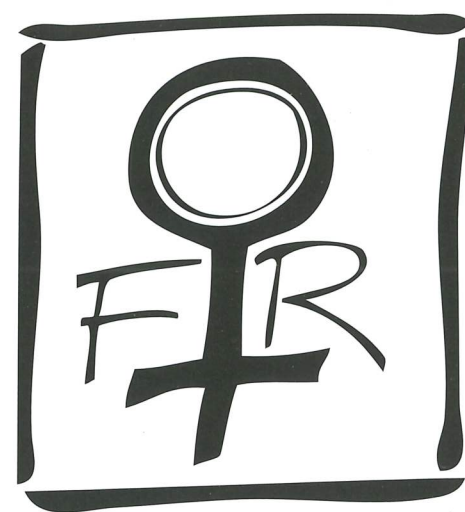




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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

As a movement feminism has undergone drastic changes since its first wave but it is far from dead. As a long standing publication at Queen's University the *Queen's Feminist Review* annually changes and grows along with the fluid category of feminism. This year I was amazed and humbled by the creative talent that was shared with QFR. As we close QFR's 21st year we hope to offer literary and artistic pieces that are challenging, provocative, personal and political – a sampling of the multiplicity of voices and perspectives that are part of the feminist experience. Within the pages of this publication you will find pieces shared by artists of every race, class and sexual orientation. QFR's contributors fall in many places along the gender spectrum, a testament to the fact that we all need to back each other in order to fight for equal treatment.

To you, the reader: I hope QFR will provide an opportunity for education, introspection and liberation.



Renee Demill

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We would also like to thank each one of the extraordinary artists and writers who bravely shared their work. QFR commends your commitment to anti-oppression in the face of a society that often undervalues creativity and misconstrues the meaning of feminism.

"A Feminist is anyone who recognizes the equality and full humanity of women and men" – Gloria Steinem

TWENTY

- Anonymous

When I heard talk of gender
I supposed I would talk of the body;
but what is the feminine body
if the breasts belong to a chubby boy.
Not the women you've heard talk of
but a skinny rack that is easily broken.
A body that is thin and weary,
(yet surprisingly durable).
Pale skin that stretches over hidden bones
who tell secrets in the moonlight to a lover
who sees them as a little girl,
(or maybe not at all).
And as I observe the body
I have to wonder if the title comes from what is there,
or what is absent.
Can the smell of tobacco and coffee
(which you've rubbed off on my skin)
make me as much of a man as you?

MARRIED YOUNG

- Louise Hill

Just a kid with a ring
but instead of candy
it's compact carbon

It means something
that doesn't fit

It slides and slips

rock and metal
smooth and sharp

A riddled symbol
fortressing flesh
like a cage

Such a small, heavy thing
you can't cast away

Double Consciousness & Pro-sex Black Feminist Theory

- Patricia Louie

The shift from the conservatism of second wave feminism to the inclusive and diverse nature of third wave feminism began in the 1980's with the birth of pro-sex feminism. Theorists such as Carole Vance (1984) and Amber Hollibaugh (1984) aimed to create a space for women to exercise agency, exploration and desire (Vance, 1984, p.1). However, an unintended consequence of pro-sex feminism was the exclusion of black voices from the discussion. In part, the marginalization of black voices is a product of a colonial past that has stereotyped the black body as always already hypersexual (Hammonds, 1994, p. 140). As a result, black academics have taken up a "politics of silence" to resist these stereotypes. In order

to understand the disconnect between white and black feminist theory, it is vital to look at the historical forces that have shaped current realities. W.E.B. Du Bois (1999) theory of double consciousness provides a window into theorizing the contradictions that exist within pro-sex black feminist theory. Du Bois (1999) defines double-consciousness as "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (p. 4). While Du Bois articulates this concept within the context of African-American identity, his ideas extend to the dialectic tension that exists in pro-sex black feminist theory. The paradox of double consciousness is that it acts simultaneously as a veil, symbolizing the otherness of the black body, as well as a potential tool for

liberation. Furthermore, I will critique the reasons that black feminists have avoided theorizing about black sexuality. I consider whether there is space to re-configure black feminist theory to create a discourse about sexuality and desire through black female rap music. The social relevance in this paper lies in its poststructuralist analysis of black sexuality, exploring the possibility of black pleasure, agency and desire that previously has been written out of pro-sex feminist discourse.

Drawing on Du Bois' (1999) theory of double consciousness, the veil is symbolic of the colour line that divides blacks from whites in society. The power of the white gaze is detrimental in that the African-American is never truly self-conscious because he is influenced by the ideas, expectations and desires of the "other" in society. In part, the study of pro-sex black feminism has been stunted by a colonialist history of white supremacy that socialized ideas about black promiscuity. Many theorists locate the hypersexualization of the black body as originating in the public exhibition of Saartjie Baartman (Nash, 2008, p.51). Baartman was a black slave brought to London from Cape Town in 1810 and was a spectacle for Europeans to observe "otherness" of the black body. She became known as the Hottentot Venus and was an object of caged display. She was exhibited for her "unusual and exotic" bodily features: her large buttocks and her labia minora. Jennifer Nash (2008) claims that Baartman's body functioned as a "master text", allowing European audiences to cast their gaze on the racially and sexually marked other

