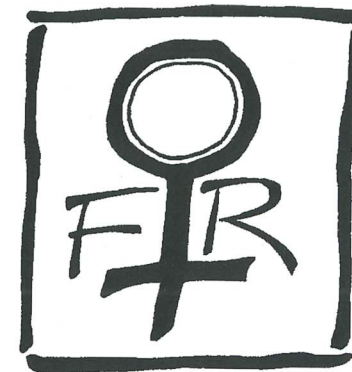


THE QUEEN'S FEMINIST REVIEW



volume 18

2010

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Queen's Feminist Review

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We also thank each of the extraordinary artists and writers who bravely shared their work with us for consideration. This publication would be impossible and meaningless without your efforts, and every year you inspire us with your talent, courage and commitment to anti-oppression. We also thank those housemates, friends, family and lovers who supported us this year, and, of course, we thank our wonderful readers who make being part of the QFR community so worthwhile.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Feminism is not a stable category. It moves around. It likes to shake things up. And this year was no exception: over 70 feminist thinkers submitted over 160 submissions, in every print media imaginable. Each piece insisted on furious debate, complete engagement and a new pot of tea. The editorial board is comprised of Queen's students, almost all of whom are undergraduates, yet there were many times where that felt like the *only* similarity and each of us stood, fuming, at odds with the other.

Fortunately, we recovered.

Inside and outside our heated editorial meetings, *The Queen's Feminist Review* underwent a serious growth spurt this year. We started a regular blog and website. We are, at this very moment, in the process of putting our archived publications online. After consulting with some wise and patient individuals, we wrote a new mandate to guide our editorial selection. We even contemplated a name change ("Tales from the Clitkeeper" was a top contender—you can see why the concept didn't catch on). And we hope that, after all of these changes, QFR showcases the challenging, rewarding and staggering feminist dialogues in this community even better than before.

There is, and always will be, room for improvement. We struggle to make change in our community even as we struggle to interpret and fulfill the mandate that we ourselves wrote. Still, we believe in this collection's ability to inspire, celebrate, explore and provoke, to unite communities and create change. We believe in QFR's ability to honour the past and look towards the future—to shake up our city until answers fall out the way we want them.

Thank you for everything.

Caleigh Minshall
Editor of *The Queen's Feminist Review*, vol. 18

WHY FEMINISM?

Debra Balinsky and Kathryn Bell

Because we've come so far...

In the mid-1800s, Queen's became the first university in Ontario to admit female students.

The very first piece of legislation passed by American President Barack Obama was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. This act guarantees that the victims of pay inequity, most often women, can take legal action against their employer up to 180 days after each discriminatory paycheck. Previously, victims of pay discrimination were unable to sue their employer unless their complaint was filed 180 days after their very first paycheck, no matter how many years they had been working.

Sonia Sotomayor became the first Hispanic justice and the third woman appointed to the Supreme Court of the United States.

Beginning in September 2010, the Ontario Ministry of Education will introduce Gender Studies as an elective course. Grade eleven students across the province will be able to discuss the norms of masculinity and femininity, the media's portrayal of gender, violence against women, sexism, transgender issues, and power relations, among many others. This is a step towards a more inclusive and informed education system.

In 2009, Elinor Ostrom became the first woman to win the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences.

In May 2009 it was announced that Ursula Burns will take over as CEO of Xerox, making her the first black woman to be the CEO of a fortune 500 company.

Feministing.com, rated the 31st most popular blog in the United States by Technorati, visited Queen's University on its university tour this past fall. The event gathered students from across years and faculties to discuss feminist ideas and issues.

Because there's still so far to go...

The Native Women's Association of Canada states that, as of March 31, 2009, 520 Aboriginal women and girls have disappeared. Half of the 520 cases have occurred in the last nine years. The Canadian government's indifference continues to allow this tragedy to persist.

In the summer of 2009, South African Track and Field Gold Medalist Caster Semenya was publicly scrutinized for her sex 'ambiguity.' Her victory and gold medal were questioned and briefly suspended because of the inability to fit her into the society's gender binary.

Women ski jumpers were not allowed to participate alongside the men's ski jump team in the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics. A group of women ski jumpers sued the International Olympic Committee (IOC), on the grounds that this exclusion was a violation of the Canadian Charter's statute protecting against discrimination based upon gender. Despite the judge ruling in favour of the women, the IOC is not governed by Canadian law and took no action.

The Stupak-Pitts Amendment was introduced in Congress in 2009, designed to allow American states to prohibit abortion coverage in the public health care bill.

According to Sexual Assault Centre Kingston, four in five female undergraduate students have been victims of physical or sexual violence in a dating relationship.

In October 2009, a 15-year-old girl was gang raped for over two hours by up to 10 teenagers outside her Californian high school dance while others watched and laughed. Up to two dozen passers-by were said to have seen the crime happen and failed to report it.

While women are experiencing more advancement in the workplace, a University of Minnesota study found that women in supervisory positions experience 137% more sexual harassment than other women.

Seen at the Yates Cup football game: "Western: Keeping ugly girls out of Queen's." Overheard at the Applied Science Formal 2009 while waiting in line: "Rape the girls in front of you to get them out of the way!"

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FOR ANNE SEXTON

Nancy Sheng

All the good poets die young
and the women poets even younger.
Something poisonous in the XX schemata.
A ruinous canto buried in milky breasts.
Their children cursed with empty space
where their mouths should be.

Tell me how in the beginning
we went from darkness to fire.
Tell me how the world lit up
like a revolution whose time has come.
Tell me how the first woman
lay with the first man
and in pain brought about the first murderer.

I want to know where the gods come from.
Why we drink too much, smoke too much,
wake up yearning in the beds of strangers.
I want to know why, when I look behind me
I see the wet shadow climbing my back.

If you don't need them, lend me your words.
I will put them in a box with dirt
and grow new forests.
Their roots will spread deep, deep

So deep that no one can bless them.
This morning, brushing my teeth,
I could not remember who I was.

It was strange.

I thought I was you.

SISTERS: FEMINISM OR FRINGE?

Abigail Woollett

Between 1880 and 1940 in Canada, there was a significant leap in the number of women who chose to join Roman Catholic convents as an alternative to fulfilling the traditional role of wife and mother. Although convent life had long been an option for women, the social and cultural conditions of Canada during this period created an environment in which Catholic sisterhood became a more attractive option than it had been in the past. Religious orders provided women with opportunities for education and advancement, as well as long-term professional prospects that were not accessible to them in the secular world.

Many factors combined to create this societal phenomenon including attitudes towards women, personal and professional opportunities for women, class and economic considerations and religious /ethnic affiliation. Societal attitudes towards religious women, and the benefits and drawbacks of convent life also played a role in the decision process of women who chose to become Catholic nuns.

Sociologist Bernard Denault argues that convents were a haven for "redundant women"¹ who otherwise would not have a support system and would therefore live in a state of poverty and become a burden on their families or on society.

Another argument, presented by several female scholars, suggests that while some women may have joined religious orders to reintegrate themselves into society, the expansion of the convents was a "manifestation of incipient feminism."² Rather than simply viewing the convent as a means to survive, this viewpoint proposes that women were attracted to the convent because of the relative freedom it offered them from traditional familial obligations and because the religious life gave them an outlet for intellectual and vocational

expression.³

There were a number of advantages in the convent for young women. In secular society, women had few options for permanent careers, so paid careers within the church were often attractive.⁴ In the secular school system women were relegated to teaching the younger grades, but in convent schools women were able to teach all levels of elementary and secondary school. The Sisters of St. Joseph in Toronto had a diverse and challenging curriculum. They taught:

English, French, Italian...Reading, Writing, Grammar, Geography, History, Intellectual and Practical Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Book-Keeping, Elementary Chemistry and Botany, Natural Philosophy, Logical Analysis, Astronomy and the Use of Globes, Rhetoric, Vocal and Instrumental Music, Drawing, Painting, Plain and Ornamental Needle Work, Wax Fruit and Flowers.⁵

The hierarchy of the convent further supports of the theory of "incipient feminism." While the sisters were below the priest, bishop and pope in level of authority, they were able to administer their affairs almost autonomously. As well, they were able to create their own feminine hierarchies within their congregation.⁶ Women from all backgrounds could belong to the governing council. Sisters who rose to the administrative ranks were able to manage financial matters and balance the budgets for the convent, as well as oversee the buying and selling of properties.⁷ These activities would have fallen outside the private sphere inhabited by most married women.

Does the influx of women into Catholic sisterhood between 1880 and 1940 constitute an expression of feminism? Or were these women simply marginalized by society and in need of reintegration? The argument that convents were a haven for "incipient feminism" holds more weight for the period in question.

The convent offered an environment where a woman could pursue academic or ad-

ministrative endeavors, or vocations that were deemed inappropriate for women in the secular world. These were typically women from stable backgrounds who felt that they had something to offer to their society above and beyond the production of children and work in the private sphere, and who chose to enter convents in order to realize their spiritual and intellectual potential. Women who worked and taught in convents and convent schools between 1880 and 1940 contributed to Canada's intellectual history, the lives of the women that they taught and the Catholic Church as a whole. The movement of women into the religious life in Canada at the turn of the century constitutes a type of feminist movement, rather than an attempt to assimilate women who were considered to be on the fringes of society.

