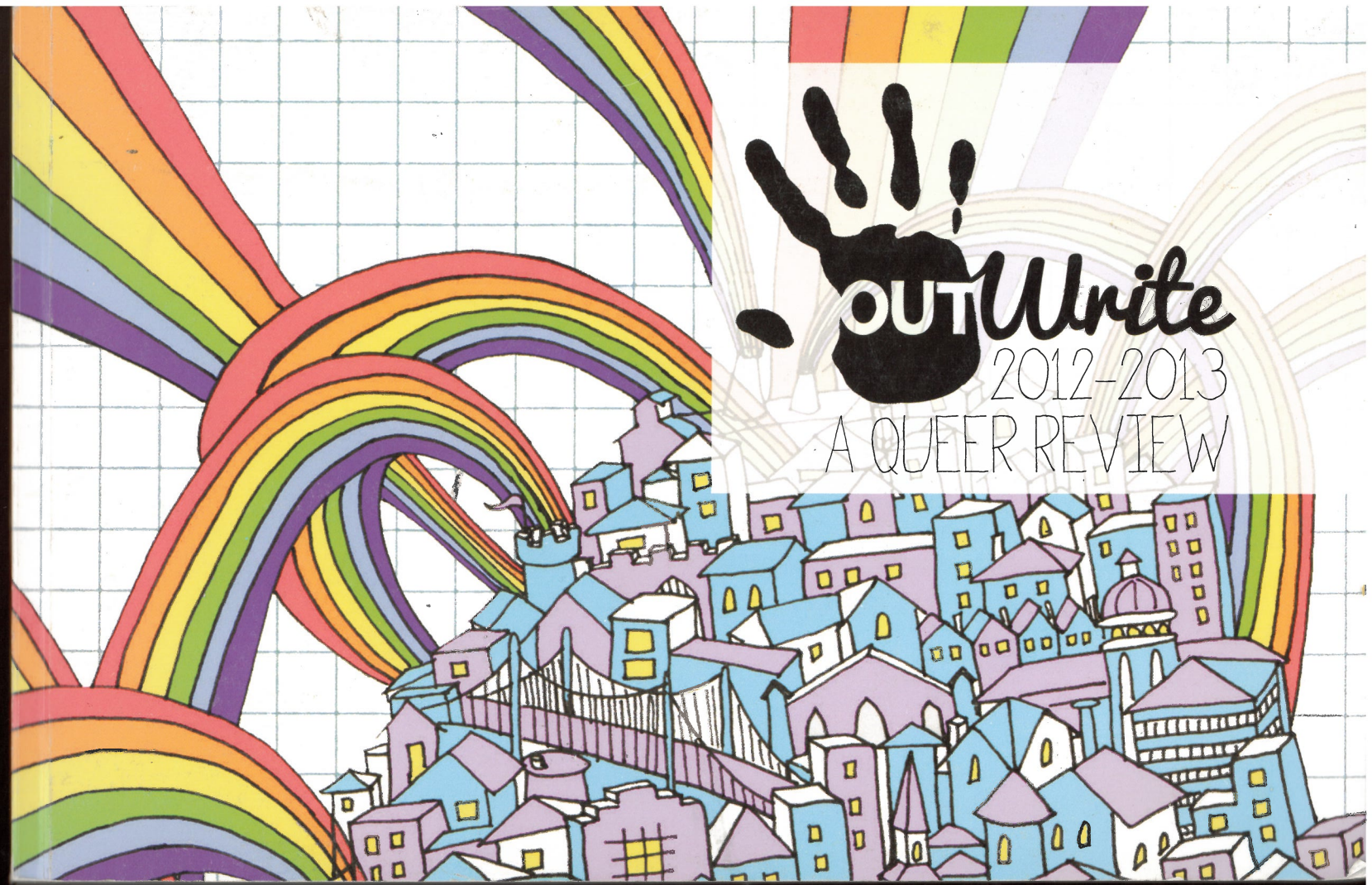




*Write*  
2012-2013  
A QUEER REVIEW





A QUEER REVIEW

volume 8

[outwrite@ams.queensu.ca](mailto:outwrite@ams.queensu.ca)

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Social Issues Commision/AMS/Queen's University





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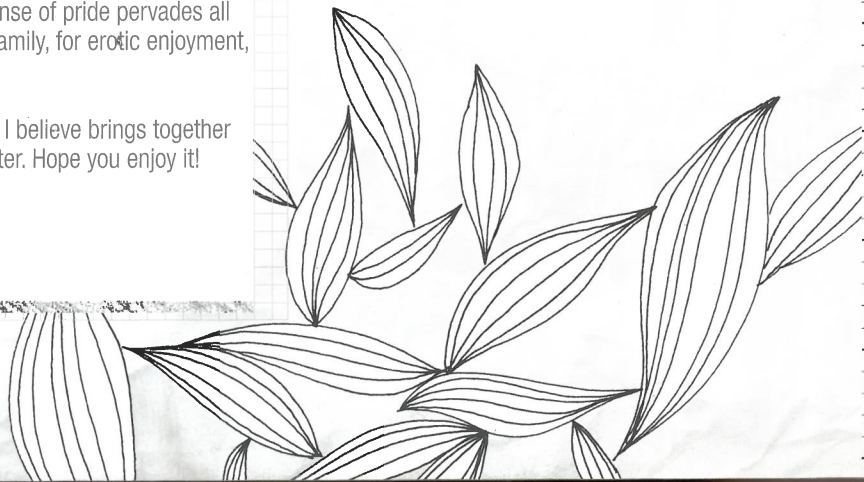
# editors notes

A queer village usually springs up in a city as a haven for those seeking safety, acceptance, and love. Although usually starting out as derelict parts of town, queer villages grow with each hardworking and unique member until they become valuable communities of great social importance. A symbol of pride and defiance, villages are testaments of triumph showing the world that queers have the power to band together and create a place that's special.

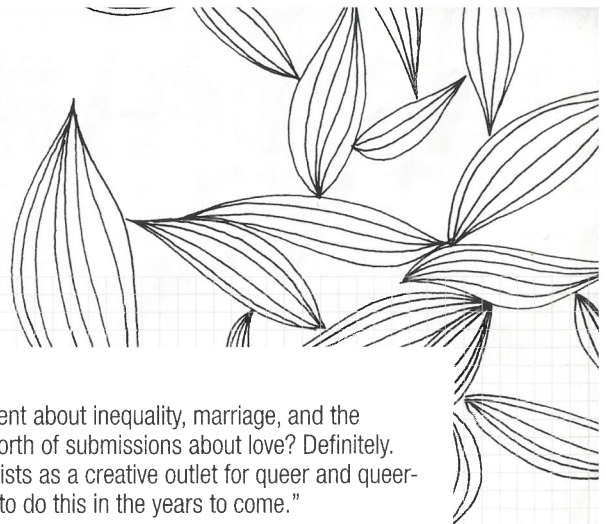
The cover art of this volume of Outwrite pays homage to exactly this. Submissions from queer and allied voices have been joined together to create a diverse publication. A safe space has been established for everyone's voice to be heard and above all, a sense of pride pervades all of the wonderful work that we have received: pride for romance, for family, for erotic enjoyment, for rebellion, for oneself, and for friendship.

