

## Mark Your Answer

Max Guttman

*Written for performance*

The worst thing you could ask me in kindergarten  
was my favorite color.

Hands shaking

Lip bitten by the front tooth I hadn't lost,

I filled in my Star of the Week poster:

B-L-U-E

*Are you sure, Max? What if it's actually orange? Or red? Or indigo? Or- or-*

Aww

My first identity crisis.

That afternoon off the bus,

"Mom, Mom, why did they make me choose?"

She said "Whatever you think is the right answer  
is the right answer.

You just pick one, that's all.

Just pick

one."

In first grade

I was taught to take a standardized test

Taught to recognize the letter A so I could bubble it in.

Taught to bubble in only one answer per question.

Taught that marks made outside the bubbles won't be recognized by the scanner.

Taught there is only one right answer

and it is

within

those

bubbles

Now,

I am in college.

I am an ambidextrous

nonbinary trans

demisexual

Gryffinclaw

white-passing

middle kid

with hazel eyes

from the rural suburbs

who's twice-over in remission

My permanent address is a place I cannot call home  
My home is a place I cannot reside permanently  
I equally like dogs and cats.

I can not tell you my favorite color, nor  
which quidditch team is mine, nor  
which of my hands is dominant, nor  
whether I'm sick or well, nor  
where I can call home.

These are questions about  
myself  
I can not "pick one."  
I am not recognized by the scanner  
I have failed the test  
because I am alive outside of the bubbles.

But that—  
That can be great.

The function of "alive"  
is not to be  
between birth and death  
It is to  
be alive

Summer vacation isn't a waiting room for the school year  
Weekends aren't an obstacle to Monday  
Childhood isn't some Lincoln Tunnel to adulthood.

Out here  
I like whatever colors I want,  
get excited by whatever fluffy animal's going by,  
Draw with two different markers at the same time,  
Buy only the best-smelling hair products,  
Cause they don't market "Dove for Nonbinaries"

Out here  
Outside of the bubbles  
I don't have to dodge the "or"  
I can be content in the "and"