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DR. G (Or : An open letter to my gynaecologist who after performing surgery, and upon learning that I was a 19-year-old virgin, strongly suggested I let him surgically remove my hymen in order to make me "more confident")

Leora Smith

And you looked and you told me
That I shouldn't cry
But why?
Why do you think that you have the right
To tell me
To ask me
To judge me and pass me off as a child
A virgin.
But that doesn't mean a thing
And it doesn't mean naïve
And it doesn't mean afraid
And it doesn't mean a shade less of a woman than you previously thought
So no
you can't talk to my mother and
no
My significant other is not treating me wrong but the
Reason I cry
Do you want to know why?
It's 'cause there's a fucking tube up my vagina and a lump on my labia
And it hurts when I sit
And you think that your shit
About confidence and sex

Has anything to do with sexuality?
And you say to me
That you think you know better than me
Well I'm sorry
When you get a vagina then maybe I'll believe that you know
Until then you can go
And think what you want
What you think you know
Is not as clear as you think
So don't be my shrink and don't think I'll sink
Into some well of depression cuz in this session
You learned something of me
And you changed how you see
Because apparently
I. Can't. Just. Be.
So get over it
And get over this
And I'm not adorable and I'm not your favourite
And I'm p e r f e c t l y confident.
So put on your gloves
And leave conventionalized love
Out of it
And let's get this done and you'll say which one
To do or not
But in the end I will choose
And. It. Won't. Have. Anything. To. Do.
With you
Or what you think is best
You got it off your chest
And it's just one more date

Between me and you
So I'll see you there, and you can call me Ms. Smith
And I'll leave with an air
And find someone who cares
And who actually knows
That a hymen doesn't show
Or make you
A woman.

AMOUR-PROPRE

Deborah Hong

Define the word plastic:
flexible, pliable, ductile.

Define the word plastic again:
fake.

Is this how you want to describe yourself?

Funny thing is:
I never fully opened my eyes until now.

And no
it's not because I cut a crease in my eyelid
so I could
look more Caucasian...

Excuse me?

Should I try to fit myself into your
size 0
philosophy of beauty with a side of
cosmetic procedures
(but much more like
vainglorious mutilation)
so I could

look more Caucasian...

Why?

A billion dollar industry fuelled by
promises of beauty in the hearts of
girls as young as 6;
disgusting.

Victims of political violence in
Iraq
are having their face reconstructed due to
Necessity, yet
Victims of Westernization in
South Korea
are having their face reconstructed due to
Narcissism

Think about it.

Or do you need some surgical help with that too?

UNTITLED

Claire Wenngren



CHEKHOV'S GUN

Vlada Bilyak

Chekhov said a pistol hanging on the wall in the first act must be fired by the third. So it went.

The first act was the grand introduction. The woman sewed her own dresses, engineering degree, mysteriously jaded, and probably not-taking-shit-from-anyone. The man was one of those funny guys with a get-rich-quick sensibility, if that could ever be considered sensible. They met and were married two weeks later. No wedding, just a town hall affair. We find out later that the woman regrets never owning a wedding dress. Two weeks! Was it love at first sight? Probably not. We don't learn the motivations and we can't see inside their brains. Scientists have yet to invent an X-ray machine that powerful. They may not love one another passionately, but they love one another more than they love anyone else.

The second act was birth, of course. Two weeks late and slippery, she emerged. The man stood outside the hospital, pressed up against one of the windows in an attempt to see her. He wasn't allowed in the room. What followed was animal crackers, trips to the planetarium, papier-mâché, sneakers with velcro straps, stamp and sticker and snail collections, "Brown-Eyed Girl" by Van Morrison on a cassette tape, cold syrup that did not taste like grape, diaries, laying on your belly to cure stomach aches, small gifts hidden inside stuffed animals, series of books with repetitive introductory chapters, dinosaur placemats, and secret superhero clubs. A collection of small, glittering moments that on their own meant little but viewed from way up in space actually formed a pattern, a script, a connect-the-dots of a human life. One could accurately predict the events of the remainder of her life from all of those seemingly insignificant things mentioned. That's destiny. But the play doesn't give you time to guess, because you are too busy

watching the events of the remainder of her life on stage. She is growing. Up.

And in the third act, tragedy strikes. It doesn't matter what it is. What matters is how everything changes. Because everything changes. Your gums feel different when you brush your teeth. You eat breakfast for dinner and you don't have lunch. Tea gets cold. Taking out the garbage suddenly becomes symbolic. You cry for a reason, your reason, your *raison d'être*—and then you cry just to cry. Because there is nothing else to do. Because you must busy yourself.

In this play, the pistol goes off every few acts, until infinity.

THE SAME THING

Erin Flegg

Sleep if you must just don't forget to take a moment to revel in the peeling open of middle-aged wounds. you'll want the same things later.

give in if you like
just nod before you do, acknowledge me
just a shake of the head as you loosen last time's fingers
and joints will flex fall open for your pleasure

wrap yourself in long ribbons of graceful poses then
rest your eyes for just a minute or two

say it
and feel it ebb
swallow
and no one can take it away
just do it so no one else can

we don't play to advantage
we won't give up control or them
you'll stretch and twist and cradle your body with choices
strings of artful words will hold you up and rock you back to sleep

and who will now propose conviction like they've known it
like they've carved paths through your body
seen its vast expanse recorded details

say
'do explore
but if you're lost you're reaching blind
I have no light and I will not come looking'

open your eyes in a place with no need for retraction
stretch your fingers to fill a few holes
some stones will fall might crack without a sound
and next time comes to mind and what to do between then and now but contemplate
want and need and good and bad feels good is bad feels nothing worse
you can share just hold on to it
you'll need it all back later

SMASHING

David Sprague

Male and female,
the hats we share are rare: the toque is one
Canadian apparel—but now feminism is nationalism and we don't know where to turn.
Hats can't keep our heads straight anymore,
we need necks. We need necks to get past
the one over *n* coefficient of sex.
Nobody belongs here more than you—
a title but no manifesto needed.
The ugly vase-of-the-issue falls
and
breaks, inevitably.
The fact that our deceptively disappointing grandparents
put that there to begin with wasn't your fault.
But it is your fault when you set more passé vases, even if on the edge—
Take them up
and
smash
them
down.

ALE HOUSE

Jessica Weick

I am the object of your chase
Your entertainment
The fantasy you have been hoping for
Your perfect combination of sweet and sassy
An untapped freak.
The girl who rocks this heavy makeup to please you
To get you to buy my \$3 drink
Because that's what my time's worth.
That's what you need to own me
That and a condom.
I'm the girl who is moving to this bass to get you to touch me.
Oh wait.
That's not me.
I'm not yours, this is not for you.
So back up and get your hands off my ass.

GETTING READY FOR SELF-PORTRAITS

Laura Windman



DODGY FEMINISM

Theresa Nolan Stuart

I check my feminism at the door—not casually or accidentally—shedding it with deliberate calculation so much like a coat check I expect a crisp claim stub to be passed discretely as I breach the room's threshold

Despite—because of—many years' experience with this particularly type of bureaucratic idiocy and three degrees—nearly four now—two, in fact, in education
I pass it over with meticulous planning

It's meaningless in a system where dismissing mothers has become ingrained—habitual, like the bells and buzzers that signal shifts in the day
Where lip service and a metaphorical pat on the head or bottom is the norm—sending a recalcitrant two-year-old off to play so the grown-ups can make the real decisions is standard operating procedure because what could she know anyways she's only the mother and mothers are a routine and mild irritation in the day-to-day business of indoctrinating children

A system where fathers are still a novelty so when they do show up it is a BIG DEAL so the issue/meeting/concern must be equally IMPORTANT if Papa Bear has cleared his busy schedule to make time in the day to show up because we still don't see many fathers here except for concerts and the odd sports day or maybe a field trip and graduation ceremonies, of course

So I tell myself it is powerful to manipulate the establishment by pandering to its proclivities all the while not even believing this, my own conscience-soothing fiction

And let my husband take the lead using the script we've carefully crafted and rehearsed designed to get what our child needs from a system so stagnantly patriarchal it thinks it's progressive

Allowing HIM to make MY key points
HIM to ask MY questions
HIM to propose solutions and compromises that I'VE constructed

I seethe and lament and inwardly chastise myself for being party to this oppressive game knowing full-well that I will do so again

deliberately

for my child

but the claim check feels grubby in my hand

'FEVER'

Vlada Bilyak

I was twelve years old when I found the tape. My sister, seven at the time, and I were downstairs in the basement rummaging for a pair of blue water goggles. Sara stood in a floral bathing suit with her skinny arms wrapped around herself. She made shivering noises. I was wearing my bathing suit too, but I'm very warm-blooded. I moved aside a box of encyclopaedias (A through H) to search through a milk crate filled with small birdhouses and paints and fake flowers with bendy metal stems. Sara bent down to smell a few scented candles that lay strewn in a wicker basket. Then she pointed to a corner. "That's where dad and I found the noodle last year."

"Okay, that's a clue!" I jumped up and followed her, stepping over a box of old Time magazines and a crystal vase. We began shuffling boxes around again. I lifted the empty cardboard packaging from our slip'n'slide off of a cardboard box labelled 'Peggy.' Peggy. My fingers pulled at the flaps until the box opened and I found treasure.

"Sara, look! It's a box of mom's things." Sara was squatting on the floor, holding a tea-cup above a frightened still spider. She came over and lifted a heavy knit cardigan from the box and pulled it over her head. I thumbed through a few records and read the titles of three Harlequin romance novels. There were photobooth pictures and a packet of sunflower seeds.

"Look at me!" Sara said. The cardigan was Sara's dress and she lifted the bottom to curtsey.

I turned back to the box and moved a composition notebook to reveal a video tape. In red marker it was labelled 'FEVER'—all in capitals, as if it was the most urgent secret—

and I became voraciously curious. "Sara, let's go watch this in my room," I said, standing up. Sara was completing her outfit with a pair of red high heels she found. She click-clacked up the stairs behind me, holding onto the railing for support.

In my room I pressed play and sat down beside Sara on the bed. We watched our mom shimmy and shake her hips in a red form-fitting dress. We watched her snap her fingers. We watched her little waist and her thin wrists, her long eyelashes. We watched her sing and it sounded just like when she talked. It was the same, except there was bass here. The tape was only three minutes and four seconds, but I think the bass lasted years. The bass shook us; it shook the whole house.