I am equally proud to present the eighth volume of Outwrite, one that I believe brings together the sense of pride that all our contributors from across the nation foster. Hope you enjoy it!

-Mason Lam, Outwrite Co-chair, 2011-2012







In 2007, Outwrite chair A.K. Fischer wrote:

"Where will Outwrite be in another five years? Will we still be receiving content about inequality, marriage, and the difficulties of coming out? Most likely. Will we still be receiving a U-Haul's worth of submissions about love? Definitely. Outwrite is an important voice in the Queen's and Kingston community. It exists as a creative outlet for queer and queer-positive individuals to share their diverse life experiences, and will continue to do this in the years to come."

That time has come. Exactly five years have passed since former chair A.K. Fischer pondered the future of Outwrite, and I wish I could tell her in person that her predictions for Outwrite were absolutely correct.

Since the first volume was published in 2004, Outwrite has continued to provide the important outlet for queer voices that A.K. spoke about, and the publication has done a lot of growing along the way. This year, thanks to countless talented members of the Queen's and Kingston communities, we received a record-breaking number of fantastic submissions, enabling us to put together a brilliant and diverse collection of works that's bound to offer something for every reader.

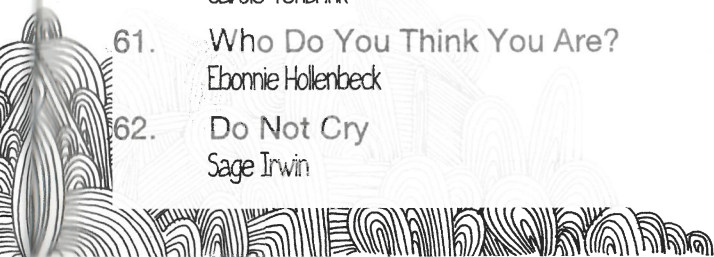
You'll read about hope. You'll read about oppression. You'll read about joy and liberation and grief and friendship. And you'll read about love — something I'm sure Outwrite will continue to feature for a long time.

—Caleb Seguin, Outwrite Co-Chair, 2011–2012

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# Possible Impossible

Impossible. In all the many times we've talked  
and all the guys I've seen you stalk,  
in all the tales of your courtships  
a female name has never left your lips  
so how on earth can you be sure that you're bi-sexual?

Possible. I don't want her for the contents of her pants,  
I am not confined to male romance,  
I fell in love with her by chance  
'cause when she hugs me with both arms, it feels like home.

Impossible. Darling, please.  
If every Sunday you're in Church with rosary beads,  
thanking Jesus on your knees  
and yet you say you also love that girl...then you're a liar.

Possible. For I think God is many kinds of love,  
a philosophy above  
all the many psalms that want to shove  
a way of living down my throat  
because of something someone wrote to tell me what God thinks.

Impossible. I hate to tell you this,  
but are you sure it's her you want to kiss  
when you have hair that's flowing down your back,  
and pretty dresses on the rack  
inside a closet that you cannot be in.

Possible. I dress myself for me,  
Exactly what those clothes would be  
changes with my mood, not what society construed  
as the way bi-sexuals should look, like binding laws within a book,  
as if there is a standard that I just don't meet.

Impossible. You're not bi-sexual enough,  
You're delicate, you should be buff.  
And in a gender studies class,  
Not those science labs you hope to pass so you can someday be  
a doctor.

Possible. My arms are weak,  
but I have strength so I don't hide behind  
the fear of speaking words within my mind,  
which pulls me to my feet when those I know have been unkind.  
A strength that allows me to surpass

the words, the looks, the cruel desire to harass.  
A kind of courage you don't learn from class,  
Whatever course you choose to love, which gives you courage and a goal, do that.

Impossible. Aren't you from the Middle East,  
A place where sexuality's policed,  
and being gay is an offence,  
nor is there evidence  
that people who aren't white might not be straight.

Possible. I'm from a place where women manage every day,  
despite demands that they obey,  
to live a life defined their way instead of lives which define them.  
Nor is preference connected to your skin,  
But in the place that lies within that you can't change and you can't sin,  
You can only let the people in and hope they will not judge you.

Impossible.

Possible.

I'm possible.

CSLD





# Ode To The Beauty Of Womyn

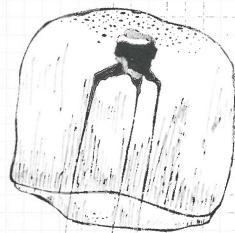
When I came out to myself  
the world looked different, immediately.  
I felt free to admire things  
that before I hadn't admitted to liking.

Say I'm walking down the street behind a womyn.  
I watch her butt sway side to side inside her jeans....  
and feel this kind of hmmmmm inside.

Everyday now, going about the business of living  
I'm sensuously aware, attentive to this constant parade  
of free entertainment. All of this happens, momentarily,  
a sort of undercurrent to any ordinary day,  
turning it luscious, just for a second. ....luscious just for a second.

Say, I'm sitting in a group  
and my eyes waiver to a womyn's breasts.  
Maybe they're full and taut with nipples out,  
or maybe they're droopy and cushy like pillows.  
Either way, breasts make me want to touch. ....lush, lush, touch....

Some days it's eyes. I'll catch a glance  
into a womyn's eyes as she passes.....  
and ooooh. her gaze holds mine,  
I'm looking deep in those green cheetah eyes.  
So even though she's with a guy, my mind's going  
"Hey, cheetah, wanna cheat with a cougar?" Cheeta cheat, chi chi cougar cha cha...



I'd never reacted to guys this way.  
When young, my friends would ogle a 'hunk'  
and say, "Oooh, isn't he gorgeous?".. (squeal....)  
I'd go, yea, I guess so. He looks nice....  
but I'd wonder why my heart didn't thump like theirs.

Yea, I remember when I was a teenager,  
with girlfriends at sleepovers. I'd be tingling  
over Margo's James Dean look, white shirt collar up,  
old jeans and a cigarette drooping from her lower lip....  
Or some of us with the perfume and make-up all over us,  
I'd sigh .. oooh, ooo la la, girls are somuchmore beautiful than guys.  
Isn't it a shame?.... we have to turn our heads  
around: It's a biological imperative!  
I'd learned this term in high school biology.

Yessssss, sometimes it's the perfume a womyn wears  
One womyn passes me in the theatre lobby,  
Her scent casting a net all over me.  
Together with her fuchsia coloured scarf,  
And a certain swagger. Her allure pulls me along....  
I'm helpless.... I follow, see where I'm led.

Aaah ha, I thought so, she's queer,  
Introduces herself as De, short for Denise,  
leads me to a bar. We have a drink, chat uncertainly. ....chit chat, chiiii  
So my eyes wander ....  
to the way one womyn moves  
on the dance floor with her girl.  
Their bodies roving like magnets,  
energy moving between them  
at one with the music.