(p. 51). In the course of the nineteenth century, Baartman came to represent the imagined racial and sexual difference of all black women (p. 52). As a result, black women have internalized these ideas and police themselves to fight against this sexual image. This self-questioning and self-disparagement exemplifies the power of colonialist discourses in shaping the self-image and experience of black women. In Franz Fanon's (1967) pivotal work *Black Skin, White Masks* he alerts us that systems of colonization shape black identities and thus the colonized understand themselves through the eyes of the oppressor. Evelyn Hammonds (1994) claims that "black women have reacted to the repressive force of the hegemonic discourse on race and sex...with silence, secrecy and partially self-chosen invisibility (p. 171). For Fanon, "the politics of silence" practiced by black women serves as a "white mask" in order to deny this image of promiscuity that has been imposed on black people. The surveillance of women's sexual autonomy within the black community suppresses any articulation of reclaiming the black body as a site for pleasure and desire. In the same line, Fanon (1967) claims that the adoption of "the white mask" actually serves to alienate black people from their own identity and consciousness. Historical understanding of untamed black sexuality marginalizes sexual black women because they deviate from what is deemed a "respectable" identity (Hammonds, 1994, p.175). Their bodies are a site of political controversy, considered embarrassing and regressive to the black progress narrative. Angela Davis (1982) identifies

the difficulty for black women of this recuperation process from object to subject because enslavement relegated black women's sexuality to the market place (in Skeggs, 1993, p. 14). Thus, their involvement in "immoral" activities is viewed as feeding the black promiscuity stereotype and mark them as traitors to their race (Miller-Young, 2008, p. 276). In this light, the veil is detrimental, denying black women the ability to express themselves as sexual beings without falling back into colonialist typecasts. This double consciousness creates a "two-ness" within the black woman as she struggles to reconcile her identity as a respectable black woman and as a sexual being.

For Du Bois (1999), the veil is also a gift because it provides African-Americans with the privilege of a second sight; the ability to navigate two worlds instead of one (8). Pro-sex black feminists embody this outsider-within status, and thus are granted a unique position to negotiate their sexuality. They can choose to subvert or remold the stereotypes that have been cast upon them by a colonialist past, and in doing so, create a new liberatory space where they can transcend the dominant sexual script. Drawing upon Michel Foucault (1988), this can be interpreted as a "practice of freedom," whereby "the subject acts upon the self in order to alter the dimensions already imposed upon it, to reconstitute existing relations of power." Although Foucault (1988) recognizes that one's capacity for freedom is limited as individuals are shaped by embedded power relations, he also suggests that by actively using techniques "proposed, suggested,

imposed" upon the self by society, individuals may creatively transform themselves and in turn how they are perceived. This "second sight" gives black women a more comprehensive view of the world; reflecting on themselves and the stereotypes forced upon them.

In pop culture, rap is a site where Du Bois' idea of "the gift" of double consciousness is being employed to create a dialogue about black sexuality. Kimberly Springer (2002) proposes the use of music as a medium through which we can educate the greater public about the work that has been done by black feminists in the past, and how contemporary black feminists are building upon their work in order to move their politics forward into the 21st century. Similarly, bell hooks (1989) also argues that black women's musical legacy is a way to understand history and contemporary black women's consciousness (in Skeggs, 1993, p. 9).

Beverly Skeggs' (1993) research on black female rappers suggests that this is a medium in which the silencing of black women's sexuality can be challenged. The female rappers "talk back, talk Black" (hooks, 1989) to the colonialist system that attempts to contain the expression of women's sexuality. Skeggs (1993) contends that black female rappers are creating a public space in which women can express their sexuality powerfully as a demand, need and desire. Springer (2002) acknowledges that while not all of these songs are "feel good," or positive, and that while not all artists are explicit about their political stances (if they claim to have one at all), music is a powerful tool for stimulating discussion about gender,

**PHONE BEFORE YOU
COME, I NEED TO
SHAVE MY CHOCHA**

**YO DO OR YOU
DON'T OR YOU WILL
OR WON'T YA**

**GO DOWNTOWN
AND EAT IT LIKE
A VULTURE**

sexism, and masculinity/femininity from a black perspective (p. 1078).

According to Mireille Miller-Young (2008), hip hop provides a medium through which artists constantly refashion and perform the self in ways that subvert hegemonic values, sexual propriety, and decency. Skeggs (1993) claims that female rappers manipulate misogynistic and racist discourses in order to create a forum in which women can express their sexuality in terms of autonomy, empowerment, and control (p. 3). Rather than side-stepping or downplaying their own sexuality, black female rappers define themselves by defiantly foregrounding their own sexual desires and demands (p. 14). They transform themselves from objects to subjects, and help fill the void in discussions of sexuality in black feminism.

The Grammy award winning black female rap artist, Missy Elliot, rose to prominence in the late 90s. She claims that she faced difficulty obtaining a record contract early in her career because, she "wasn't 5'6", size three, with a tiny waist" (in Godfree, 2005, p.63). Instead, Missy embodies a brand of femininity that is very different from that of conventional artists like the Spice Girls. In the song "Work It" (2002) Missy Elliott expresses her own kind of sexuality, effectively creating a dialogue for us to rethink our analyses of black women's sexuality. She claims her body for a site of desire and empowerment. Missy Elliot's hit song "Work it" is a celebration of the black body, active female desire and hip hop culture. In refusing to agree to containment of their sexuality, black female rappers are challenging the

discourses that are used to control them.

In Missy's hit song "Work it" (2002) she celebrates her body: see my hips and my tips, don't ya, see my ass and lips, don't ya.

In "Work It," she centres her body as unapologetically sexual and thus as a desiring subject as well as an object of desire (Godfree, 2005, p.67). The celebration of black women's rears in hip-hop music has created a space for black women to reclaim their bodies as natural and attractive. This is a radical re-presentation of the historical image of black women's butts as grotesque and a mark of their deviance and hypersexuality vis a vis the "hottentot venus" (Miller Young, 2008, p.269). Missy subverts normative white beauty standards and recreates it as a site of desire for men (Miller Young, 2008, p.270). Within her explicit lyrics, she raps:

Phone before you come, I need
to shave my chocha/Yo do or
you don't or you will or won't ya/
Go downtown and eat it like
a vulture.

Missy Elliot is "flipping" the patriarchal narrative when she demands that her partner "work it" for her. Her willingness to discuss her sexual desire "challenges male notions of female sexuality and pleasure" (Godfree, 2005, p. 66). These images make black pleasure visible and create what hooks (1992) would call a representational space where black spectators can view themselves and each other as sexual subjects. Black feminists can break from the tradition of sexual conservatism and instead embark on what Hammonds (1994) calls a "politics

of articulation." In this way, Missy Elliot is actively confronting and breaking the legacy of silence surrounding black sexuality. As a pleasure seeker, she authorizes other black females to pursue their sexual desires without being stigmatized as a "whore."

