

# Dinnerview: Paige Lewis

written by Danielle Susi | May 23, 2018



Paige Lewis is the author of the chapbook *Reasons to Wake You* (Tupelo Press, 2018). Their poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *American Poetry Review*, *Ploughshares*, *The Georgia Review*, *Best New Poets 2017*, and elsewhere.

Here, they talk about ice cream for breakfast, chewing a pack of gum a day, and smashing bags of tortilla chips.

## **On their all-time favorite meal:**

I grew up in a big family. At one point there were nine of us in the house—seven kids, my mom, and my stepdad. My mom had to get creative with cooking healthy, cheap food that all of us liked. When I turned nine, I decided to make things more complicated by becoming a vegetarian. So my mom did what any mom who had limited time and money would do, she cooked the same things, but made a small portion of each meal meatless. My favorite meal is actually my mom's version of vegetarian chili. It's just a can of red kidney beans, a can of diced tomatoes and one of those seventy-cent chili powder packets. I know it sounds really boring, but oh my goodness, I loved it. Still do. I know people have strong feelings about what starch to eat chili with, and I feel like I'm going to lose friends over this, but I love eating mine with elbow macaroni. Don't @ me.

## **On what the light looks like during their favorite meal of the day:**

The light is usually bluish because I love to watch TV while eating dessert. When I say dessert, I really just mean ice cream. My partner Kaveh has been trying to get us into the habit of reading while eating meals, but I like to have both hands free so I can keep our cat, Filfy, away from my bowl. He's really sneaky. He'll pretend to be sleeping near my food, and he'll very slowly reach his little paw out to try to touch it because he knows I won't eat it if he touches it. Filfy does this, not Kaveh.

The light will sometimes be bright yellow because I also like to eat ice cream for breakfast.

## **On snacking while writing:**

I can't write at home for two reasons.

1. I live in a studio apartment with a needy cat who will do anything to keep me from working. This includes sprawling across my keyboard and gnawing on the corners of my laptop.
2. I will gnaw on every food in the house instead of writing. It's a way to procrastinate and I will never be above using food to keep from working.

I drink a lot of black (Breakfast in Paris) and green (organic peach) tea when I write. I wouldn't call it munching, but I do chew a lot of gum while writing. Like, I go through a pack of gum a day. It's really gross. But I've been a big gum chewer since I was young. Right now, my gum of choice is bubblegum flavored Trident, but I used to chew watermelon Trident so much that one of my friends wrote a pop punk song about it.

#### **On their go-to late-night snack:**

Cookie dough ice cream! I used to be embarrassed by how fast I went through cartons of ice cream, but now I hold only pride in my heart. I mean, I probably deserve a trophy with a little golden ice cream scoop at the top.

I also really love to make summer rolls with tofu, bean thread noodles, and veggies. If I've eaten trash all day, making late night summer rolls help me feel like I'm still sort of taking care of my body. No matter how many times I make them, I always underestimate how filling summer rolls are, and I always make too many.

#### **On their food quirks:**

I'm very boring. If left to my own devices, I would just eat rice and black beans with Sriracha sauce for every meal because it's easy and tastes good. But I do have a habit of eating my food very fast. Like, part of the reason I'm a good dinner date is because I'm a good listener, and part of the reason I'm a good listener is because I'd rather be eating than speaking.

Because I eat so fast, I really like foods that I can eat a lot of pieces of (like popcorn), and I will sometimes break food into smaller pieces so that it takes longer to eat. I do this with pizza and chips a lot, but I usually don't do it around other people. The first time Kaveh saw me smash a bag of tortilla chips, he was so distraught he whispered, "You monster."

#### **On their final meal request:**

I feel like this is cheating, but—I want my last meal to be ten thousand bags of Chicago style popcorn. I want the cheddar popcorn to caramel popcorn ratio to be 3:1. I want to eat my popcorn in one of those movie theaters with the fancy reclining chairs so that Kaveh and I can watch cartoons in total comfort. Filfy will be there, too. He loves popcorn! I'd say that all my friends and family are invited, but I think they'd feel guilty knowing that every piece they eat brings me closer to death. So, it would probably just be a big empty theater with my partner, my cat, and my popcorn. Oh, and water! We're going to be so thirsty.