Watching them makes me weak in the knees.  
I pray De, ask me to dance, soon. I wanna dance,  
de, dance da da, ja da, cha cha, de dance, please.

Now straight gals, don't get worried,  
We discern, we got gaydar.  
We won't chase you, demean you.  
Hey, remember, we're womyn too.  
Sure, just like guys, we like to look,  
We might chase you, but we won't unlace you...

And straight guys, bet you didn't know  
how much you have in common  
with us queer girls. Always,  
some hormones on our brains....  
Turning everything luscious.... just for a moment.

But, sometimes I wonder....  
Why did men keep this secret from me...  
Why didn't they tell me, how amazing it is  
to love womyn!!!!!!

Carole Tenbrink

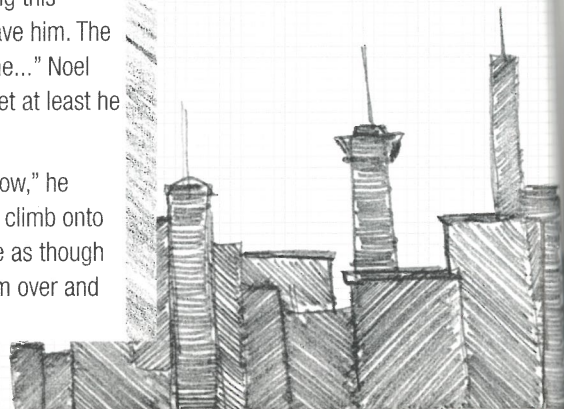
# A Walk in the Park

Noel sat back on the park bench with a long, tired sigh. He spread his legs comfortably and rested his forearms on his thighs, just about ready to give up. It had been a truly awful day, and he could still barely comprehend why. He had gone to the park that morning looking for some company, hoping to find an attractive, funny individual to invite out for a drink. Honestly, he would have just been happy for a conversation, though he also would have been happy if things went further than one drink. But each person he approached had gotten angry at him for the most bizarre reasons, and Noel was now feeling quite unmotivated and unloved.

As he sat staring out at the view feeling a little lost, rough weathered wood against his back, he heard paws approaching in the grass. A moment later a bullterrier with an ill-suited pink collar trotted up to him and sat between the wide stance of his feet. Noel stared down at the dog who stared back up at him expectantly. This dog had done nothing to improve his day thus far, but Noel realized that at least the dog had given him the time of day unlike the general human populace.

Noel made a little noise with his lips when the dog glanced away, suddenly not wanting this random bullterrier - the only creature he had met this day who showed him any interest - to leave him. The dog glanced back at him in a flash and they stared at one another again. "So it's just you and me..." Noel stated, as though testing the idea. He sounded a little disappointed to be talking to a dog, and yet at least he wasn't entirely alone.

He sighed again on an intake of breath and the dog stood up to nuzzle his hand. "I know," he muttered sadly, scratching one ear. The bullterrier pulled away and trotted around his leg to half climb onto the bench, nudging at his upper arm. "I know," Noel said again, his tone understanding this time as though the dog had given him some worldly advice. He gave a long suffering sigh as the dog sniffed him over and then climbed up fully onto the bench, clamouring onto his thigh.



Noel returned to staring at the scenery as the bullterrier licked his hands and continued to sniff him over. Then the dog leaned across his body to nuzzle his far shoulder, and the warm fur against him felt like a comforting hug. Noel kissed the dog's fur. "Thank you," he said, and then said it again when the dog nuzzled the other side of his neck, wet nose nudging his skin. Noel leaned his head against the dog, cuddling him, and then said something he hadn't even said to a human before: "I love you too."

The dog continued to move around him and the bench, energetic despite the fact that Noel knew the dog had been in the park most of the day. He appreciated the company and the comforting nuzzles after such a disheartening day, and he already felt a little better just sitting there with the bullterrier. Then suddenly he watched as the dog wiggled his way between the seat and back of the bench. Noel wasn't sure what the dog was doing, but then he felt paws on his back right before the dog nipped the back collar of his shirt, pulling him backwards slightly.

Noel smirked and reached behind the bench to pet the bullterrier, but the dog had already moved away, "You cheeky bugger." He watched the dog trot away for a moment, wondering if he should let the dog go. But then he pulled himself off the bench and trailed along behind the dog, not ready to give up the attention yet, "Come here."

He followed the dog across the grass, feeling a little spurned that the dog seemed to have forgotten about him so quickly. They rounded around a tall row of bushes, their pace quicker as the bullterrier dashed away, and then Noel stumbled right into another human. "Sorry, mate, sorry," he apologized profusely as he pulled himself away, putting a reasonable distance between them. He noticed the bullterrier returning and circling around the stranger's legs, clearly very familiar with the man.

"Why are you chasing my dog?" the young man in front of him glared at Noel as he brushed off invisible dirt from his outfit. Noel took a moment to study the other man, taking note of how out of place he looked. The man had short black hair and brown eyes, which were dark even in the afternoon sunlight. He was wearing a white collared shirt underneath a blue polo vest, and his dark gray slacks still had a crease from being ironed. The man looked like he belonged in a library, not a park; even his skin was pale enough to look translucent in the sun. Though Noel had to admit that the man looked rather attractive.

"He started it," he accused as he pointed at the bullterrier. "Earlier today, actually," he added, remembering the dog chasing him halfway across the park when he had snuck behind a tree to relieve himself.

"Yes, I saw," the other man's thin lips quirked upward slightly in amusement.



Noel narrowed his eyes in suspicion. "Are you a stalker?"

"Don't flatter yourself." Brown eyes rolled in exasperation. "You weren't exactly easy to miss, making an ass of yourself the way you were."

"Excuse me!" Noel glared, crossing his arms defensively. The bullterrier trotted over and wound around his legs.

The man raised an eyebrow, as though challenging him to argue. "The first time I saw you running away from Jake, my dog, with your pants halfway down yelling 'What do you want from me?' at the top of your lungs." Noel opened his mouth to interject but was cut off. "The next time you were running away from a woman who was yelling quite angrily at you in French. Though..." the man smirked, "At least your pants were up that time."

"You know what--!"

"And now I see you again, only now you're chasing my dog and staring at him like you're lovesick," the man finished, the look on his face a weird mix between confused and amused.

"You know, I've been having a really bad day and your dog is the only one who's paid me the least bit of attention, let alone actually been nice to me," Noel grumbled, irritated beyond belief. "And you're an asshole."

"People tell me that a lot," the man shrugged, seemingly unfazed. "I tell them not to bother talking to me if they can't handle a sharp tongue."

"Is that a challenge, darling?" he leaned down to purposefully scratch behind Jake's ears.

The stranger narrowed his eyes at the pet name but otherwise ignored it. "Not if you don't think you can't handle it."

Noel grinned, always ready for a challenge. "Would you like to grab a bench with me then?" he offered, straightening up again to hold the stranger's gaze, retaliating with his own challenge.

But the man shrugged and turned away, beginning to walk along the available footpath. The bullterrier trotted faithfully behind him. "No thanks. I don't like to stay still for long."