Double consciousness is both detrimental and a gift. On one hand, it has injured the progression of black feminist theory by locating any sexual representation of the black body as linked to colonialist conceptions of black hyper-sexuality. On the other hand, there is space for resistance and creativity within the discourse in which the subaltern group can navigate for their own gains. A potential site to begin the discussion of a pro-sex black feminist discourse is rap music. As discussed above, rap music is a potential mechanism to overcome the powerlessness that many women experience as part of their structural and cultural positioning. It is important to recognize the pitfalls as well as the liberatory potential in pro-sex black feminist theory in order to achieve a more wholistic conception of the theory.

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untitled - Jess Roberts

PRETTY GIRL

- Joni Aikens

It's ok pretty girl, these things, they haunt.
It's ok, these times on the brink.
It's ok pretty girl, I'll take care of you.
It's just that sometimes, I think...
I think of loneliness of person.
I think of loneliness of flesh.
I think of heart lines in attics,
patches of snow,
disdained breasts.
This girl, oh is she pretty?
This girl is she to shine?
This girl who comes from Glories,
stand-in as I exit, blurring time.
They say she's a distraction. They say, and stop, and stare
but pretty girls can't be sorry,
they've no extra time to spare.
The ssssss-way of Spirit has no blame.
And the demons, they're on a tear.
The lines, they're a' waving,
clothing the distance with her hair.

TO BECOME A **WOMAN**

- Lauren Di Pede

*This is a spoken word piece meant to be
performed by one person.*

It takes time,
It takes pain,
And it takes love
To Become a Woman.

Women are not formed stark naked out of the hands of God
They do not drop from the sky or rise from the ocean
On a bed of seashells
As vixen

 Temptress
 Or minx

Oh no. That ain't it.
Oh yes. It takes time to become a woman.

They are given clothes, bigger and bigger
Until their bosom grows to fill their dress
And with it, compassion to calm the rest
As those clothes, in velvet and brocade
We've draped
Their trimmings itch as they bunch against one's skin
Still soft, and shy
Oh yes, it takes pain to become a woman.

It also takes many hands to become a woman.
There are the hands in her hair,
Brushing and pulling those locks into coifs.
There are the hands that pinch
 Hands that wax
And tweeze and squeeze
And polish and buff
And lock and unwind
All to push and form and shape
That girl,
 That CHILD
Into a woman.

Oh yes, that's right, it's true.
It takes love to become a woman.
There needs to be....
Warmth.
In the air to become a woman.
She needs to heat up
To grow
And shift
 And change
To be soft
 And spread (like butter!)
And widen
 And lengthen
To Become a Woman.
She needs the:
 Ashes of her elders
 And the kindling of her peers
 And the match of her heart
To set that fire FREE
To Become a Woman.
She needs to say:
Damn Right!
I'm here!
Thank GOD!
I AM A WOMAN!

Oh yes.
It takes love to become a woman.

So if you've got a clock
 Throw it out
And if you've got your remedies
 Keep them near
And if you have a heart
 Which I'm sure you do, girl.
 Keep it strong
 Hold it true
 Let it move
 And you will
 Become
 a Woman

From: Prayers to God & Leonard Cohen

– M. E. Csamer

*And I'll bury my soul in a scrapbook,
With the photographs there, and the moss
And I'll yield to the flood of your beauty
My cheap violin and my cross*

– Leonard Cohen, "Take This Waltz"

They called it faith but meant obedience
While you were always the shadow at my heels
Being dragged along through so much deception
Mostly my own – I was afraid to believe
In something so undemanding, pure.
I shut my eyes when all I had to do was look
At those around me whose eyes were wide
With the beauty of it: terrifying love, tearing down
barriers, stripping the supplicant of supplication, I took
a chance, said: I'll bury my soul in a scrapbook
And start again. But where to start? Advice
Was everywhere, so many positive they knew,
Concrete abstraction of truth laid on living soil
Until the earth could not breath. Nor I.
Nothing had a clean smell, a room I could enter
Without a ticket, a barren yet welcoming doss
To wait out the nothingness, the time before;
A vacuum, begging, I added touches, here
A candle, incense to hope, my Joss,
With the photographs there, and the moss.
How long was that room, my prison
My refuge? Something was there with me
Indefinable, as now, but more real than despair:
If iron can touch soft as feathers, it was iron
If fire can sear without burning, it was fire
If water can clean without drowning, it was blue sea.
Anticipation's woven shawl, I wore and whispered
Every name I knew but none was yours. Not God
Not Yahweh, Buddha, Dharma, Love or Duty
Then silence and a yielding to the flood of your beauty.
I found you where you always were, inside me,
Me and not me, thing and shadow both, shape-shifter
Not guardian, not watcher, yet both, your threads and mine,
one rug. The peace of that yielding, more truce than concord
There was so much to let go of: to think that nothingness
Could hold such weight, years of anger adding to the sauce
I supped and called food. The flesh that grows on skeleton
Lets fly the false gods of faith bequeathed, dispossession not loss
My cheap violin and my cross.

ODE TO GIRLS WHO LOOKED LIKE LOVE

- Tess Klaver

I wanted to curl you into my blood stream that night. So cold it was like the moon was dragging its fingertips across my skin but it didn't matter because I had you, you were in my arms, and all I could feel was the sweet scent of your ringlet hair and your thighs kinked in mine and your lungs pushing the air into my neck and God, I thought: If your heart was a spiral staircase, let me be treading in the middle. Let me be looking up to the rafters where the light comes through. Let me be standing in awe on the marble, waiting for something to drop, because I never trusted anything I couldn't see the top of, never trusted anything I couldn't feel with my fingers and my feet. Let me be grasping the railing like my life depends on it, because it does, because it did, because sometimes I feel like I'd rather throw myself off than trust that someone won't push me.

I'M SORRY. I JUMPED.

I read that dust from the moon smells like gunpowder, and I thought of you. Because we crashed into starlight like a high-speed car wreck, we threw ourselves all of sixteen and ready to explode like hand grenades against a town we could barely stand in, we fractured each other like tectonic plates slipping together in the nighttime. Your mouth was always lonely; you always tasted like vodka and cigarettes, strangers and ash. You always felt like sheer need. My hand would slip into your wild fire hair and you would cling to me as if you couldn't feel me burning, press yourself into me like a trigger, as if you didn't know my heart was an empty chambered gun, waiting for your bullets. Tell me, if I could turn back time to the night when you told me I wasn't a boy, so I wasn't enough, tell me you wouldn't have done it differently. Tell me the moon will always be scented with napalm and shrapnel. Tell me on a cloudless night that you can still smell war.