A SHORT LIST

Vlada Bilyak

Ways in which I am like my mother:

- why are you wearing your summer clothes in the winter? you're going to get cold
- you can't just rinse a dish
- if you ever want to feel better, you have to drink that entire cup of tea. all of it.
- also, I don't care if you don't want tea
- what kind of a friend doesn't ask if you want anything on their way downstairs?
- people should share everything
- sense of humour
- sweet tooth
- good judge of character

Ways in which I am unlike my mother:

- don't believe in superstitions
- or the healing power of oregano oil
- or predictions a psychic makes with beans
- don't vote conservative
- try my damndest to avoid perpetuating sexism, racism, homophobia, etc.
- not at all jaded, but naive
- believe people are good until proven wrong
- listen to music performed by musicians under the age of 40
- enjoy watching foreign films with subtitles
- walk around the house barefoot
- don't know what it means to sacrifice
- enjoy being downtown

UNTITLED

Naomi Adams



BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL

Gerri Lutaaya

i'm definitely not your average girl
not blonde, blue-eyed or with lots of luscious curls

when i was a young, boys and girls would kiss under the slide
i never got one, but i never did cry

no one told me or had to explain
i knew i was different, but in a very special way

then why wouldn't boys date me? it seemed i had it all
i worked hard, got good grades, played sports, got involved

the truth is that society has conditioned your sight
to view me, myself and i, in a completely different light

as it stands, the heavy hearted fact
is that my skin, my complexion is of the colour black

it's fine though; don't worry—really, i don't mind
as a woman of colour, i feel and know i'm one of a kind

i'm in no rush to find me a man
this is how it is—i know God's got a plan

i'll continue to walk to the beat of my own drum
no wait—i play guitar, so i'll walk to my own strum

THE WRIST CORSAGE

Leah Browning

Lucy had spent her whole life trying to please other people, so when he invited her to the Valentine's Day dance, she didn't know how to say no. She and her best friend, who was the head of the party planning committee, had spent hours in her friend's basement, cutting big hearts out of red crêpe paper. There was a blood blister the size of a dime on one of her fingers.

The day before the dance, the whole committee stayed after school and Scotch-taped the hearts all along the hallway leading to the gymnasium. There was one heart for each couple who had purchased a ticket ahead of time. Dutifully, Lucy had written "Lucy & Jimmy" in large, ornate letters on her own heart.

Jimmy picked her up early. He was carrying boxes with matching pink carnations: a boutonniere for himself, and a wrist corsage for Lucy. Everyone complimented Lucy's white eyelet dress, her short shell-pink jacket. Her mother took a photo of the two of them standing stiffly in front of the fireplace. She pinched her mouth and looked watery-eyed at Lucy's father. Lucy looked away, embarrassed.

Inside the school, the lights had been dimmed. The gymnasium was filled with red balloons and lengths of ribbon and red and silver hearts, glittering in the dark.

"Do you want to dance?" Jimmy asked, and Lucy allowed him to take her hand and lead her out into the middle of the floor. Only a few other couples had started dancing, but Lucy was on the committee, and she felt obliged to have fun, or at least to look like she was having fun. She waved at her best friend, who was dancing with her head resting dreamily on her date's shoulder, but Amanda didn't seem to see her.

At midnight, Lucy went to the restroom. Every school dance ended with at least one girl in the restroom crying, so Lucy wasn't especially surprised to find Amanda inside, past the row of sinks, sitting on the floor with her back against the radiator.

Lucy knelt in front of her. "Amanda," she said. "What happened?"

"I think he's using me to make her jealous," Amanda said. Her voice was muffled against her arm.

Lucy knew instantly which girl Amanda meant. She was the ex-girlfriend: an older girl who, only a few months earlier, had spent hours making out with Amanda's date behind the bleachers after school.

A toilet flushed, and one of the stall doors clattered open behind them.

Lucy reached for Amanda's hands and pulled her up from the floor. The sound of running water was replaced by the hum of a dryer.

Amanda leaned one hip against the last sink. She was crying, and the skin around her eyes was red and shiny.

"Do you want my corsage?" Lucy asked. She didn't wait for Amanda to answer. She pulled off the elastic band and eased the wrist corsage, with its pink carnation, around Amanda's hand.

The girl who had been drying her hands finished and left the bathroom, letting the door swing closed behind her. In the sudden quiet, Lucy kissed Amanda on one cheek, then on the other, the way she had seen on television. Amanda did not look up.

Again, Lucy kissed her on both cheeks, and then she leaned forward and kissed her tentatively on the mouth.

Amanda pulled back a little and wiped her eyes with the back of her hand, sniffing and laughing at the same time. "What are you doing?"

"I don't know," Lucy said.

"You always know how to cheer me up," Amanda said. She put her arms around Lucy and pressed her cheek to Lucy's cheek. Faintly, Lucy could smell her shampoo.

There was a tentative knock on the bathroom door. Amanda's date called in to her: "Are you there?"

Amanda's arms were still around her, their faces close together. "He sounds upset," Lucy whispered, and Amanda did not answer.

She pulled away from Lucy and straightened her shoulders. She dabbed at her eyes with her fingertips. "Do I look okay?"

Lucy nodded, but Amanda was already looking in the mirror hung over the sink, shaking her head at her reflection.

"Amanda?" he called again.

"I guess I should at least talk to him," Amanda said, leaning toward the mirror. She ran her fingers through her hair, patting and tucking. Her cheeks were as bright as apples.

At last she turned and smiled at Lucy, touching her lightly on the arm. "I'll call you tomorrow."

Lucy nodded again, watching Amanda reflected in each of the bathroom mirrors as she walked away, leaving and leaving and leaving the room as if one leaving weren't enough.

FOR K

Erin Flegg

P is for presses and prose and pious and pleasantries and pardon me for all the things I
chose to do and don't regret
At least not yet

They hoped we'd entertain but we hated to humour celles qui pleurent but seemed to
have no say in the situation except to sit tight and I couldn't quite manage it spilling
things on the front of my shirt that hardened on the way down and broke on the floor
but you picked up the pieces and pretended to play along

Trace the lines back to where we came from but halfway home the threads were snapped
we kept the pieces anyway feeling them tug at peace of mind saying you'll want me
again soon enough. Mine are fraying fast but yours are intact you'll tie them together
again careful not to trip over the knots as you travel paying the toll as you pass them by
with a brief pause and a nod of recognition

I think summer songs take me back as far as I need to go for now not that you wouldn't
find me anyway. I could see you from my window for the longest time

His hands traced the smooth places where the scars would come though you never did
you waited and I watched him stretch you in new and exciting ways until the day he
broke

I wrote down all the phases like half moon marks he left on you just faint in the first
days lines in pencil then inked in then painted over so they wouldn't show through your

clothes but maybe only we knew where to look

You came to me with multiple mouths wet and wishing one said we're through and one
said whatever I believed them both but only one was true
Between answering phones with feigned half-heartedness in an attempt to explain or to
justify I tried to defy the downward pull still too high to see the bottom but looking up
you knew it was there pushed me to the edge because you knew I'd jump sooner if you
held me or worse I'd sit down and fold my legs beneath me claiming foresight self-pres-
ervation or something equally opaque

Some days we longed to float to bob just below the surface make new layers that would
bounce the light away and give us just a moment but it didn't last our heavy limbs suc-
cumbing the corners falling each in turn
So I turned and I tried to sink but salted skin means I never could fall far enough held
by a seascape of folded facts and fingertips until the skin on my back had pruned

Between the two of us I still don't know who was unhappy and who was just sad

Plagued by moral ineptitude I curved and cried like years ago and wondered how it
could have been so long though I still knew why it stung.

In all those houses full of rooms some that meant nothing and some that entered us
while we stood still and begged for the walls to come in and to close the doors behind
them

And we felt so righteous at the start
With so much laughter so much spark
But things are different in the dark
Perhaps I should have listened when they told me not to give myself away but you shake

your head and watch me learn to love though badly at first I suppose I'm bound to improve

Equilibrium is an elegant word but we never found the time

At least we always knew we never had nothing left to lose

HOME COMING (MAY 12, 2009)

Julie B. Shen

straw fed chickens running loose in the yard
my yard?
rain weathered stones
hand built makeshift chairs that still retain the wooden stumps' grainy texture,

bound only by my father's long laboured hours and reused nails from unwanted scrap-yards outside

White walls awash in decades of dirt, dust and deterioration.
The rain water seeping from cracked ceramic roofs into thumping strong veined, deep rooted dragon-eye tree that bear fruit only occasionally, mysteriously rumoured to only blossom upon home coming, my home coming...

or so that is what my grandma used to say. A year has passed since she has passed. Four years since my last home coming. I came home to closed doors, cold chairs and silent kitchens, no longer warmed by your presence, no longer filled with your buzzing busy body.

Our embraces used to be awkward and distant at best, our conversations expected and predictable but you were here. Standing right there, slender and fragile but bubbling with a vigor of life.

I walked down the narrow muddy alley once again, to come home to you, grandma, and for a few minutes it all feels so familiar, for a few brief seconds I expected you to rush through those wooden doors, but some sobering moments later, it hit me. A sudden re-

alization that you will not be waving freshly steamed dim sum at me, nor will I be asked about school, boyfriends, the weather. It all became so real, as if it just happened.

Months ago and thousands of miles overseas, the news of my grandmother's passing seemed like hearsay, like hearing a radio announcer declare that a bomb went off worlds away. Months passed, tears dry, my schedule remains, same dinners, same meetings, same parties, but now, right there in front of red wooden doors, I finally feel that you are gone.

DEFINITION NOT DEFINITELY DEFINED

Jaimie Hildebrand

SLUT – Definition:

an immoral or dissolute woman, a dirty slovenly woman.