"An action man," Noel suggested teasingly as he jogged a few steps to catch up.

The stranger glanced over at him as their walking paces matched. "No need to sound so excited."

"Yeah, you don't really seem the type with that outfit," Noel muttered the jibe under his breath, pretending to be disappointed. He saw those brown eyes narrow for a moment but received no other telling reactions about the jab towards the man's fashion sense. "So what's your name?" he tried instead, unsure of how to proceed.

At first he thought the man wouldn't speak, but then he received an answer, "Ethan."

"Hello, Ethan," Noel offered a hand even as they continued to walk, which the other man ignored. "I'm Noel."

"Tell me then, Noel..." Noel closed his eyes for a moment, liking the way his name rolled off the tongue of this young American man, judging by his accent anyway. "Why were all those women chasing you away today? Should I be taking their indirect advice before you do something outlandish?"

Ethan spoke with a serious tone, as though this was of grave importance, but the quirk at the corner of those lips was still visible. "I had a bad day," Noel said again, aware that Ethan was listening intently even though he was pretending to appear bored. "But I swear it wasn't my fault. The first girl I go up to was crying and I tried to make her laugh and keep her company. She seemed to cheer up and started flirting with me, but then out of nowhere she just gets really angry and tells me to leave her alone before storming off. Then I go to relieve myself and your dog attacks me."

"Did you ever think that maybe she didn't want company if she was crying and that you were intruding?" Ethan suggested. Jake was still trotting along with them, weaving between their legs like they did this often.

"Yeah, of course," Noel admitted. "But you don't lead a bloke on and flirt with him and then out of nowhere storm off three seconds later," he muttered darkly. "And then--" he began again before Ethan could say anything. He wasn't sure why, but it felt very relieving telling his tale of woe to this beautiful stranger. "Then I go up to this woman and try to talk to her about her book and sit down. She starts yelling at me in French like I just insulted her!"

"Maybe you did--"

"And then I run into this couple and ask for a light," Noel charged on, "And I say that the woman looks very nice. And they tell me to fuck off!" He shook his head in disbelief, still feeling rather stung at the poor response to his compliment. He kicked a loose stone, watching it bounce away into the grass as they continued walking.

"Maybe the man was jealous," Ethan offered, proving he had actually been listening.

"Nah, the woman actually said 'How dare you talk to me like that!' like I had just insinuated something horrid," he grumbled. "I may not be the most innocent minded, but I mean my compliments," he finished somewhat sadly.

Ethan's pace still matched his, both of them taking up half of the footpath as they walked shoulder to shoulder. "People are strange," Ethan said as he shrugged.

"Yeah..." Noel nodded, watching the bullterrier between their feet for a moment before staring at Ethan, taking him in again. The man was clearly a reserved person, someone who only offered his deeper thoughts to those close to him. But Noel liked a challenge, and he seemed to be off to a good start. "Speaking of strange people..." Ethan glanced over at him, looking expectant. "What's with your male bullterrier having a pink collar?"

"Oh!" Ethan chuckled, apparently not expecting that question. "It was a gift from Anne. She didn't seem to understand the issue and I'd feel bad for chucking it out."

"Your girlfriend?" Noel asked curiously, not liking the way his heart pinched with pain at the thought.

"No, no," Ethan shook his head, black hair mussing itself up slightly. "Just a friend at school. She's on exchange doing the first year of her undergraduate degree here. I'm finishing up my PhD but I'm a teaching assistant for one of her classes."

"Which is?" Noel questioned, genuinely curious. A part of him was just glad for any sort of friendly company at all, but another part of him felt drawn to Ethan; each question answered just made a dozen more pop up.

"Paradoxical Architecture." Ethan's smile looked a little nervous, which just made Noel more interested.

"They have a whole class on that?"

"Surprisingly, yeah."

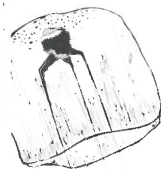
"Huh," Noel nodded, watching Ethan again. Then another thought occurred to him. "Aren't you a little young to be getting your PhD?"

"I suppose twenty two is pretty young," Ethan murmured quietly, which surprised Noel because Ethan didn't strike him as the modest type.

"You must be one of those brilliant types," Noel teased lightly.

"I suppose," Ethan said again, quieter this time as he stared at his own moving feet.

Noel cleared his throat nervously, worried this encounter would turn out like the rest of his day. "So uh..." he began and fell silent again, Ethan not picking up the conversation. "Finishing up the PhD and all... Does that mean you'll be headed back home soon?"



"Unless I find something to keep me here," Ethan confessed, glancing over at Noel before focusing on watching Jake who was now racing ahead of them to sniff some plants.

"Like what?" Noel asked, feeling suddenly flustered.

"Work?" Ethan suggested, though he didn't sound entirely sure.

"What would you do?"

Ethan bit his lip and purposefully looked away, watching the scenery. "I don't know."

They fell into an oddly comfortable silence for a few minutes after that, Ethan clearly deep in thought and, even though Ethan seemed somewhat unsure, Noel felt more at ease and relaxed than he had in years. Jake had returned to trotting along in the space between them, though he still occasionally dashed off to sniff a flower or chase a squirrel as they continued to walk through the park. Despite his horrible day and his earlier disheartened feelings, Noel realized that after only a fifteen minute walk with the bullterrier and his odd owner, Ethan, he felt like he could do just about anything.

He was saddened by the thought of bidding Ethan farewell, which would no doubt happen soon as the park exit was slowly approaching in front of them as they continued to walk. Even though Ethan's wit really did make his tongue sharp and his attitude a little prickly, Noel had enjoyed the challenge and the company. He didn't want Ethan disappearing quite yet... "Hey, Ethan?" he began hesitantly. Ethan didn't respond. "Ethan?" he tried again, voice a little louder.

Ethan seemed to jolt out of his thoughts at Noel's voice. The young man glanced over at him questioningly, giving him his full attention.

"Hm?"

"Do you think...?" Noel trailed off, feeling foolish as his stomach fluttered with imaginary butterfly wings. "Do you think inviting you to get a drink with me would be something to keep you here a little longer?" he finally asked timidly.

Ethan blinked at him in surprise, coming to a standstill on the footpath. He looked away for a moment and Noel could see the man's cheeks flushing slightly in the afternoon sunlight. It was actually a rather stunning sight when he stopped to really take it in. "Well Jake likes you..." Ethan muttered quietly, almost to himself.



"He does appear to, yes," Noel nodded in agreement, both of them watching as the bullterrier returned to their sides and sat down by Noel's right foot.

"And it would be terribly cruel of me to take you away from him after such an enjoyable walk in the park..." Ethan continued, the tiniest smile hinted on his lips.

"He'd never let you live it down," Noel stated mournfully, playing along. His body was thrumming with adrenaline and nerves, but he couldn't stop the grin that was growing on his face.

Ethan nodded as well, accepting this heavy truth. "You're right. I'm afraid I'll just have to put up with you for another visit. For Jake's sake, of course."

"Of course," Noel chuckled, shuffling closer and brushing one finger tentatively down the length of Ethan's arm, feeling warm skin against his own.