We were twelve and I would love you for five years after that, had already loved you for a year, had no idea I loved you. Thought you had been born straight out of a storybook where the heroine is dark and doesn't know what's coming and doesn't need a brilliant knight to save her. You were the first and last girl I ever loved in daylight, threw you into a pond full of the sun and tadpoles that writhed amongst our feet, because we weren't damaged yet and everything was alive. Grabbed your hand and hauled you out to a half submerged bench, climbed up on it like we were planting a flag for our homeland, your hand in mine. Thought, oh, of course, and that was it for five years. Didn't know that later your parents would throw plates at each other's heads, didn't know that the boy who taught me to fight would never teach me how to fight him, didn't know we'd both end up carving into our own flesh, hieroglyphs of unintention. Didn't know we'd go off like a nuclear power plant, we weren't the chernobility yet, weren't the poisoned royalty of a skinny love. Didn't know we'd both end up broken and come out the other side whole. Didn't know I'd wake up one day, still with the ghost of your lips on mine, enormously happy. Because you had fallen in love with a girl. She isn't me, but God, how you smile.

In addition to identifying as a woman and a feminist, I identify as a geek – a difficult mix. I am surrounded by hyper-sexualized representations of women in all streams of media, women characters dying to torment and motivate the men who love them, conflicting messages about how I should look and dress and act, and men decrying my audacity at complaining about any of this.

–Allison O'Toole

I first learned that girl geeks are treated differently than the boys when I received the *Lord of the Rings* books for my tenth birthday, about six months before the first film was released. I adored the books and movies to the point that my grade school nickname was “Mr. Frodo.” Yet boys in and outside of school could never accept that I was a “real fan” like they were. They assumed that as a girl, I was only watching the movies for the cute boys, so I’d be asked if I’d ever played the video games, exactly how many of the appendices I’d read, and minute trivia about the books and movies to prove my legitimacy as a fan. I’d always win these contests, of course; I’d read the series twice by the time I was twelve, I knew a thing or two about it. I would prove myself to be a worthy fan in their eyes, unlike the “fangirls” only in it for Orlando Bloom’s face.

Hostility in geek culture can be neatly summed up in the fact that fangirl is held as a derisive term. According to the geek community, fanboys are a little too interested in their geek interests, but fangirls are only interested in attractive men and romantic plots. Not only do these concepts ignore the potential for women to have different interests, they delegitimize the sorts of media that are associated with femininity; there is nothing in romance to make it inherently inferior to other genres aside from its association with women.

Society has very strict ideas of what women are allowed to like and engage in, so exploring media outside this bubble is treated as suspect. As a result, women are shamed for enjoying traditionally feminine interests, but are told we only seek male attention if we enjoy the more masculine. Women gamers are constantly assumed to be less skilled than the men, and women who cosplay (creating realistic, detailed costumes for conventions) are criticized for wearing the revealing costumes assigned to women characters by their often male creators. According to masculine-heavy sections of the internet – fans and men in the industry – women cosplayers select the skimpiest costumes they can find in the hope that they will be showered with praise from male nerds. Yet again, the idea that women could be genuine geeks is not within their realm of possibility.

Basic belief in the difference between legitimate and false nerds is present in less obviously hostile ways however, such as the prevalent concept of the ‘Fake Geek Girl.’ Pictures, articles, tweets, and every other form of Internet expression have been written at length criticizing the women who conform to all of the stereotypes I’ve discussed; women who know nothing about their chosen geeky interest, or express their love for it in the wrong way, or don’t love the right aspects of it. Even other women will lament losing nerd cred by proximity to these ‘Fake Geek Girls’ – but I’ve never witnessed any women who fit this mould. If women don’t know as much about something as other geeks, they are shamed for having newly discovered it, or for having less

investment in it than others do.

In the end, women are discouraged from liking anything, and can be scared to admit their interests, because no matter what they do someone will question their validity.

I understand some of the motivation between distancing yourself from a ‘fake’ geek. Being a nerd is cool now, so we want to have some kind of exclusivity to our title. But there’s no number of hours one has to log in order to be a geek. No one was expelled from the womb with an encyclopaedic knowledge of Batman. A geek is just a person with a lot of enthusiasm for something that has been deemed geeky. Yet this extends further than nerd culture; girls who like sports or hardcore music can face similar problems with perceived legitimacy. In any of these areas, decrying fake fans – especially when we only attack women – results only in women being afraid to express their love for things, not in some kind of exclusive identity. We should be working to make this a supportive community, rather than policing arbitrary concepts of geek purity.

Girls, we don’t need to be afraid to express our love for the things we like. Being a geek is cool, and there are safe spaces to share the love and learn about new things. Be a geek, be proud, and don’t listen to the guys who say that your love is less legitimate than theirs or that you love it for their attention. I never would have made it through elementary school if I’d let their attitude get to me; I survived on my one *Lord of the Rings* zinger question, since none of the boys could remember what Éomer’s sword is called.

(By the way, it’s called Gúthwinë).

BEYOND COPING: REVOLTING AGAINST A RAPE CULTURE

– Ellie Donohue-Miller

Western culture normalizes, excuses, and encourages sexual violence against women and other marginalized peoples. Defending against and coping with the routine hostility a rape culture presents is a normalized expectation for all women in this society. I was born with a vested interest in dismantling rape culture. It is not through statistics, but everyday lived experience as a woman and supporter of survivors of sexual violence, that I understand the dire need for cultural revolution. Rape culture is at the heart of the systemic oppression and victimization that billions face in this global patriarchy. While tyrannical in size, our culture is not monolithic or infallible. Feminism is an antithesis to patriarchy. It is with great excitement that I cling to and nurture the idea that liberation from this rape culture is possible.