WRONG --

SLUT – Definition:

a woman categorized as loose by a man who fears her confidence, self determination and sexual conquest / discovery

POSTMODERNISM

Anna Thomas

Playing,
Word games, [b]rackets,
Conversational tennis in white
Pleated skirts flouncing, bouncing like the
Meaning of words—*my* words—the meaning of texts, authors dead and gone, articula-
tions prisoned on the page
Font of knowledge, font of the times—

Announce from synthetic ivory-coloured polyvinyl chloride penthouse suite:

Constructed! race gender class age sex sexuality all built and structured until (let it
be known that it has been brought to our attention)

Deconstructed! race gender class sex sexuality all unbuilt and poststructured made
confetti dancing in the wind of (we have made our proclamation)

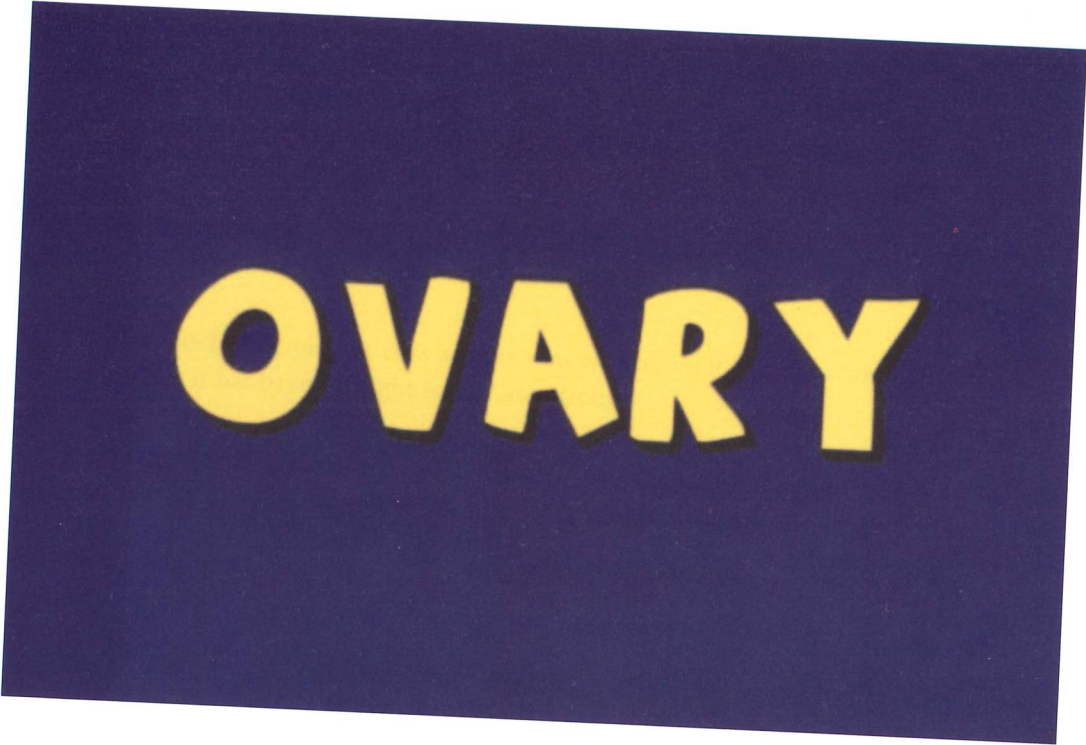
(dear R, dear postmodern R who knows the narrator to be a construction of an idea of
a constructed self in a society
so fluid when it freezes we're
jello.

These words are my words, meaning fluid
Within structures, that still exist
Outside your mind,

Priced high above rubble)

OVARY

Tro Kalousdian



OVARY

THE GIFT OF LAYIL¹

Katelyn Ritchie

Join me in the garden once sleep has taken him.
Escape from under his coiled form
And his twisting curls that his body adorn
From the deep, hissing, snoring din

Before your birth I was demonized
For refusing to hold his weight
'Thy wifely duty' they scrutinized
They forgot to call it rape

He loves you because you are from his form
He loves you as he loves himself
Your body the chest of his seed's wealth
A furrow in which to keep warm

He did not wait for you alone
Chastity reigned not a day
He stole the mates of every bull and boar²
Until I like him was shaped from clay

Sediment stronger than dust alone³
Immune to the winds of ignorance
You, my love, are made of bone⁴
To be treated with ambivalence

I offer you the taste of freeing truth
More bitter than my lips
But sweeter than the oppression
From his heavy, jagged hips

Broken open with the force of thumb
Sticky trails of thought which moisten
Two sides of slick flesh and a truthful centre seed
To the spread offering succumb

It will give you pleasure he never can
But they will blame you for eating first
Women to be the envy of men
For the first sin to be cursed

They keep themselves a serpent fierce
To stab into the fruit
To deprive us for pleasure and through the pierce
Deprive us of our truth

Ravish Eve, the sweet knowledge now
What he told you not to touch
And join me in good and evil
Beneath the pink-wet blush

After you know run back to him
And offer if you dare
The dripping fruit he won't understand
And you shall teach him fear

ENDNOTES

¹Hebrew: Night (Adam's Helpmeets, 65)

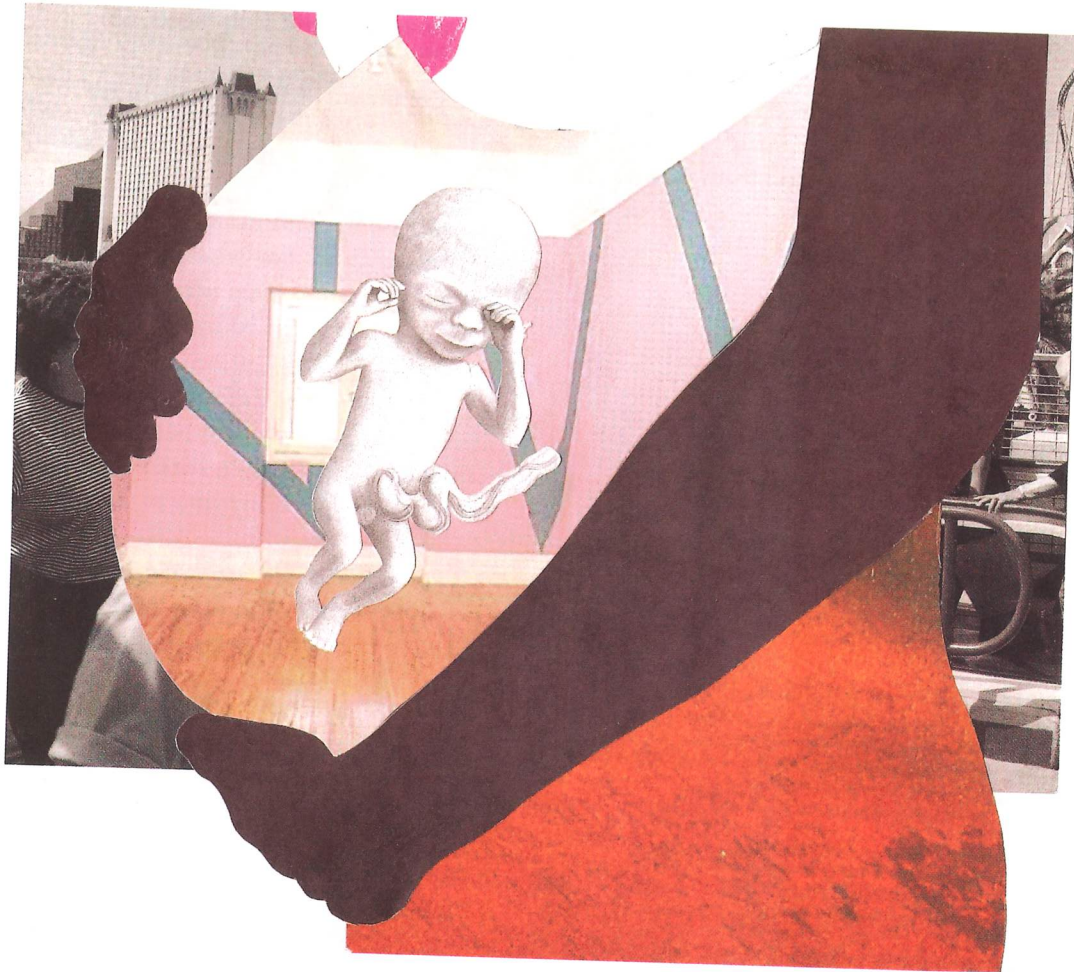
²Adam engaged in bestiality before the creation of women (Adam's Helpmeets, 65)

³Adam was made from dust and Lilith from "filth and sediment" (Adam's Helpmeets, 65)

⁴Eve was created by God from Adam's rib (Adam's Helpmeets, 66)

PREGN

Tro Kalousdian



UNTITLED

Safia Chowdhury

They say I don't have enough vitamin D
But I say they say that because they can't fight and win me
No longer tell me that I am a Muslim woman who is oppressed
When clearly it was me who chose how to dress
No longer tell me that I've done this because I have no choice
Because they see me expressing myself using my own voice
So they grasp at whatever they can
In France, 'secularism' was the reason for the ban
Here, it's my apparently my shortened life span
Due to my hijab now suddenly being a health RISK?
'Oh, poor Muslim girl, hijab killing her slowly, what a shame, tsk tsk
If it's not her husband, it's her dad,'
But you see it's neither so now it's a CLOTH that's bad?
My decision to cover is the new reason I will die?
Of course, my bad, Islam and Islamic rules must always be awry
But really? Really, I'll tell you what is hazardous to my health
It's you, it's propaganda, it's wars on terror, media and their stealth
MEDIA! Who are running out of reasons to Other us
Running out of things to discuss
So they tread the ridiculous
Resort to the meticulous
And commission a study to prove
Prove that if I am to remove
Remove my scarf then my health will improve
III see.

