

A392_2018AbstractThibodeauChris

Abstract

How does mental illness interact with Christianity? What is it like to lose your faith as a mentally ill person? My thesis explores these questions and more through poetry and the lives of St. Christina the Astonishing - a medieval saint and the patron saint of mental illness - and myself. I juxtapose my experiences with St. Christina's as a way to discuss the differences between a mentally ill life with and without Christianity. Throughout the chapbook, I argue that St. Christina and my experiences are more similar than they first appear, that Christianity is not always compatible with mental illness (but can be), and that breaking out of what is expected of me (Christianity, straightness, neurotypicality) has been the most healing part of my life. I do this through pantoums, free verse, and prose poetry, as well as hymn and liturgical forms. The vocabulary I use also connects my work to the Church and tries to pull away from it.

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