“FEMINISM IS AN ANTITHESIS TO PATRIARCHY”

Myths about rape are common in western culture (Sudderth, Leisring, & Bronson, 2010). With “one out of four [women] sexually assaulted in the course of their college career” (Sudderth, Leisring, & Bronson, 2010, p. 56), this culture of violence and the tendency to misplace blame on victims has implications for every woman (Boyd, 2012). When women experience sexual assault, they are often unwilling to report because they feel embarrassed, ashamed, or do not actually believe that the incident constituted a ‘crime’ (Sudderth, Leisring, & Bronson, 2010). “Rape is only four letters, one small syllable, and yet it is one of the hardest words to coax from your lips when you need it most” (Peterson, 2008, 2009). Cultures constitute a set of shared beliefs and customs. When culture instructs how to act in most situations (McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2008), unchallenged cultural myths about rape play out as scripts for how to respond to sexual violence. Women are blamed for being sexually assaulted, based on how they dress or behave, and taught that sexual assault is only a crime if it involves obvious physical violence and is committed by a stranger (Sudderth, Leisring, & Bronson, 2010). Within this hegemonic system of patriarchy, women are divided on stereotypic lines and valued accordingly (Pietsch, 2010). The criminal justice system neglects women of colour (Pietsch, 2010) and sex workers (Schwartzman, 2012). Only those who are perceived by middle-class white men as representing the ‘perfect victim’ receive any semblance of ‘protection’ (Schwartzman, 2012). When violent acts can no longer be ignored by institutions, a scapegoat is concocted

to be the target of blame. At York University, blame for a string of sexual assaults was placed on the surrounding racialized communities. This narrative of perpetrators as ‘Others’ removes any need to examine the rape culture that permeates our societies. By turning a blind eye to the sexist and violent men that exist within our communities, myths are reinforced that perpetrators are scary and deviant strangers, lurking in the shadows and not the people with whom we study, work, and live. (Ikeda & Rosser, 2012).

Women are taught to be vigilant, as though vigilance will protect against all violence. The focus on vigilance overlooks the roots of this violence (power and control), that have had a stranglehold on the world’s marginalized for so long it has become a normalized part of life (Ikeda & Rosser, 2012). Women are taught “how to avoid being raped” (p. 40), but men are not taught the importance of consent or positive masculinity (Ikeda & Rosser, 2012). Women are instructed to follow a list of rules, which includes: not walking alone at night, not flirting with strangers, not going home with a man you just met, etc. These rules are not always explicitly followed. Though, if one does experience violence, the deviation from these guidelines is used as justification to place blame onto the victim. Women are burdened with responsibility for the actions of others. Women are expected to anticipate and prevent another person from choosing to be violent. Their efforts of resisting violence are scrutinized by the arbitrary standards of hegemonic patriarchs, to ensure they ‘struggled enough’

(McDonald, 2009). This revictimization accuses victims of actively or passively allowing violence to happen to them, as though they failed to protect their chastity (McDonald, 2009), an object owned not by the victims themselves, but by men (Jones, 2012). I believe this focus on what the victim could have done is a coping mechanism for survivors (Sudderth, Leisring, & Bronson, 2010), and as a culture it is used to come to terms with the presence of monsters. When I speak with survivors of sexual violence, they are the first ones to blame themselves. We are afraid that we have no control over our world. It is scary to imagine that a partner, parent, relative, or friend could choose to sexually assault me and I could not prevent that. Unfortunately, this mentality also props up and maintains patriarchy.

Rape is a term used to epitomize the worst of sexual violence, but rape culture goes far beyond ‘just’ rape. A woman may never be raped, but she is nonetheless scathed and oppressed by rape culture daily. Acts that are often trivialized by misogynists as insignificant because they are ‘not rape’ constitute the majority of sexual violence women face. This ‘not rape’ epidemic includes an understanding that it is acceptable for women to be leered at, seen as objects, as potential victims. Sexual harassment and most sexual assault fall under this ‘not rape’ category and serve to groom and pressure women to meet the sexual expectations and entitlements of men. ‘Not rape’ is characterized by being not as bad as ‘rape,’ and therefore all the trauma is repressed and minimized. “Not rape [is] all those other little things that we experience...every day and struggle...

to learn how to deal with" (Peterson, 2008, p. 210).

Sexual assault is a demonstration of power over the vulnerable. It can strip away a woman's illusions of safety, leaving her feeling disempowered and silenced. Sexual assault survivors often suffer alone (Sudderth, Leisring, & Bronson, 2010). Self-blame and isolation can lead survivors to overlook sexism and inequality as root causes of sexual violence. Women need to understand that personal experiences are not isolated happenings. These issues do not occur in a vacuum, but rather as part of a system of oppression that affects women all over the world. Sexual violence is seen in the systematic subordination of children (Overall, 1988), human trafficking (United Nations, 2012), and rape used as a strategic military weapon (Gregory, 2012). It encompasses the fear women feel walking home alone at night and a culture saturated with pornographic depictions of women. Understanding that the "personal is political" (Baines, 2011, p. 86) removes feelings of isolation and powerlessness, and in turn inspires action.

"RAPE CULTURE HAS MANY NAMES"

Through support, we instill hope in the exploited. Consciousness-raising and education undo the myths and silence upon which rape culture is dependent. When men refuse to be perpetrators or passive bystanders, cultural revolution begins to unfold. This revolution is solidified through action that dismantles rape culture.

The success and failure of movements are connected. Rape culture has many names. It is also known as capitalism. It is known as poverty. It is known as colonialism. Even when people are not raped, they are still enslaved. Therefore, we cannot end rape as a culture in isolation from other injustices. As long as there is war, rape will be used as a tool of war (Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012). As long as there is poverty, the impoverished will be vulnerable to exploitation (UN Works, n.d.). As long as there is capitalism, profit will come first. Sexual violence plays out, interconnected with other forms of systemic oppression. Members of the queer community are targets of sexual violence by hateful homophobes (Taylor & Peter, 2011). Racist xenophobes' hateful acts include the use of sexual violence as a means to hurt people they consider others or outsiders (Khim, 2010). Different movements must come together, recognize common goals, and strengthen one another.