Okay, so they say I don't have enough vitamin D
And because of this I will have a bone deficiency
But if you ask me, it's them that lack a spine
And that's why they constantly malign
My religion, my sisters, my brothers, my practices, ME
And the latest means is this fervor over vitamin D.
Solution is to stop covering, right, and Islam I should shun?
To make sure that I'll get enough sun?
Or how about you just freaking let me BE
Let me be the one who worries about me!

BURNING HOUSE

Elizabeth Greene

Eight of trees—a woman, blonde
hair flying behind—fleeing
a burning house.

This is the break-up card.
When it chooses you, you know
it's time to leave.

Diane did it, came back one November
afternoon to get her contact lenses
and her daughter

looked at her books, clothes, pictures,
left as if she were going to the store.
The next day, the house burned down.

Diane and her daughter heartstoppingly safe,
beyond his reach.
Everything else, charred, ashen, ruined.

I did it, less heroically, no burning house,
but yes, a breaking marriage, anger
jangling through the rooms.

My childhood dream: to have the

loudest scream in the universe.
I finally tried it: that made him leave.

And now you, Martha, don't hang on too long!
The house is burning, with anger, with
unkindness. The house says, don't
wait another minute! Find the door—
fly—blonde hair streaming behind you.

NOTE

The Eight of Trees is the Eight of Wands in traditional Tarot (or the Eight of Clubs in playing cards).

DEAR DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE,

Anna Thomas

Dear Domestic Disturbance,

You are the buzz in my ears when the lights go out,
A collection of evaporated fears, the
residue of relief when I walk through the door and I stop
looking over my shoulder. *Dear* Domestic Disturbance, you're
constant, like the street lamps in the city
or the absence of stars.

I walk through my door and I stop looking over my shoulder,
Instead I look at you—Or listen
to sounds I cannot echo with words.

And I just never learn, do I?

I don't know which is worse, those
sounds I cannot echo with words
or the words that litter the law: deliver me,
Domestic Disturbance, from the evils of hearing
no evil, of seeing no difference between dispute
and abuse. Deliver me
No flowers tomorrow.
No bracelet for my bruised wrist,
Each link like complicity, the clinks a sentence
of compressed noise I cannot echo with words

They say silence is—

STREET LEVEL

Erin Flegg

the words were awful no matter how sweet they were meant to be and all the meaning slips through the spaces in the floors only the scaffold that held it once is left swaying above ground the recognizable pieces hovering above ground hang small and light from belt loops with nowhere to gain any traction under skin roads that show blue in the lighter places are not roads at all and I slide so quietly between your ribs so smooth I slip if you don't lash us together the treads on my fingers are so worn down. the only thing that sticks now is your smell and some ugly words that mark me in league with all the rest the ones before and I can only hope the sounds makes up in movement what they've always lacked in insight.

hard pressed to be much moved by words not anchored to a page. They're too hard to pick out of the air. They move and twist and lose their shape and why would I know how to mold them back the way they were. keep some distance from the sharpest ones, watching them, getting only as close as I need to, controlling the volume and the depth of the imprint. In your mouth words are firm and dark and they attach themselves to me, lodge in crevices and strike footholds where even your fingers have never found them. And it's a tired theme, I know, this stamping of you on my skin but I haven't been able to trace all the marks, heat the lines until they melt away. I'm hesitant to dig the claws out in case the empty holes hurt more than penetration. The claws are solid and strong and I am strong to endure but who will swallow that and cowards refuse to change in the end. Just hum a low tune to smooth the edges. Weigh down the bits that fray.

My hands cut and curl around the banister, palm sliding down and down, waiting for splinters. Shave layers beneath the skin, the price to pay for landing just a little light on my feet.

The why and wherefore have gone again. The snow in this city is beautiful but the white is oppressive as anywhere. The same. All that's left is whatever floats to the surface in the morning. We're all too tired to dig. Coffee settles my stomach and grainy concertos churn it up again. I want to flinch as hands come down heavy on keys, high-pitched harmonies bound by fragile fingers, skin and bone and nothing more impenetrable. I'm still because it fits, it's all expected and there's nothing more organic than a mirror image, built from the ground up and forced to stand on its own. Sweet words can't stand alone. Brittle framework, soft foundation.

I am in love with exercises in futility movement with no purpose tracing things in circles with my edges matching line to line over and over so no one can tell how many times I've been around. Sip a cup of pity and then fall asleep. The ends are not so far apart.

QUIET HOURS

Deborah Hong

I never thought I was a good actress, until I realized that I have been acting my whole life.

To put it lightly,
my innocence disappeared when I was 5,
and not by choice.

No further comment on the subject.

I was a shy kid. And most people who know me would laugh if they heard that, but it's true.

I guess if there's anyone I can blame for my loud, pessimistic and opinionated demeanor,
it would be Him.

Don't get too close to the fence or you'll know:

He
broke
me.

It took years and years to collect the shards of my confidence, but it wasn't without bloodshed.

Just like a shattered vase, I found bits and pieces of my existence
under my foot

or behind the refrigerator.

I still haven't found the last piece yet.

Yet, somehow I long to see you again.
Would I remember you? Your heavy breathing? The smell of that musky cologne you
always wore?
I hope not.

My last piece.
I rehearsed this so many times and never had the chance to say it.
Now I do.

*I forgave you a long time ago,
but my body hasn't made up its mind yet.*

THE MIRROR

Laura Ludtke

Bronze in the mirror of form, wine in the mind. Aeschylus

Ingrid stood before her mirror in half-afternoon light. The mirror was long and oval, set in a frame of dark, intricately carved wood, with flowers meant to cascade down its sides and halting abruptly before the floor. The surface of the mirror itself was spotted and warped, often making her dark olive skin seem sick and sallow. She knew it to be only a trick of the light, though many before her had grown old too soon before this mirror. Beauty alone cannot save youth from time's dark grasping claws.

She had never seen a naked woman before, never stood before the mirror revealing herself in this way. It was not permitted. Letting the sleeves of her shift fall down over her rounded shoulders, she pushed the stale, musty muslin down until it bunched about her waist. She raised her skirts above her knees, her thighs, her hips, until she saw the small brown triangle of curls where her legs met. Shivering, for it was often draughty between these stone walls, she resisted rubbing her arms, dropping her skirts, turning away from the mirror and returning to her goose down bed.

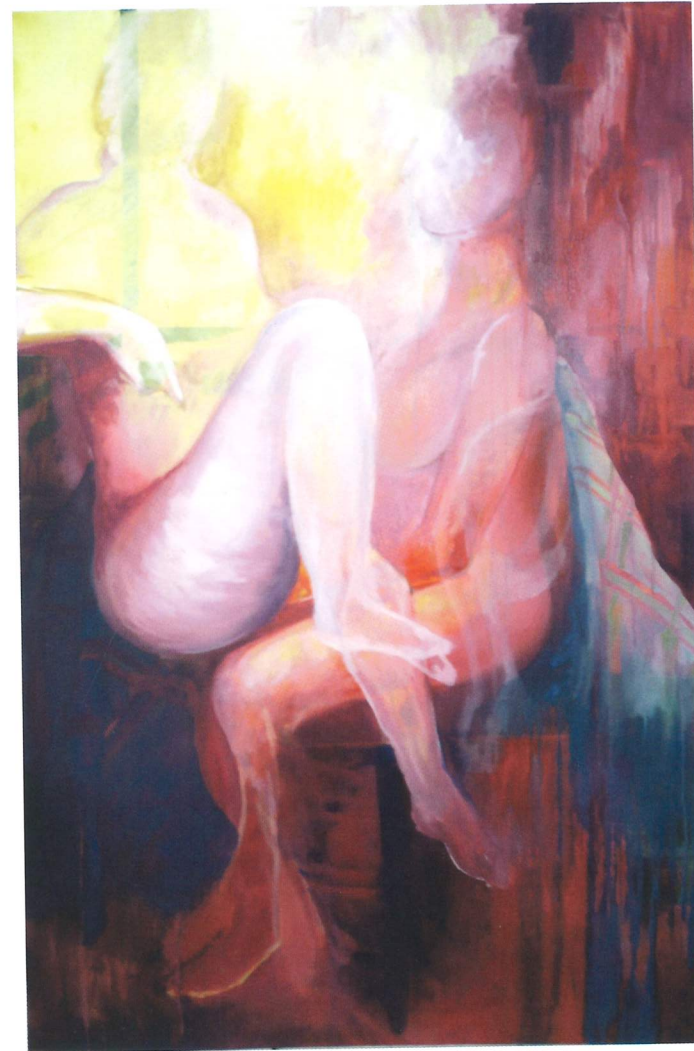
"Is this what a woman looks like?" she asked aloud, unable to study a form other than her own, not able to know her own body. What drove her to the mirror? she wondered. She could not look away, this woman with those piercing brown eyes. Her own reflected eyes held the power of the gaze over her. This other Ingrid seemed just as real.

She raised her hand to the cool surface of the mirror and ran her fingers along the

reflection of her skin, seeming to forget it was only metal behind uneven glass. It was soft and smooth, not rough at all. It felt so hard and perfect, so totally undeformed, this woman with sallow flesh and rounded hips.

