable  
Golden nuggets of language  
Strung together with silver thread  
But there are only pebbles  
Strung up with twine

*Making the Unconscious Conscious*

Let it go  
Without censorship.  
Let it go  
Do not judge  
Its speed, distance, content  
Let it go. Let it  
Go. Set it free.  
Set it free.

Free the unconscious  
To the paper of reveal -  
Here is my mind  
In print. No denying.  
There's the bottom  
Of the iceberg  
Brought out of the ocean  
Emerge.

*In Dreams, We Are Healed; In Dreams, We Ascend*

Fear barged in.  
No one knew he was coming  
But there he was -  
Busting down the side door  
Without warning  
We ran.  
Downstairs to escape.  
But there was no leaving.  
There was only up.  
Twelve flights. And I ran.  
Two steps at a time.

Halfway up their voices met my ears.  
Melodies trickling down through the air  
Like peace & tranquility in a raging fire  
A siren song luring me to ascension.  
The others heard, too, but they remained  
Frozen in the stairwell, staring at the ceiling -  
Where were they? These female voices.  
The safety of their song could only be above us.

So I ran.

Away from the basement of fear  
And the frozen, dumbfounded crowd  
Toward the unknown  
Harmonies of the feminine song  
Breathlessly, I reached the top  
The women singing, accepting, welcoming me.  
Adorned in purple tunics, they nurtured me.  
Sunlight flooded the twelfth floor - I was safe.

And we would sing. We would sing  
So that those below could hear, believe,  
Ascend.

*The Key is in the Pen*

Fear – Fear  
Let it out  
Free the fear,  
we scream.  
Fear of  
the revealed,  
the truth.  
Spew it out.  
Vomiting up  
fragments of truth  
partially digested  
Truth. Comes up.  
Released from its prison –

Prison of fear  
Holding truth  
The key is in the pen –  
The key is in the pen –  
*The key is in the pen.*  
You have the key –  
Open the cage.

Truth is the key.

## *A Manifesto*

I do not want my words published  
In an anthology or chapbook,  
On a social media platform  
Or tattooed on someone's flesh

I do not want my words remembered  
For their beauty and eloquence  
Perfect rhyme and meter  
Or delicately woven metaphor

I do not want my words repeated  
Emptied of their context  
Stripped from their roots  
Splattered across memes and profiles

I want my words to pierce flesh  
To be a painful sword of truth  
Splitting open untruths and injustice  
And blazing a trail of change

I want my words to be remembered  
Because they are living  
Because they are the breath of spirit  
Because they speak beyond language

I want my words to be power  
To those without power  
A voice for those who cannot speak  
And love unexplainable to those unloved

I want my words to transcend language,  
Humanness, thought, reason  
And become a metaphysical agent of change  
Shifting an entire culture toward truth

I want my words to live  
Beyond me, beyond ego  
Beyond the boundaries of physics  
A living voice in the wilderness  
Setting the captives free





# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elisabeth M. Claytor is a writer of poems, author of unfinished volumes of philosophy and psychology, scribbler of lyrics with forgotten chord progressions, paint splatterer extraordinaire, and lover of goofy, playful, and informal moments. She is fascinated with the psychology of the creative process and is a believer in the power of art to heal and create change. She currently lives in Northwest Alabama with her husband, Daniel.

More writing can be found on her blog at [emclaytor.com](http://emclaytor.com).