

2021

Punk

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Shaw, Fred (2021) "Punk," *Floodwall Magazine*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 3 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://commons.und.edu/floodwall-magazine/vol1/iss3/4>

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Punk

I keep embarrassment in a stash,
stacked and piled like yellowed news
in cracked plaster rooms,
off behind the kitchen table of my mind,

a place to visit my drunken faux-pas,
file away the fuck-ups, and feel bad
about the time I hit an old woman in the mouth
with a jar full of maraschino cherries.

Sometimes, I thumb through to that time
when Leo and I were sixteen,
and we sat parked for hours
in front of the Electric Banana,

a punk club we'll never go inside
out of fear our night might end
in a busted nose from a swirling
mosh-pit full of knees.

Our missed chance to stomp
and bleed on a sticky dance floor
still jangles like loose change in a pocketful
of sad attempts to fit in.

But, it's only after Leo's blond hair is lost to glue
and malt liquor in a botched attempt at dreadlocks,
after he buzzed it close to the skull and we lose touch,
that I'll come to know so well those

Minor Threat cassettes that click
in a dusty Delco tape deck while we watch
the Iron City punks loiter about the Banana's front door
in their comfortable Mohawks and effortless combat boots.

Marooned and sober behind
a foggy windshield,
a lush hillside
fails to take shape,

and I find that, years later,
I am a self full of deeds undone, going places
where so much is an idling Chevy
with a paint-job, the color of contusion.

About Fred Shaw

Fred Shaw is a native of Pittsburgh, PA where he teaches writing and literature at Point Park University.

His work has been published at *5AM*, *Mason's Road*, *Shaking Like a Mountain*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, and *Pittsburgh City Paper*, where he's also a book reviewer.