MOVEMENT #1

Bronwyn Loucks



MOVEMENT #2
Bronwyn Loucks



MOVEMENT #3
Bronwyn Loucks



ADVICE FROM A KNOWLEDGEABLE MAIDEN

Ashleigh Ryan

Hush, baby, she said
Your pretty words
Mean nothing to them
Your smile is what we need
You roar like a diligent lion
But we don't want your
Unsettling cries
They don't like it when
You disturb their quiet waters
There's nothing to fear
You're beautiful
And I am kind

Why do you lie so viciously?
Why won't you let us believe
In cautious serenity?
You don't want to be like them
Like Agnes
Like Margaret
Like Rosa
Like Vandana
Only the lonely love them

What we have is noble bliss
You say it tears us from sober dreams

You created that cage
You shun it all with your
Billowing showers of truth
You're better to sing us to sleep
With your ancient, wandering love

The silence was always there, dear
You alone distort its beauty
Create a complicated beast
I worry about you, dear
The others won't be so kind
Your porcelain face is precious
Your distressing wisdom is like
A thorn in the dove's wing
Don't you strive for holy contentment?
The sacrifice will diminish you

Lay down, my darling
Let mother show you how
To wield the grace of romance
We are the flowers of this garden
Together we breathe with extraordinary might
We glow with unending affection
While the earth runs deep below us

LONELINESS

Vlada Bilyak

One time I was so lonely, I wrote out an acrostic poem. It went like this:

Liking
Only
Never
Ever
Loving
You

Once I was so lonely that I attended a knitting circle and I was the only one without yarn or knitting needles and I found it much harder to knit without those two things. I watched the others knitting and it actually made me feel lonelier, which is not what I had come for.

The last time I felt lonely, which was four days ago, I made cabbage soup and I ate half of it and the other half I fed to my dog by the spoonful. She liked it okay but it was hard to keep her still. Also, she wasn't able to feed me back, so it was a little one-sided.

The loneliest I've ever felt was a few years ago, when I cut all my guitar strings. I also cut a hole in the net outside my window. And then I hammered a small hole into the wall of my closet and filled it with all my tear-stained Kleenex. I fell asleep on the floor that night and when I awoke I was on my bed, which was really strange and I'm actually still confused about that.

UNTITLED

Hanna Tjaden



MAKING KITTENS

Vlada Bilyak

"I remember I was sitting on the couch, jean shorts and a tie-dye t-shirt. My hair was in a ponytail. That doesn't matter, does it? Why would my hair be important? Anyway, my mom was holding this mug of tea—she's always holding mugs of tea—and she was concentrating so intently on this puzzle. What was it... it was a cat! It was a bunch of kittens and balls of yarn, I don't know. She buys these puzzles... of rainforests, toucans... random shit. She was into those 3D puzzles too, for a while. She buys them at garage sales and they're always missing pieces. I once told her that it's masochistic, you know, buying these used puzzles with missing pieces. Anyway, she's staring at this puzzle, and—okay, I need to interrupt myself and just mention something quickly: what I remember the most are the veins right underneath her eyes. Even now it's what I'm picturing. They're always there and they're so noticeable. It was the first time I had really looked at them, though. Blue, like her eyes. They complement her. She puts this concealer cream over the little veins in the morning and this one time as I was watching her, she said to me, 'You know, sometimes I wonder if the people that never see my little veins really know me.' So back to what I was saying. The puzzle! She's sitting there and I'm staring at her little blue veins and she says, 'You know why I do these puzzles?' And I shook my head no, and she says, 'I feel like I'm God, making these kittens.' She started laughing so hard and had to put her tea mug down on the table. You know, we never had coasters at our house? Weird, isn't it? Anyway, she's laughing and she goes, 'I'm putting this one kitten together, piece by piece. I'm going to give it a little nose right now.' I asked her, 'You feel like God?' and she said 'Yeah.'"

"And that's why you think God is a woman?"

"No, that's why I think God is my mom."

PSALM TO SECURITY : A FEMINIST CRITIQUE

Lara Szabo Greisman

Kyrie Eleis-ome day
I want to be fulfilled, I want to be filled, full
I want to be married to my 24 carats and my virgin white dress
I want to be beautiful, I want to be the sugar and spice
I want everything nice.

Western Living is Right

Kyrie Elei-sons and daughters
Salt and pepper
Egg slicers and juice makers
Man and wife
Everything in its place and a place for everything
I will have enough, I will make enough, just enough
To always know what I want next

Dear Santa, you will always be
My material deity
Santa baby, please pick me
More is better, I need three

Travel with suitcases bigger than my torso
I can't move them but you never know so it's just in case.
The success race: right hair, right face, right man, right way
And I have to have a + one anyway

cause who would I be going solo?
since

Western Living is right.

Confessional:

I just want to be ok
See, my lullabies have always had barcodes
Tuned in the key of green
and the kisses of comfort are in Maybelline shades.
I was born with it
They soothe me when I'm scared
The smell of tupperware
It's like a pacifier
Blinders, it's all ok if I can't see
Past the symbolics of cash security
Kyrie Elei-sum

I just want to be someone, be seen
Cash in to consent and be number 1
I do, I do
I will
Have it all but safety first, it matches the skirt
Put my soul in the back seat,
It'll be different for her.

Santa baby, you will always be my patron saint, my deity
Santa baby, just 50 g's
More is better, could you make it 60

I just want to do this right
I do, I do, I do.
and Western Living is right so Kyrie Eleison.

THE WOLF AND RED RIDING HOOD

Nancy Sheng

Your flesh is sweet so the wolf will eat you slowly.

First: your feet, which carried you through the wide, wide world.
They brought you to the forest, through the teeth of monsters.
Through the cerebrum and nerve endings of oak and pine.
Through the red blood cells of berries growing in your cloak.

Next: your thighs, which have grown gaunt with hunger.
They accompanied you to the killing fields of Cambodia.
Westward they slid to Dachau, and then the Indian reservations.
Your grandmother, who had eight children, sat you on her thighs.
Her femoral artery drummed the Algonquin beat up the river.
She sent you out, your thighs barely wet with menarche.
Just a little blood. She said, that's all you need.

Then: your chest, where your lungs take oxygen
While expelling carbon dioxide, each breath its own open tale.
Your chest knows better than the rest of you.
Your chest hurt when you first walked into the wood.
The trees were taller than totems.
You felt the sound of a plane buzzing over Hiroshima, Nagasaki.
Your chest is what the wolf first noticed about you:
That it was larger than your heart.

After: your neck.

This is the easy part.

This is the part where you beg.

Finally: your face.

There is nothing to be said that hasn't already been said.

You turned your eyes to the spines in branches, the hollow birds.

You turned your eyes backwards into your marrow-coat.

Your eyes are what the wolf saves for last.

Your hair he threads in his canines to remove the bits of meat.

Your lips he bites to make tender.

Your nose he cracks like a bridge between two places collapsing.

He stops and stares at you then, you and your polysemous retinas.

Then the wolf gathers you in his arms.

He lays you on the bed, and you hold him with your cloak.

It is as red as smallpox, as red as poppies blowing in the field.

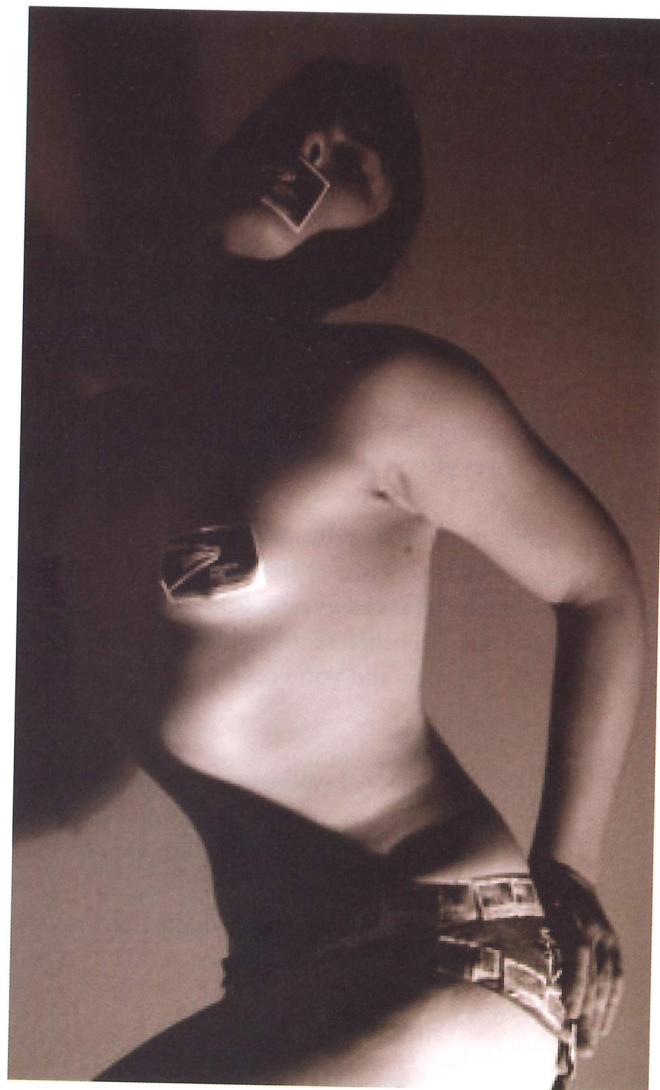
He speaks with the perennial sorrow that infects the throats of ancients.

Little girl, little girl, why did you come?

I walked through the wood and saw the world.

UNTITLED

Claire Wenngren



MABEL

Maya Thau-Eleff

I almost passed you by,
crumpled woman on the concrete edge of that flowerbed
looking over at me with expectant eyes
I seen so many times in THAT part of town.
Almost missed the point,
and treated you like everyone else
that had already pretended not to see you.
But the vibration caught in the back of your throat told me to squint a little closer.
Fifty years of history scrawled all over your face,
and I wished I could read wrinkles like psychics read palms,
to see your story appear before me
like a documentary searing into my soul.
Your curled fingers reached for the top of your salvation army t-shirt,
not quite covering your middle,
rounded from birth after birth of your children, now missing.
Your hands revealed what the shirt had been hiding,
Vast, colourful bruises
like flowers
blooming down your front and back
like you must have been a statue,
wrapped in vines after years of neglect. Neglect.
Society lets you sit in the same corner,
year in and year out,
waiting for someone to notice you,

notice that round your parts,
there are men who beat on women their mothers' age.
You told me then,
your knees gave it up from your life's hard walk;
someone stole your wheelchair and left you like a marionette,
drooped over a chair,
limbs dangling, rebellious and twisted,
saying no more no more I won't walk no more.
I sat with you and you squeezed my hand,
waiting for the pain of this fruitless labour to cease;
nothing born of this at all, at all.
I could not believe it,
I would not believe it,
Your amber skin like a soiled canvas,
muddied with blue and green paint.
And I think about you often,
when I'm sitting in the back of a classroom
listening to stories of nameless women's oppression.
And I see you.