Rape culture does not only imply that we live in a society in which rape is prevalent. It means that this culture institutionally and socially perpetuates rape and places the blame on victims. Beyond rape, this culture is founded on inequality and oppression and so it is not just rape or other forms of sexual violence that women and other marginalized people are attacked with, but all forms of domination. Facing such a Goliath is daunting, but the presence of resistance and strength of my allies gives me hope and conviction that we can uproot patriarchy and rape culture. Andrea Dworkin (1976) said "the norm

of masculinity is phallic aggression" (p. 46) and a "ravaged femininity... sustains it" (p. 111). When the phallus is used metaphorically and literally as a violent weapon against women, we can and must rise up and castrate patriarchy for our self defence and for a better world.

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ANSWERS

- Olivia Strohschein

The answers aren't simple

evidence is elusive. unclear.

what he says only scratched the surface

The way he sees it, It will require more growing

"Everybody's life is going to be
changed to some degree or another,"

He shows elegance and synthesis

I lag behind.

we enter a wild and ethereal time

Rain spatters down on our heads

"Shhhh," he says at one point, asking us to inhale deeply and listen to the silence.

attached like barnacles

our hardest objective was distinguishing between us

"That was a period of time," he reminisces, "where I think we had all the pieces in place."

So how do we get there?

an earlier time.

safe from the changes,

with a window of opportunity to address some of the glaring inequities

which could affect everything

but we don't have the energy for that

when you lack respect

and have high expectations

but pay nothing

It breaks my heart

there wasn't enough of me

Engagement, along with commitment

they're locked
locked down

they are trapped

and he will find ways to influence or control

what could come from inaction

very negative impacts

That has to change —

time to do it.

and move toward

something that will make you feel

good all over.

ignore the

costs that a move might bring

and find a reason for now.

yourself is also home

caught up

unveiled for everyone.

finally being recognized in the process

"This is really when she's coming into the height of her powers,"

out There's no single reason

If the answers were simple, we would simply do what was needed

WE WERE NEVER
MEANT TO SURVIVE

- Myra Shivanandan

When I was younger
whenever I saw old
South Asian women,
for some reason I would
feel an overwhelming sadness.
I never knew why their delicate bones,
their white wiry hair
arranged in a long
braid down their thin
fragile back
would send an ocean
of sorrow over me.

Maybe it's because I
see my ammama in them.
Maybe it's because
she has stopped
wearing her long
beautiful saris because
they make her glow
among the sea of
sameness.

Maybe it's because I've
seen her adjust her
accent when she talks
to the white ghosts
who always seem surprised
that she can speak at all.

Maybe it's because I was
scared to death when she
sat on the Gardner Expressway
and people yelled and called
her a terrorist.

THAT SHE PRETENDED THAT SHE
COULDN'T HEAR THEM
AND THEY JUST THOUGHT SHE
COULDN'T UNDERSTAND ENGLISH.

Maybe it's because everyday
she tries not to wonder
if it would be better
in Sri Lanka –
that perishing in the
bombs and war there
would be better than
fighting and dying
in a war here.

THUNDERSTORM

– Connor Briggs-Morris

Trigger Warning: Themes of Domestic Violence

The thunder wakes me.

I don't think thunder is scary, like most of the girls in my class. Mom says that means I'm brave. She says that I shouldn't be afraid of the thunder, and that the thunder should be afraid of me. I don't think thunder can be afraid.

I hear it again.

Just for a second, it's loud, and it rings in my ears, but then it's gone. And I'm not afraid.

I get out of bed and put my slippers on. I'm still wearing my favourite pink pyjamas with the horses on them. I pick up Bear and go to the window to see if I can see the storm. I stand on my tallest tiptoes and look out, but I don't see the lightning. Mom always tells me that thunder and lightning are brother and sister, and that they're always in the sky together. She says that they fight with the sun and the moon, because they all want the sky to themselves, so they have to take turns using it. But right now is the sun's turn, so how could there be thunder if there's sun? Maybe Mom didn't tell me everything.

I look at the big clock in my room; the first number it says is seven, which means I can't wake Mom and Dad up. Mom says that it has to be at least a nine before I can do that on the weekend.

So me and Bear go down the hall to the couch. I pick up the remote and click the TV on. Me and Bear look through all of the channels. Boring, boring, boring, yes! Dora is on! I watch with a big smile, and Bear tells me that this is his favourite show too.

I keep watching, but then my tummy starts rumbling. Mom says that when that happens, it means my tummy is hungry. But Mom also says that I'm not supposed to get food by myself. Sometimes, Mom's rules are silly.

My tummy keeps growling at me, so I get up and walk over to the kitchen. I reach as high as I can and grab the Fruit Loops off the shelf. I open the fridge and look for the milk. All I can see are Dad's grown-up juice cans. Mom says that I'm not supposed to touch those. Bear looks inside and helps me find the milk.

I can barely see over the counter, but I get a spoon and a bowl and pour it full of Fruit Loops. As careful as I can, I lift the big milk jug and pour it in too. I miss a little, but that's OK, Mom will help me clean it up later.

I sit back down on the couch and munch away. By the time I finish my cereal, my tummy stops rumbling and Bear helps me put the bowl in the sink. On my way back, I see Mom's special makeup container by the mirror. I pick it up and bring it to the couch.

Mom says this is a special makeup container because it's for when she falls down and gets a booboo. Mom falls down the stairs a lot, and she's always crying about it. I think Mom should be less clumsy, and then she wouldn't have to wear her special makeup all the time.

I open up the case and try to remember what she always does. I put the little sponge in the brown powder and then pat it on my face, just like Mom does. I take out some lipstick and make my lips red and pretty. Bear says I look like a princess with my makeup on. I finish making my face pretty and put Mom's makeup back where I found it on the table.

Then, I hear something and turn the TV off. The noise starts far away, but it sounds like it's getting closer. Me and Bear go to the window and look out. It sounds like a fire truck, Bear says. I think it sounds like an ambulance.