Noel was met with a beautiful smile as Ethan took two steps down the footpath and glanced back at him over his shoulder, looking expectant. "Are you coming?"

"Always, darling," Noel promised, grinning widely enough that his cheeks hurt as he rushed to rejoin Ethan's side, their paces matching once again as they left the park side by side.

Anonymous

# DANCERS

Kari Lynch



# Kissing Carey

An experiment.

Two self-proclaimed bisexuals and a lesbian. None of us with any experience with anyone of the same sex.

It started one night when we were drinking beers on her porch. Carey had thrown out a few pillows and blankets and we were lounging there, sharing a bounty bar and drinking out of cans.

We were talking about sex.

Jaci was telling us about the collar her boyfriend would wrap around her neck at her request. Sometimes she'd also put on bunny ears.

Eventually, once we'd pried out the details of her kinks, we talked about how we all talked about sex a lot.

And then about how we all wanted to explore other girls.

These conversations were not unusual. These were friends I'd had for years. We had known each other back when we first started questioning.

I'd come out four years ago, and I felt done with waiting for the distant future where a girl would come along who would be both gay and interested.

Getting both at the same time is tough.

Jaci and Carey felt the same way.

This time as we were talking something unusual did happen. We decided we should fool around.

But Carey's mom was home and so was her brother.

Another time.

We went our separate ways that night but we did come up with a date.

We met at a coffee shop. We all laughed at ourselves for putting on make-up, and at Jaci for her ridiculous cleavage. We shared steamed milk and poppy seed cake.

We went to my house. We were alone.

Still we only talked.

Soon we even started talking about how we couldn't do anything but talk.

That was bad.

So eventually Jaci said we had better try something. A simple kiss. Except not so simple because there were three of us.

I thought we should take turns. Jaci and Carey thought it better if

we all kiss at the same time. Majority rules, so we did.

It didn't really work.

And then Jaci went home.

This left Carey and I alone together, with tequila. We got drunk but not quite enough. We ran out of alcohol and found ourselves lying around my living room.

We pondered how to get past the talking and to get to the doing.

We decided the best course of action was to take off our clothes and get in the bath tub. We made bubbles and splashed each other like kids.

After that the three of us didn't get together again. The excuse was commitments. Carey was busy with work, Jaci with her social life, and me with...

Well, I just felt uncomfortable.

Later that summer I went to Carey's on one of her days off. She told me about how she'd fooled around with this other friend of hers one

night, spontaneously. We talked about how the thing we'd all tried never took off.

I made the decision. It had to be easier **than** this. No more talking.

"Should we just kiss then?"

"Yes, we should."

Carey was the one who leaned forward. She put her hands just above my hips.

She tasted like vanilla and coconut.

"You're taking the dominant role," I said.

"Oh, am I? I ~~didn't~~ notice. Sorry." She laughed.

"Let's switch."

I lean in to kiss her.

Much giggling ensues.

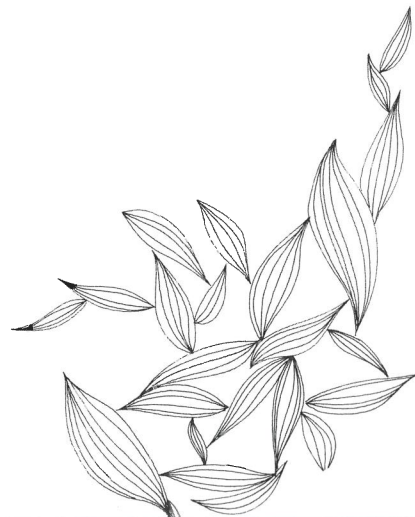
We go back to being regular friends after that.

Carey and I travel through Europe together. And she, who went by lesbian before, discovers she just doesn't like Canadian men.

Labels aren't that dependable.

I've found attraction is largely based on the person and not on the gender.

Anonymous





# Wait

W A I T

I can't be something YOU want me to be . . . when I'm NOT.  
I WANT to be something that YOU love.  
Its. breaking. me. sitting. here.  
watching. you.

Cry.  
B r e a k a p a r t  
not able to u n d e r s t a n d  
or accept me.  
for ME.  
But there is nothing I can do.  
But wait . . .

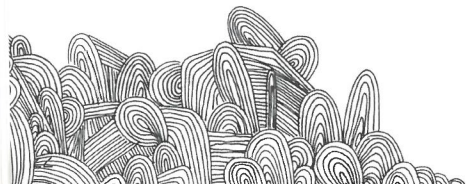
You raised a daughter . . . I know  
And I wish I could still be her . . . at least sometimes  
But it's harder to lie to myself and to YOU  
and be something that I am NOT.  
Than it is to be TRUE to myself.

I know this is confusing for you, you cannot understand how this  
daughter that you raised, that girl . . .  
can now be a guy, a boy, a son?

It's really fucking confusing for ME, I do not know if I want to be  
THIS,  
BUT how can I lie to myself?

You want me to go see a counsellor  
and a psychiatrist  
because YOU cannot understand how I can make  
"such a big decision"  
about MYSELF  
without  
"professional help"

As much as I believe myself, I will do that for you, if that is what  
it's going to take, if that is what YOU need to believe ME.



YOU said it hurts to look at me.  
well it hurts me TOO,  
to know that YOU cannot look at ME without PAIN.

That is why I cannot stay HERE and need to be AWAY  
and need that space to CLAIM who I AM.

You said it hurts YOU, this hurts YOU  
YOU cannot understand  
what YOU have read about other people does not fit ME  
You said you raised a daughter  
who figure skated  
wore dresses . . . did not express gender confusion  
I know that I do not fit what you might call  
a "classic trans narrative"

But everyone is DIFFERENT  
EVERY person's story is different

I do not understand THIS  
what is happening to me  
and I wish I could explain it better to make you understand  
but I am doing the best I can . . .

I hope one day,  
I KNOW one day  
you will accept me for who I am, but I know that will take a  
l o n g t i m e  
For now all I can do is  
w a i t  
and say I love you  
and  
w a i t

Beckham Ronaghan

# We Love Nurses:

## The role of power and privilege in maintaining and fuelling male heteronormativity in Queen's engineering culture.

Heterosexism and homophobia are present in all facets of society, but I have experienced these in their greatest intensity in the engineering faculty at Queen's University. This power relation exists in the marginalization of queer students by considering straightness to be the overwhelming norm among engineering students. Engineering culture – sometimes called “Engineering Tradition” – is something in which the faculty takes pride. From distinctive jackets, to special ceremonies, to the grease pole, to the iron ring ceremony, the engineering faculty has a strong sense of unity and culture. At times, this engineering culture comes at the expense of marginalized groups. Heteronormativity is upheld by the engineering society and the administration. As a queer engineering student, I experienced four years of this power relationship; however, I have chosen to write about an experience from my first week as an engineering student. It is significant because it is the first event that incoming engineers will be subjected to, and it carries oppressive

undertones and overtones. I speak only to the experience of a single male cis-gendered queer engineering student, but my analysis will show significant problems with engineering culture.

