

# RORSCHACH HEARTS

## A Magic Lantern Poem

Edward Murray

Personally, I find that the visual language of storytelling is a collage, and this work combines magic lantern slides and poetry. The Rorschach test is a subjective look at the psychology of persons, as they describe what they see in a series of inkblots. The inkblots on cards are symmetrical, and the test relies on the interpretive values associated with projective attributes. In this work, I propose the re-imagined magic lantern slide is an inkblot, and the heart is subjective.

I received a large collection of slides from Terry Borton, which has served as the basis for ideas to discover and employ the visual aspects of the medium in a more contemporary interpretation. I am very appreciative of Terry, and his investment in my imagination has been a huge part of the incredible journey in this medium. When discussing this magic lantern poem and the process, I have to thank him and the Magic Lantern Performance Group. Workshoping this poem was essential in improving the output through the expert perspective and genuine interest of each person in the group. That process helped to solidify the images, the order of the images, the editing of the poem, and the tone of the oral presentation.

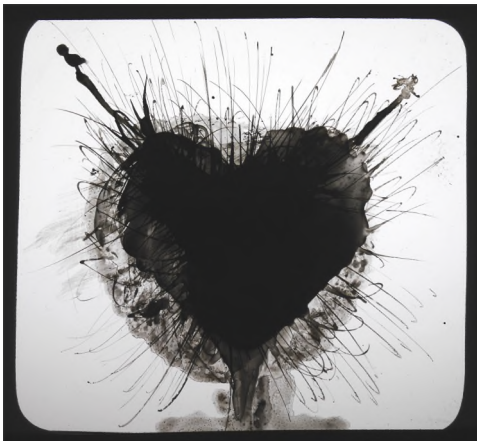
Each slide in this poem is a combination of an exact duplicate pair of the same slide, with the cover glass removed from each, the images turned on each other, and then re-bound. So the two slides create one slide of a possibly symmetrical presentation, like an inkblot. I spend a lot of time contemplating the duality of imagery, visual imagination, and the oral presentation of storytelling through language.

In ancient Greece, art students would write a vivid, often dramatic, literary or rhetorical description of works of art (*ekphrasis*), painting a picture with words. For this work, I selected the slide images, created the inkblot, and then wrote the poem. The slide images were used as prompts for the work of writing an *ekphrastic* poem.

I find it near impossible to find where the lines, and blurs, of visual language of slides begin and the words of the storyteller end. I have included some images of the original slides to show the starting point for the final images. You can see and hear the poem and images on YouTube ([youtu.be/RvmtVzjYtrA](https://youtu.be/RvmtVzjYtrA)). I hope you enjoy it!

Edward Murray was awarded special recognition for this poem in the 2023 MLS Awards (see TML 37, p. 11).

### Rorschach hearts



the harder I try  
the harder I fall  
I don't know if she loves me  
or nothing at all

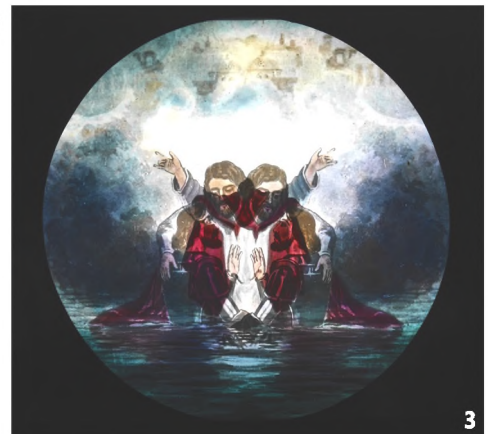


1



the skeletons of trees starting to show  
the squirrels busy running from tree to tree  
trying to beat the snow

been searching everywhere  
for anything  
and the fall is coming  
all in  
or nothing



3



and it's hard sometimes  
to know if you love me  
or don't want to be alone



4



tethered to desperation  
and I been searching everywhere  
for my electric chair

and it is love  
until it is nothing  
it is my chair of nothing

5

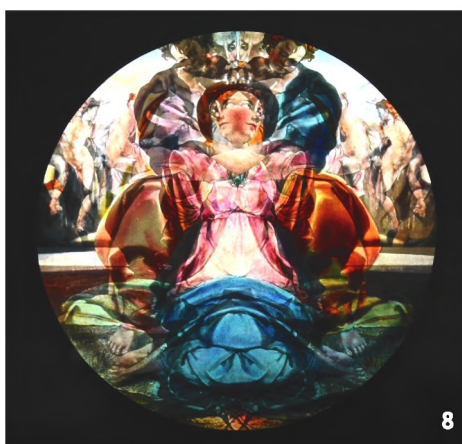
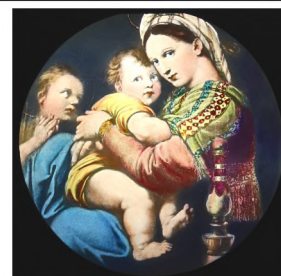


6

light peeps through the fingers of trees  
lingering outlines  
making sense of moments  
the fog lies



7



8

and I been searching everywhere  
for everything  
when I should have been searching nowhere  
for my chair

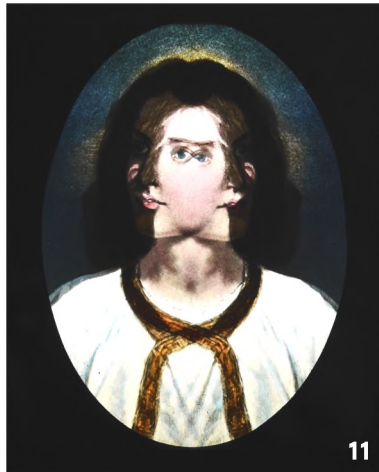
you might be right  
the wrong place  
the right time  
two time travellers



9

and I'm sitting  
in my chair of nothing  
searching everywhere for you  
searching for me

I've been searching everywhere  
for something  
for anything  
and maybe you're my everything  
maybe my nothing



and maybe I'm a bird with one wing  
and no song to sing  
and baby you're my electric chair  
and maybe  
I'm your nothing