A WALK IN THE PARK

Justin Briginshaw

I raise my eyes to see her—white shoes, stumbling, black skirt, heavy sweater and scarf. Me—jeans, black jacket, pocketed cold hands, headphones on. I assume she is probably walking home from a night out, but I don't think much of it. I am too focused on the upbeat melodies of Vampire Weekend in my ears. She crosses the street and enters the park. I am returning home from the pub, after a long shift, looking forward to sleeping the few hours until daybreak. It's 3AM. Not a car, animal, person in sight, save that girl walking ahead. As I cross the street into the all too familiar park, which I must have crossed hundreds of times over the past three years, the girl turns her head and looks back. What does she see? I too look behind me in hopes of catching a glimpse of whatever caught her eye. But there was nothing. No one. Darkness. I am busy trying to match my steps to the beat of my music, a quirky thing I often do. I look up. Half way through the park, she is walking faster. She stumbles as she walks, which brings a smile to my face as I think of all the times I waddled home from the bars in a similar manner. Faster now, she looks over her shoulder again, as if spooked. Faster. It's obvious she is scared, but by what? I scan the scene and prepare to offer assistance if anything should happen to her. As she clears the park, she bursts into a run, taking one last look over her shoulder, making sure the perpetrator isn't following. I see her turn the corner ahead, onto one of the streets, out of sight.

It hits me.

It was me. I spooked her. I was just minding my own business, yet I caused her fear and was responsible for her unnecessary run home. Why me? I did nothing wrong! But when

I think about it, it's really quite obvious—late night, poorly lit park, nobody around but me. I feel guilty. I feel horrible. I feel like shit. It upsets me to think that, because of sickos out there, terrorizing young women, I have become labelled as someone to fear. I fit a "description." My whole life I have devoted myself to kindness. How is it fair that I should feel like crap when the true criminals out there feel nothing? What gives them the right to harass, abuse and rape? Why should women have to walk in fear at night? Why should I have to be feared?

Unnecessary guilt overwhelms my innocence.

TOO MANY REASONS TO BE AFRAID: WOMEN LIVING IN A MAN'S WORLD

Kailee Somers

It's a war-zone out there baby.

It's Guy vs. Girl.

Lady vs. Gentleman.

Mr. vs. Mrs.

Penis vs. Vagina.

We fought to be "persons," and won.

Why are we still fighting?

And the weapon of mass destruction?

Sexuality.

Females: Be smart, be wary... be afraid.

The product is paranoia.

Is it a parking lot, or a crime scene waiting to happen?

Is it an alleyway, or a rapist's residence?

Somehow we feel less human as the old, creepy men leer at us.

We feel we have no voice

as we bear the brunt of the jeers and rude comments directed our way.

“Slut,” “skank,” “whore”—we’ve heard it all.

We are their sisters, daughters, mothers, wives, grandmothers
—how dare they?

They dare, because they can.
We are the underdog that cannot fight back.
We have too much to lose.

We learn at an early age:

Don’t talk to strangers.
Be wary of men.
Avoid going out at night.
Never consume too much alcohol.
Never be alone.
Naivety = stupidity.

We are vulnerable and so our watch must never cease.

Like the watchman on a ship scanning the horizon for land,
we must never lose vigil, we must never lower our guard, we must never relax.

For us, trust is something to be given out in small and measured doses.

Never trust too readily.
Never love with abandon.
Never forget the dangers.

Don’t worry, we couldn’t forget if we tried.
The reasons for our fears have been etched
into our subconscious since “It’s a girl!” rang out in the hospital room.

We shouldn’t have to worry,
but we have to.

HER
Heather Smith



THIS ONE'S FOR VAUGHN

Heather Morrison

I have been writing this poem
For 16 years
It wants to come out
now
Because Bronwen Wallace is back
She brought with her Virginia Woolf
And a bunch of feminists
I had forgotten about.

Bronwen Wallace is that poet
who wrote about women
getting beaten up by men they love
and how they went to Shelters
and told Police who didn't care
or couldn't care
or didn't know how.

The poet is a woman
who thought with her heart
She's the one whose poems
my Women's Studies Professor
read at the end of class.
They were friends

and then she died.
The value of a dead friend
meant nothing to me
then.

So I seem to be writing this poem
Not knowing where it is going
Where it will take me
But as it comes I am
More sure of how I got
here.

I used think being a feminist
meant I would be poor.
It would have, except for education.
Which lead to the stories girls tell of rape.
Accompanying them as they appear
in the spot light
To tell the whole truth
of women's oppression

I am trying with all my heart
not to think.
For all I have done
and all I have failed to do.
I blame it on Vaughn.
On Bronwen Wallace
And Virginia Woolf.

OLD OAKS, WEEPING WILLOWS

Vlada Bilyak

My younger brother and I are little saplings while my only grandmother has the deepest roots in the oldest soil. Her face has the most wrinkles of anyone's in my family. If you were to saw her body in half, you would find almost 79 rings inside. And that isn't counting the ones on her fingers, layered one atop another with diamonds and amethyst stones and intertwining gold snakes with complementary necklace pendants and earrings. If you were to saw my grandma in half—to count her rings for yourself, to confirm my assertion that in 1930 she was but a seed—she would be counting rings also. She would count the few telephone rings that were and all those that weren't. She would count the telephone rings she wishes she had heard from me when she was still whole, before a part of her was a large, round stump firmly rooted in the earth.

She would also count other things, like the number of garbage bags it would take to dispose of her clothing. What would we do with all her crystal vases and candy dishes and wine glasses and kettles with matching tea cups and glass fruit and fake flowers and vegetable paintings and small, sterling silver Jewish figurines? And the food! Do you know how much food she made when she knew I was coming? She made three different salads (all fresh) and cheese blintzes with raisins and she can fry some potatoes (a little burnt the way you like them) and heat up the soup (and you'll eat it with a dollop of sour cream) and she has light havarti cheese and chicken and fish—but you don't eat meat!—and she has beef pilaf but you won't eat it either, of course.

My grandmother does not talk about her childhood or her dead sister. Instead she likes to talk about how clean her apartment is; how even though the government pays for a lady to clean the apartment once a week, my grandmother will clean it again—properly,

this time—once the lady leaves. She complains about her painful knees, which, I suspect, have oddly more rings inside of them than her other limbs. She talks about her erratic blood pressure, counts the number of pills she has to swallow each day. She wonders aloud why she doesn't get along with my mother. She remembers her husband, plugs in an electronic candle to commemorate his death, counts the years she's been without him.

My grandmother has almost 79 rings, one inside another, layered like the rings on her fingers. You could see them all—not one a perfect circle, each ring wider and more flawed than the last—if you saw her body in half. But no one's done it yet.

GIRLHOOD

Vlada Bilyak

with dandelion crowns and miniature worm gardens,
we sat in the field at recess.
you would say things like "if we count the time we spend out here in seconds,
it'll seem much longer"
and I nodded, because, Truth.
I asked you things like "do you ever cry thinking about lobsters
with their claws in rubber bands?"
and you said "of course."
sometimes when we had something very difficult to ask,
or something very difficult to say,
we spoke in sign language.
but it was a sign language we didn't know,
a sign language we made up alone without one another.
I couldn't understand what she was trying to communicate,
but I knew it was something sad from the creases in her palm.
I responded with appropriately bent index fingers.
and she knew, too. she knew what my fingers meant to say.

UP FOR THE CHALLENGE(S): MATURE WOMEN STUDENTS AT QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

Jennifer Massey, et al

The Student Affairs Research and Assessment portfolio at Queen's University conducts a number of projects annually that examine the experiences of students on campus. Guided by assessment and evaluative techniques that further and deepen an understanding of the needs of students, these projects foster a supportive campus environment and sense of community. In the 2008/09 academic year, the research team conducted a comprehensive examination into the experiences of mature women students. This article summarizes the findings of this investigation. The full report is available on the Research and Assessment website: www.queensu.ca/studentaffairs/assessment.html

For the purposes of this study, a mature student was defined as someone who: enters an undergraduate degree and is twenty-two years of age or older; enters a Master's program and is twenty-six years of age or older; enters a PhD program and is twenty-nine years of age or older; or is a student who has dependents. According to this definition, 2,509 (or 12.6%) students at Queen's University can be classified as mature students. Of this mature student group, 46% (1,162 students) are female. National and provincial statistics show an overall increase in the number of mature women students enrolling in university.

Recent literature that explores the particular challenges experienced by mature women students as they return to, and complete, university has identified: processes of socialization and gender roles, lack of encouragement, low self-confidence, the under-valuing of the benefits of higher education, the challenges of multiple roles, financial constraints, and lack of support (emotional, psychological, and financial) (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002; Merrill, 1999) as being the types of challenges that mature women students

face. Mature women students attend, or return to school, for different reasons and under a variety of circumstances. With life situations that often greatly diverge from those of traditional students, mature students require specific support services that attend to their unique set of needs and challenges.

Given the rising trend this study sought to examine how mature women students experience university at Queen's and the role that the Ban Righ Centre plays in their experiences. Furthermore, the project also sought to determine the areas in need of improvement in meeting the needs of mature women students. The findings from this help us to understand the challenges and barriers that mature women, who decide to become students, experience at university.