During frosh week, incoming students meet their orientation leaders in a chaotic setting. With heavy metal blaring, the leaders enter a dark hall, dyed dark purple, with punk haircuts and intimidating chains slung over their shoulder. Yelling, they make the frosh follow all of their orders: “Stand up, sit down, stand up – stupid frosh!”. A clear power dynamic is established. Soon after this first meeting, incoming frosh are taught chants that must be repeated during the week, on command. Each incoming class of engineers is instructed to chant: “We love nurses, we love nurses, we love nurses!” every time they pass a group of nurses. The gender overtones of this chant are clear. The chant carries with it three main assumptions: engineering students are (heterosexual) males; nursing students are (heterosexual) females; and male-female attraction is the norm. The chant marginalizes a number of groups: (straight) female engineers, (straight) male nurses – and it implicitly marginalizes queer students in both faculties.

Power dynamics became clear when I broached the subject with my classmates. When the topic of the chant was brought up, many had similar responses: “What’s the big deal? It’s not meant to be harmful to gay guys. And, even then, there’s only ever like one token gay guy in every engineering class.” Others said, “We’re just expressing inter-faculty spirit – it has nothing to do with gender or sexuality”. This is an attempt by people with power to reshape the issue so that it is less of an issue for them. By denying the gendered nature of the chant, and by calling people who bring attention to it “too sensitive”, marginalized voices are stifled, especially when faced with a number of people sharing the same opinion. In these group settings, it seems as though the more people there are who are saying the same thing, the more confident they are in their belief, and the less credibility they will give to a different opinion.

This heterosexism is used as both a basis and a support for homophobia in engineering culture, and can be seen in other engineering faculties in Canada. For example, last November the University of Toronto Engineering Society's humour newspaper, the ToikeOike, was pulled from stands because of sexist cartoons. However, the same paper published an article entitled: "Faggots! All I see is Faggots!" When questioned, a staff member of the paper said, "I didn't really think there was anything wrong with it. I don't think there's anything racist [sic] against gay people in it. It's just the word faggot. Yes it is an offensive word, but in the context there's nothing saying: 'hey, we hate gay people'" (Kagedan, 2010).

I see a persistent attitude in engineering that echoes this event. Many students are homophobic and heterosexist, but deny that they "mean anything bad by it". It is a privilege of those in power to be able to ignore the effects of the power dynamic, simply because it does not affect them negatively. In my experience, heterosexual engineers benefit from their position of dominance while denying that systems of oppression exist both within and outside of the faculty. Without engineering societies challenging these attitudes, homophobia will remain closely tied to engineering culture.

Other power dynamics reinforce and compound this heteronormativity. The age difference between frosh and frosh leaders, the intimidating behaviour of frosh leaders and the jeers that reinforce the power imbalance between frosh and frosh leader, all make it more difficult for a student to question the "we love nurses!" chant, let alone voice his or her opinion. In my experience, as an incoming frosh, I was extremely concerned about fitting in and making friends. I did not want to call attention to myself or cause problems. In a sense, the heteronormativity of the engineering faculty is imposed on vulnerable students and marginalizes them when they are most vulnerable.

The power dynamic is also maintained through social pressures to conform. If a student were to choose not to cheer "we love nurses!", there is a chance that the student would be questioned by his or her peers. So, the heteronormative cheer manipulates oppressed students into an uncomfortable situation. In my experience, I was worried that by not chanting, people would see that I was different. But in chanting, my own personal power and sense of self-worth were eroded because I was hiding part of myself for the benefit of other people. While it can be an advantage in certain situations to 'pass as straight' – it gives me heterosexual privilege, in some cases – it also makes me an invisible minority, making me easier to ignore, and making it easier for my voice to be ignored. In conclusion, in my experience homophobia and heteronormativity are strongly linked to engineering culture at Queen's University. This is made even clearer when an article with the word 'faggot' is published in an engineering humour newspaper. At Queen's, rainbow stickers pepper office doors to signal an 'inclusive' environment, but this weak attempt to combat homophobia conveniently avoids adequately addressing the issue. This avoidance of the issue manifests itself during frosh week, when all incoming frosh are taught a gendered cheer that reinforces heteronormativity in engineering, marginalizing queer students and providing a breeding ground for homophobia.

Pete Bishop

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<sup>1</sup>Kagedan, Elizabeth. (2010). Toike accused of homophobia. Available: <http://thevarsity.ca/articles/38373>. Last accessed 19th February 2011.





# Get Over It

Max Tremblay

# Brother

He is my brother.

He may have a booming voice,

And be insensitive sometimes.

He may snore,

And drive me crazy with an endless parade of sports on TV.

He may lack the ability to colour-coordinate his clothes,

And be tone deaf.

He may be completely ignorant to pop culture,

And be short-tempered at times.

But he also holds our family together,

And motivates those around him with his passion.

He spreads his appreciation of sports,

And leads a generous life.

He works towards his goals with gritty determination,

And is relied upon by many.

He accepts my panicked phone calls,

And is there every time I need him.

Every single time.

Gay, Straight, Bisexual,

I still want him to be happy just the same,

I still respect him just the same,

I'm still excited to meet his partner just the same,

I love him just the same.

Because he is my brother.

AJ Ives



Jonathon Reed Nothing Lasts





Feu de l'amour Jonathon Reed

# booty brothers

you lose your booty brothers to love  
when you're twinkly coloured boys shaking it out on the dance floor.  
lose them the way sailors used to lose each other  
out at sea, when swells rocked their ships and the sky spit out  
lightning like deadly cuss words; there are  
invisible typhoons of love that suck your gay brothers up,  
pick them off one by one as you ride  
the waves of the beat, searching  
for the distant shore of strong arms you can rely on.

like sailors, we answer the call  
of the ocean's angels  
we hustle, shake our asses swing our hips pout  
like every night's our last. your booty brothers  
are the ones who keep you living, whose hands  
hold your hair back  
put you back together  
punch out that sonofabitch for breaking you in the first place even though  
they told you he would and you didn't listen.

they drag your sorry ass to the god damn clinic  
when you've done it unprotected again even though you promised you  
wouldn't  
scream at you till you promise again,  
hand you a cigarette so you can smoke together, breathing in comfort  
and those sweet, sweet toxins.

your booty brother's hands  
are the hands your lovers father mother blood siblings  
teachers  
never had, the hands soft and strong enough  
to crack open your chest  
and squeeze out all the tears that are clogging up your heart.  
the hands that only hurt when  
they are loving you right.



you lose those hands to love,  
and the bodies attached as well. you lose them  
to rich boys and white boys you know will break their hearts  
and to bad boys you know will break their bones.  
love pulls them under, keeps them bewitched  
by the promise of warm, blue waters  
and skies the colour of heaven. keeps them dreaming  
just the way you dream. and you wait  
for love to give them back  
for the storm to spit them out again, gasping for air,  
eyes pouring salt water, a little worse for wear  
but still alive.

but sometimes love doesn't give you  
your booty brothers back. sometimes it leaves you  
gasping alone, a fish washed up on the dance floor. shaking your ass

like a salmon flopping, so helpless.  
sometimes you lose your booty brothers  
to time jealousy marriage the burbs AIDS  
happiness or suicide  
and you have to wander those distant, alien shores without  
them.  
searching that forest of arms alone for a pair  
that will hold you perfectly.