Then we see a police car race down the street! We were both wrong. He keeps driving closer and closer to our apartment building. I wonder where he's going? The police siren keeps getting louder and louder, but it's still not as loud as the thunder. Maybe that's why he came, to make sure the thunder stopped. I look back to Mom and Dad's door, it's still closed. I look at the clock in the kitchen, and it still starts with a seven. Bear says I shouldn't bother them, but I want to show them the police car and ask Mom about the thunder.

I slowly walk to their room, making sure the wood on the ground doesn't make noises when I step on it. Bear keeps holding my hand, because the police car's noise is starting to scare him. It sounds like it's right outside. I reach up my highest and open Mom and Dad's door. Me and Bear walk inside, and Mom and Dad still sleeping, but they're not in their bed.

Mom and Dad must be playing a game: they're both sleeping on the floor. I ask Mom if the thunder will come back, but she doesn't answer. So me and Bear decide to snuggle up with her. I can hear yelling in the hallway, and then someone bangs at the door. Mom says I'm not supposed to answer the door. The door bangs again, louder this time.

But it's not as loud as the thunder.

Aren't we all Barbie dolls?

-Dhivia Joseph

I was caught up in the fantasy
The lore of hope and promise
Caught in the tangential
Science fiction delusions

Manic fury
Depressive angst
Strained through the drain
Catching the crumbs

Something is wrong,
The crumbs are bigger
The cracks close in

Fractured into cookie crumb segments
Let me out of this cookie jar
For here I remain caught
Between the gutter and the sidewalk
Between this jail cell and society
Between the binary of 0 and 1
Between me and you

I refuse to become a corrupted product
Of your caveman lust
Fodder for the fire burning
Between your looming thighs

Lusted for this tikka tikka masala
Finger licking good piece of ass
Hoping to bring me home
Because you offered me your cigarette

I am not for your consumption
This mind is bountiful
Working in orchestral scores
Reconstructing what has been broken
The jigsaw puzzle you made me
Is fractured no more
For when I am embodied
As a tikka tikka masala curry dish
I break out into screams
Over this chauvinistic oriental thought

Over and over and over again
I hear curry adaptations
Of this form
Broken down into spices

I am not made of sugar and spice and everything nice
Don't break me down into Disney princess archetype
Frankly, it just makes me furious!
I refuse to become an ignorant adaption
Of the cookie cutter submission
A F.O.B. Barbie in a sari

Oh look you're globalized
Because I am your
Multicultural late night booty call
Just for you to fuck

I call bullshit on your patriarchal delusions
Superior, based on the implicit
Constructed as historically inferior from Eve until now
Systemic discrimination spread across the woman's womb

Planned parenthood isn't the problem
The problem is each and every one of us
Projected into stock card artifacts
Under display on this opaque shelf

Mounted and distorted
Conformity is acceptance
After all, aren't we all Barbie dolls?
Living in this world

Dress up...

Dress down...

Because after all,
We're only back up stock
Our bodies are objectified
As misogyny's toy-r-lust

Hey mister mister, pretty please
Buy me, own me, come play with me
I'm only for your lust

GENERATIONAL

-Lindsay Cavanaugh

For Marge

I don't remember when you told me about grandpa
it was sometime between school and childhood
but I remember he was handsome—
I saw the black photograph with your mother
smiling back her monotone hair. The caption said:
1953, graduating-engaged-very happy,
and they were looking at each other, simply
as if they couldn't help it,
the flash, and their gowns, and both of their deaths.

I don't remember her—maybe it's why I love her,
because it's always easier to love what you don't know
though I never knew, only heard of how that man
changed from very happy, 1953, to something used
that you hated as your hair grew long
then short because you were radical somehow
between the blows that spite the quiet domesticity of now
the reality of making meals with too many vegetables,
counting cheerios, and telling dad he works too much while telling yourself you don't.

I don't remember the man your father was supposed to be
only the man he was on holidays with a beer and Doris,
who was not my grandmother, but who loved anyways,
gently and between us, catching onto hands with desperate eye.
She was a red-head too, but you can barely see the cataract hue—
and I never understood she was second but first
until that time you told me quick, and I was angry
because I loved her, hushed and more—calling me bumblebee—
than the saint buried with his father's father's name.

I don't remember you before—because I never knew your soft womanhood,
the time before you married, cried out streets, and watched your mother
wrap herself in scarves to hide the baldness, I was two
and then I hardly noticed you aside meals and father's flittering hands
that would mock trees and children and socialists.
So I hated you in my years of seventeen,
because you tried to pull back my hair, and said I was beautiful
though I wasn't just yet, and you were too beautiful for a woman your age,
though you didn't know it.

I don't remember when you died—it hasn't happened yet
but I fear someday I will awake with my own inherited name,
and streets, and monuments watching their mother die
without having known not to hate the quiet domesticity I don't know I impart—
and I wonder if I will have grey hair or dye it black like Aunt Bev
though it would be beautiful more to watch those strands twist out into something new
being still beautiful and quiet and thinking in thought the can in the not.
So I remember that time you worked your fingers, young and bright through my hair,
beads rocking against braids—I wasn't born, and dad coughs, and Jocelyn isn't there,
the first dog is alive, and I am what I cannot forget:
the cheerio counting companion you will remember you never really met
or simply, one of those million monotone ends taken with cataracts.

FINDING COMFORT

-H.P

When I was eighteen, I went to a reggae concert in West Africa. I had enough money for a taxi home and my housemates knew where I was, so there was a limit to how much trouble I could get into. The issue was that towards the end of the concert, there weren't any taxis. That was one of the things about Ghana: public transportation sometimes worked according to the whims of whoever happened to own a car, and it just so happened that on this particular night no taxis were driving along the beach.

Even after a few hours no one had been able to get a taxi or a tro-tro (which is a kind of minivan used as a bus and held together through the combined efforts of duct tape and will power). By midnight I was still waiting by the road ignoring a drunk Rastafarian man who was trying to nag me into going home with him. I remember thinking that this was probably the worst fear of any parent who has ever allowed their child to travel: that their little girl will end up stranded alone at night in Africa being harassed by a drunken stranger.

After about an hour of this I went back to the concert to take deep breaths and come up with a plan. While I was sitting there hyperventilating, a ridiculously pretty woman in a white dress turned around, grinned at me and asked: "why aren't you dancing?"