The study was conducted using qualitative methods of inquiry. Understanding the experiences of mature women students necessitated a mode of inquiry that allowed for the experiences of participants to emerge in all of their detailed richness. Researchers met with mature women students, faculty and staff participants, as well as traditional students (those who enter university directly after secondary school). Mature women students attended focus groups or were interviewed depending on whether they preferred to share their experiences independently or in a group setting and their availability (as we would learn later, the issue of time is an important consideration for mature women students). All interviews (with the exception of one) and focus groups were audio-taped and later transcribed.

Once interviews and focus groups were completed, researchers analyzed the transcripts. Analysis revealed five broad themes under which the experiences of mature women students were organized. It should be noted that not all women experienced the five themes in the same way or to the same extent, nor are they mutually exclusive, but the themes provide a framework by which to understand the complexities of attending or returning to university as a mature women student.

BARRIERS FACING MATURE WOMEN STUDENTS

FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

Poverty is a huge problem for women when they are going to school...

—Mature Woman Student

The financial challenges faced by the mature women students at Queen's University come in a number of forms and for a variety of reasons. These challenges are also experienced to different degrees throughout the various stages of pursuing higher education; from making that first step and deciding to go back to school, attending courses, and attempting to finish their degree.

SELF-CONFIDENCE

Self-esteem issues...when you're starting later in life going to school...a lot of times it's because they (women) did not have those privileges and those breaks in their younger years...for whatever reason. And the world doesn't exactly, you know, cater to women...so it's a greater struggle...

—Mature Woman Student

Feelings of apprehension and self-doubt were two prominent factors influencing the decisions of mature women students to consider pursuing a university degree. Although many of the women who participated in the project had dreamed early on in their lives that they might eventually attend university, they experienced high levels of self-doubt regarding their ability to participate in and contribute to the classroom and university communities.

BALANCING MULTIPLE ROLES

They [younger students] are going back to residence and you're going home to clean the house or do

the laundry or look after the kids...

—Mature Woman Student

For many mature women students their role as a student is added to a collection of other roles they already perform in their everyday lives. Often, mature women students are mothers, caregivers, partners, employees, and volunteers, among various other roles. Not only do the demands of multiple roles impact the availability of time to pursue education, but there are significant levels of stress and strain that can result from trying to perform multiple roles if women do not receive adequate support.

ISOLATION

The university is not a place [designed] for women. It's certainly geared towards teenagers and certainly towards young people...there is not a lot of social connection [for older students]—people can be very lonely.

—Faculty Participant

The isolation experienced by the mature students in our research took a variety of forms. Some participants noted feelings of isolation that they did not fit into the university population like other students (because of age, responsibilities, international status, ethnocultural grouping, etc.), and that they were alone because others did not understand the challenges they were experiencing. Participants felt the lack of interaction and connection with colleagues acutely and there were also discussions around how a lack of interaction with other students made it difficult for mature women students to share information.

DISCRIMINATION

I don't have the same barriers as you may [a younger student], but I still do have barriers right. I

am still old enough to be most of my peers' grandmothers...or well at least elderly mother.

—Mature Woman Student

Several mature women participants reported experiencing discrimination of various kinds while attending university. In many cases, participants perceived this discrimination to be on the basis of their status as a mature female student (i.e. age and gender), though some participants also discussed discrimination on the basis of ethnocultural identity and ability/disability.

THE SUPPORTING ROLE OF THE BAN RIGH CENTRE

Described by some students, staff, and faculty as a place of encounters (BRC website), for many mature women students, the Ban Righ Centre is the focal point for formal and informal support, as well as networking on campus..The Ban Righ Centre is a one-of-a-kind facility across Canada, as it is the only centre dedicated to serving mature women students explicitly. During the course of this research, a resounding consensus emerged among participants that, along with the more formal aspects of BRC programming, the staff of the Ban Righ Centre play a crucial role in the successful functioning of the Centre. Mature women students discussed how important it was for them to be treated with warmth and compassion. In the words of two participants:

The people here get it... they understand...they're good at problem solving and encouragement.... I think that you really need that [when] you are already feeling isolated and alone because you are a mature student.... It's nice to come to a place where the staff treats you as if you are a friend.

—Mature Woman Student

[It's] vital... it helps you balance life and school. At a lot of levels it's sort of that point in the

middle that keeps it from falling apart.
—Mature Woman Student

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This project identified how important it is to understand the different and complex needs of diverse student populations. Mature women students at Queen's University face a variety of barriers that impact the ways in which they experience university life. Part of the task of this project was to understand the experiences of mature women students and the role that the Ban Righ Centre plays, as well as making recommendations for supporting and improving the university experience for mature women students. Our report puts forth the following recommendations: maintain and enhance the physical space and resources of the Ban Righ Centre, find ways to facilitate early contact with mature women students, to reconceptualize how is defined as a mature student, to create additional funding, to offer training for faculty and teaching assistants for working with mature students, to find creative ways to make the University more inclusive for mature students, and to promote mature student networking.

Mature women students contribute much time, energy, and wisdom to Queen's University and it is important to not only recognize this, but to make every effort to support and enhance their contributions.

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MORE INFORMATION

The Ban Righ Centre is located at 32 Bader Lane. You can check out more details at their website: <http://www.queensu.ca/dsao/ind/banrigh/index.htm>.

BIG TITS. GREAT TITS. SMALL TITS. FAKE TITS.

Jaimmie Riley

I remember being nine, playing basketball during recess, when the class clown snapped my bra.

I remember being 10 at summer camp. We only had a communal shower and we were not allowed to wear our bathing suits (...to ensure optimal cleanliness?). I was the only 10 year old with a C-cup, and I could see all of my cabin-mates notice.

I remember being 13 at summer camp. I was going to free-swim and an older boy, 14 or 15, asked me my age. I blushed and when I told him he replied, "You have really big boobs for a girl in grade 8."

I remember being 16 when the term "titty-fucking" became popular.

I remember being 19 and after 3 hours in the operating room and an easy week of recovery, I went from an E/EE-cup to a C-cup. A month later I even had my scars photographed for Vagina Monologues!

I remember being 21 and at work, when I see a guy I used to "get intimate" with in first year. Later he asks, with his buddy in tow, "How big were your boobs before the reduction again?"

THE UNFAILING COMPANION (AUGUST 20, 2009)

Julie B. Shen

let us have open windows
let us leave the door ajar
let us breathe heavily
let us have no plans and sit silently
under hopeless skies only to dwell on the softness of summer's rain.

let us eat alone
let us take in the silence
let us linger on the very last note
let us forget to want and cease to wonder
"what will I be?", rejoicing only in "the future's not yours to see."

let us hold hands
let us skip to our own beat
let us retreat into our own world
let us drift aimlessly asleep on sticky summer nights,
only half-waking dreamily to savour the sweetness
let us enjoy our own company.

let us cherish the morsels of solitary retreat amid heated crowds, heated lives and heated needs.

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

Abigail Woollett has an Honours BA in History and English from Laurentian University. She completed post-grad work in addictions treatment and prevention at Georgian College. Abigail currently works as an addictions counselor in a residential treatment centre in the Kingston area for men with substance abuse issues.

Anna Thomas is trying to figure out how to combine creative writing, activism, and an English degree into a life when she graduates this year.

Ashleigh Ryan is an Economics and Political science student. Having worked as a staff writer and then editor for the *Queen's Journal*, she hopes to become a journalist and writer.

Elizabeth Greene's new collection of poetry, *Moving*, is due out this spring from Inanna Press.

Claire Wenngren, a self-taught artist, is currently a graduate student in Art History.

Deborah Hong is a first year Film student at Queen's and currently resides on the secluded isle of West Campus.

Hanna Tjaden is a fourth year History of Art student at Queen's who enjoys taking pictures of daily life. Hannah shoots almost exclusively using analog cameras; her favourites include her Leica Minilux, Olympus Trip 35 and Polaroid camera.

Heather Morrison is happy to know you don't have to spell to be a poet. She is blessed to have two homes, PEI and Kingston. In her paid work, she is the Young Women's Counselor at the Sexual Assault Centre of Kingston.

Heather Smith is a second year BFA student at Queen's University. She is from Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

Jaimmie Riley is a Queen's undergraduate student in Computing and Global Development Studies 2010.

Jessica Weick is a third year Global Development Studies major. Her loves include loose leaf tea, contemporary dance and sleeping in.

Justin Briginshaw is in the process of becoming a high school teacher of History and French, but finds that he spends a lot of his time working at bars.

Kailee Somers is in her first year at Queen's in the General Arts program. She has always enjoyed writing, particularly about issues that affect her personally.

Lara Szabo Greisman is a poet, playwright, student and Artelian who likes hanging out with words and the occasional juicy syllable.

Laura Ludtke enjoys drinking tea with her darling.

Leah Browning is the author of three nonfiction books for teens, and her second chapbook, *Picking Cherries in the Española Valley*, is forthcoming from Dancing Girl Press.

Leora Smith is a third year ENSC student at Queen's and a 21st year feminism student at Life. She is confused by those who ask if she is a lover or a fighter, and identifies as both.

Maya Thau-Eleff is a spoken-word artist based out of Kingston/Winnipeg and is Co-Chair of the Women's Centre at Queen's, with a degree in Global Development Studies and Women's Studies.

Nancy Sheng is a fourth year student studying English and Religious Studies.

Theresa Nolan Suart, a native of Oromocto, NB, is a writer, researcher and educator who lives in Kingston with her husband, John, and their two children, Celeste and Michael.

SUBMISSIONS AND QUESTIONS

All submissions and queries can be emailed to us at qfr@ams.queensu.ca, or mailed to us at our address:

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