Kai Cheng Thom



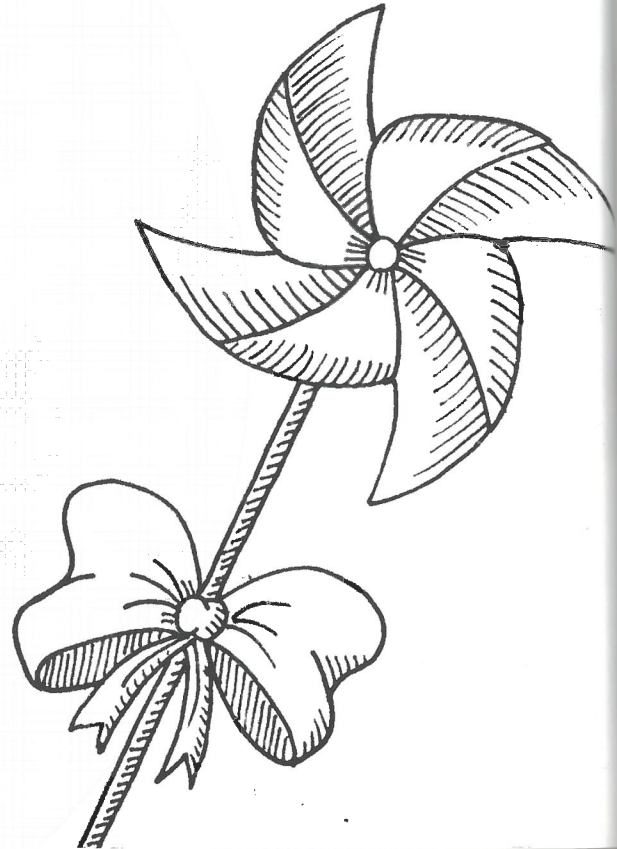
## My Dearest Captivating Lover,

It seems unfair, doesn't it? That once you find that perfect, highly anticipated, yet still mysterious love, it doesn't unfold as you would expect. I would say that this must be common among everyone who finds their soul mate, however, I've not encountered anyone who seems to go through as much chaos as you and I. Together we are untouchable. We are strong. We are beautiful. We are complete. How could something so perfect ever see such grief? Though it may lead one to believe that we have been deceived, and that we are not actually untouchable, strong, beautiful, or complete...I believe just the opposite. I am further convinced that we are of the utmost perfection. We are the most beautiful, strong, and complete couple. We are untouchable, though we still ache. Why do we ache? We ache because we are feared. Our love, our passion, our deepest secrets, feared. We have stumbled upon something so perfect that the cosmic universe, in which we live, cannot fathom its depth. We are the center. We are the soul. We are the fire that burns everlasting. No one can understand, no one can see, no one can feel how we feel. Your hand. Unshaken. In mine. To put the world to rest. To end our pain. You are whom I desire. For always, you, are my desire. My heart, my soul, my flesh. With you. Destined. Your hand. Unshaken. In mine. Nothing stronger, nothing more beautiful, nothing more perfect. Take my hand. Unshaken. Do not let go. As I never will.

Sincerely,

Your Ever Passionate Lover

Anonymous



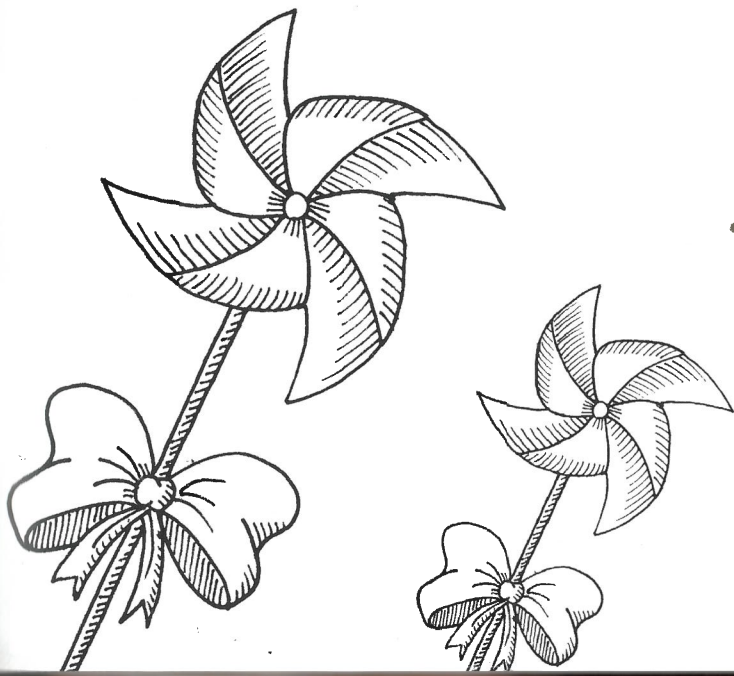
Carolyn Elizabeth Lamb

## Beyond Skin

Let me be your vision, girl,  
the heavy warmth around you in your dream.  
What do you crave?  
Strong arms, thick hands?  
Let me be your cliff-solid man.  
I will paint such a picture -  
brush me with trembling fingers  
and smell my musk.  
Or do you, after all, wish for a goddess?  
Watch me, and I'll spill with long limbs,  
round breasts, an avalanche of hair.  
I will sing to you, soft in the morning.  
A prince, a slash-haired pixie,  
a slave in golden chains:  
Sculpt me, girl. I can be all these things.

Don't you know that this is the realm of dreams,  
that the merest gesture melts our flesh?  
I am sick to death of fences, man and woman,  
bodies that you love and will not love.  
Why should this skin come between us?

Let me be your vision, girl,  
and this body will be nothing  
but your dream.



# Glass

Margaret came home from work early tonight so I pretended to be surprised. I stumbled around the bedroom pretending to push someone out the window and down the fire escape. I messed up my hair in the bathroom mirror and took just one sock off, all while yelling for her to wait just a minute. I finally made my appearance slightly out of breath and with a faux-casual tone.

Monogamy is for guppies.

"Hey!" I walked into the kitchen where she had put down her backpack and was now taking food out of the fridge.

"You didn't make dinner." She continued to take food out of the fridge, searching for something different. There was never anything different.

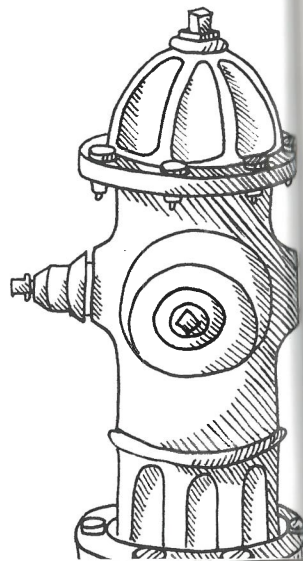
"I thought we could go out!" I had been waiting all day for this, the new Chinese place around the block looked fantastic and pretentious. "We could go to that new place and put glass in our salads. Or see a mouse on the floor."