Because it was too late to try and maintain any dignity, I told her my whole story. At the end she nodded and said "you should stay at my place." She said it so simply, as if we'd known each other for years. After talking seriously in Twi to the Rastafarian who wouldn't leave me alone, she took me to where she was staying. I remember there being a low ceiling, a mattress on the floor, a suitcase full of clothes, and a chair. There was no water or electricity. She stubbornly insisted on giving me the mattress, and she slept on the floor. I kept thanking her profusely, feeling so grateful I didn't know how to express it. Whatever I said she would wave away, saying "you would do the same for me" and "this is no problem. Besides, I think that man would have raped you."

The next morning she gave me some water and showed me where I could find a tro-tro back to Tema. I still didn't know how to thank her—she kept treating her hospitality as if it was something that anyone would do for a stranger. By an almost fairy-tale like coincidence, the woman in the white dress was called Comfort. It's not an uncommon name in Ghana, but the appropriateness of it made it almost too perfect to be true.

THE POLICY OF NON-INTERFERENCE

-H.P

While I was growing up, all the boys I knew were raised under strict instructions to never hit girls. In university, where women outnumbered men three to one, people were more adamant about women's rights than ever. What I did find, though, was that people were prepared to defend women only until the point that it ceased to be socially comfortable.

While I've never been hit by a boyfriend, I did date someone who once threatened to beat me into unconsciousness. I'd been interrogating him about something I can no longer remember, and he looked me right in the eye and said "if you don't get out of my room right now, I'm going to beat you until you lose consciousness, and throw your lifeless body down the stairs." I remember how dangerously calm his voice was and how hard I tried to keep my face expressionless as I left the room. It was one of the most sickening things that has ever happened to me, and when I reported it to some friends I was convinced that everyone would be as shocked and disgusted as I was.

Friends who weren't close to my ex-boyfriend were furious on my behalf. Mutual friends, however, were so unfazed I wondered if they'd understood me.

No one wanted to hear what led to the threat, and no one wanted to know anything beyond whether I was physically injured. Since I wasn't, the matter was dropped. No one confronted him or asked questions, and unlike most events in our social circle it went unnoticed by the gossip circuit.

I'm sure that if a stranger had threatened me, my friends would have been up in arms. But since my ex-boyfriend was a friend too, no one wanted to intervene. Months later, a group of the same friends sat in silence while my ex-boyfriend pushed a girl around in circles until she fell over a coffee table. That night, she came to me crying and sporting fresh bruises. When I demanded that we talk to him about it, she tearfully swore me to silence and insisted that we couldn't blame him because "he's not himself this year."

In theory, we're all agreed that violence against women is wrong. But once confronting it became difficult, our self-righteous outrage disappeared. We excused it with phrases like "he's just going through a rough time," and the bruised girl is now his girlfriend.

My own reaction to all this was an almost overwhelming sense of shame. It was embarrassing that I'd once loved this person. It was humiliating that whenever I stood up to him, I was dismissed and called bitter. It was even worse when I finally accepted that my friends were never going to confront him about how he treated us. He was going to get away with threatening me, just like he was going to get away with groping us, making sexist remarks and snarling at us if we retaliated. For all we talked about the importance of respecting women, standing up for ourselves and supporting each other, no one was going to confront him.

BUILDING A FEMINIST

-Kathleen de Vries

A feminist is someone who learns she's been lied to. Sold a story about herself that someone else invented to excuse himself, to shame or control her and through example 'others' - to always have someone to be on top of. Very young, I sought women's stories, and once I shed the myths they'd raised me under, I didn't hate myself. I've always been a feminist, but I always felt very alone.

I wanted to read about girls, so I read *Sweet Valley*. Every single one until the senior year reboot when Jessica gets called a slut. I wanted to read about women, so I read my stepmom's collection of novels, a wide array of romance.

I also found my first online female-centric peer groups at this time.

So I went through Stephen King and Anne Rice and L.J. Smith (hipster feminist, read *The Vampire Diaries* before they were cool). And a lot of other stuff. Then I read *Jane Eyre* and I was kind of like holy crap. And it wasn't so much Jane's story as the character and contained female energy (passion?) of Jane.

Though at this time I assumed I'd found who was to be my Rochester and I joined a wedding forum (wb r.i.p.). I got married and went to school and read a lot of amazing women's literature, and some other stuff too.

I wanted to go farther in school and it was my bad for messing that up, and for hurting some people fucking bad before I figured myself out. (hetero r.i.p.)

So all my life I'd been taught opposites attract. It's like a science thing too, in a way, but in a lot of other ways not. In my reading, I wanted to get closer and closer to the things that mattered most to me - the things that made the most sense. So while I'll always adore the Brontes, readers, I married him--and it didn't work out.

The Handmaid's Tale jarred me and *Surfacing* found me and *Oryx and Crake* changed me.

The Bell Jar, *Leaving Earth*, *God of Small Things*, *Vindication on the Rights of Women*, *Frankenstein*.

After a diversion into fanfiction which was great for my writing, but not my feminism, I began to read feminist literature, mostly through tumblr, where all my worlds collided. I could feel the tracks change beneath me. See, I've always been a feminist, but I've always surrounded myself intimately with men. I pushed away and hurt friends and family, and there are things I can never make up for missing. But I know I'm supposed to be around women. Women's lives make sense to me. I always knew it intellectually but never properly demonstrated it.

I've always lived according to my next big move, but I'm learning our existence is a process of evolution right down to our individual lives. Every option is a choice. Every choice reflects a change, both in the series of events that led to the change, and the series that will follow it. Minute but positive steps will lead to large and often jarring change. It's okay.

I'm eager for revolution but not everyone is ready. It's happening, though. I know I'm not the only one who senses it - who sees it. In the interim, seek out your sisters, do what you can to help, understand that burdens compound and some womyn need faster relief.

They want you to know everything and defend yourself if you're to make such claims. So I do suggest knowing everything. If you're good at it, read and write. We need a new generation of storytellers. If you learn, like I did, that you can't do it alone, find or create a community. That's the purpose of them: support. And maybe you too will find that like is drawn to like. Science.