"Honestly Alice, can we have an evening without drama just this once?" Margaret was annoyed. She had lost her taste for undermining authority. She was starting to become authority and didn't even realize it.

"Well then I'll make Kraft dinner." I don't know why I was pushing her so far, boredom I guess.

"Alice, you know I'm lactose intolerant."

"Right. I knew someone was. Thought maybe it was Jodie or Don..."





"Fuck you Alice."

"Wish I could."

"Ugh, stop being a child!" Margaret, unsuccessful, was now putting the food back into the fridge.

"Fine. I'll go buy some tofu and vegetables. We'll have a stir fry." I grabbed my keys to go.

"Don't tell me you're pulling that vegetarian crap again."

"I don't eat animals, I told you." I tried to look sincere, but it was just to piss her off.

"I found bones from chicken wings in here last week." Margaret sighed, "Unless they weren't yours?" She raised one eyebrow, failing at subtlety.

"Margaret, you know I'm meat intolerant." I gave her an innocent smile. It was fun to watch her struggle like this. Margaret was losing her edge and if we were going to keep playing games she had to keep up.

"Right." She said, "I knew someone was; I just couldn't remember who."

I stared at her for another moment. Shit. Now I'm the one with no response. We regarded each other, sizing each other up. I couldn't hold it in much longer, I laughed. She stared at me a little longer, then she laughed too. At this point all I could muster was the classic "Touché."

"So, Chinese restaurant?" Margaret walked over and snaked her arm around my waist. As we headed out the door she added, "I already have some glass."

Julie McCann



Anonymous

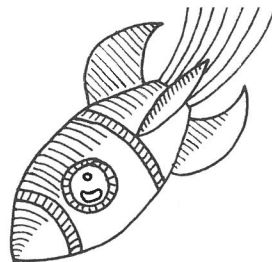
# Muscular

I feel small next to you.  
You are firmly curvaceous,  
Like a cartoon of feminine fecundity.  
You are strength and sexuality, an overgrown fantasy,  
And I feel like a child.  
You are muscular  
And you own the spaces you move through.  
When you place my head on your chest  
And my shoulder in the crook of your arm,  
I feel subjugated,  
And I want to tell you  
That I too  
Have protected;  
I too  
Have hunted and conquered;

I too  
Am strong.  
Though slender and lithe,  
I have broken bones  
And broken hearts pure,  
Purely to mend them.  
Even though, yes,  
My wrists are china stems  
And my pulse is skittish,  
I know both sides  
Of this miniature patriarchy,  
Of the layers  
Of genderedness within gender.  
And yet I do not know  
If your embrace is a gift of mutual comfort  
Or a salvation of your internal hierarchy.  
I feel my defences rise,  
Scrabbling for privilege,  
And the moment dies untasted.

Rob Parry

# Princes and Poets



Two princes jeered at me and asked me why I had no crown.  
The people, who all scattered when their Harrier touched down,  
Had come to see, not these two, but the third prince, who was true.  
The other two were roguish, but these other two I knew.

I craved the dark one. This he knew, but he would ne'er be mine.  
I loved the fair one. He knew not, but we had intertwined  
Our bodies. When the dark one learned of how I loved the fair  
He said that ev'rybody knew, my crownlessness laid bare.

They vertically exited. I wait, and doubts remain,  
Until the fair prince, sage or naive, touches down again.

I went to hear a poet speak. He was renowned throughout  
The world, or at least some of it, of this I have no doubt.

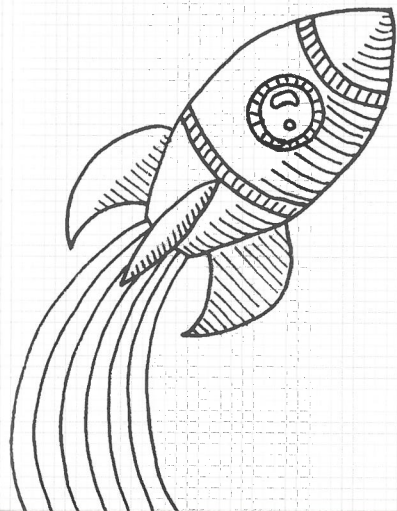
His daughter was a poet too. 'Twas her I sat beside  
While listening to him recanting verses long and wide.

When asked what was the harshest rudeness known, he pointed  
to  
A lazy book-to-film rendition, one I vaguely knew.  
I nodded in agreement. Then he cut me with his eyes.  
"How do you know?" demanded he. My concurrence was lies.

Don't nod unless you know for sure. Don't fake an artist's air.  
Don't fall in love with princes when you have no crown to wear.

Rohan Sajjani





# Stages of Coming Out

I didn't tell anybody at first.

I just watched.

One day, I'm on a beach.

There are lesbians gathered at one side

Sharing that charged camaraderie I've learned to recognize.

And the straight folk on the other.

I'm screaming inside ...I'm on the wrong half of the beach....

But how do I cross over?

I watch one womyn's gait as she swaggers back to her truck

her thighs swing, sure and supple

makes me know she is strong

and would be very lusty in bed.

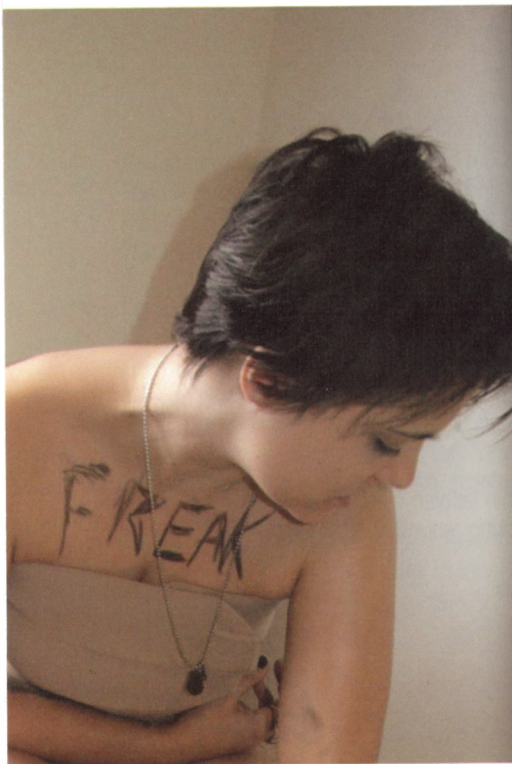
Maybe she won't know I'm a virgin lesbian.

Or maybe she will, cause I'm looking around

Eyes jumping out of my head.

Holy shit, I've just gone to heaven

Carole Tenbrink



## BODILY INSCRIPTIONS:

Hey, you faggot! You look like a queer. Take off your make-up faggot. Dyke! Come here and I'll take care of you. I'll make you like this. You wish you could be a ~~man~~ like me. Lesbians love me. ... Fucking queer. I'm gonna lick your ass. What the fuck are you? Freak.

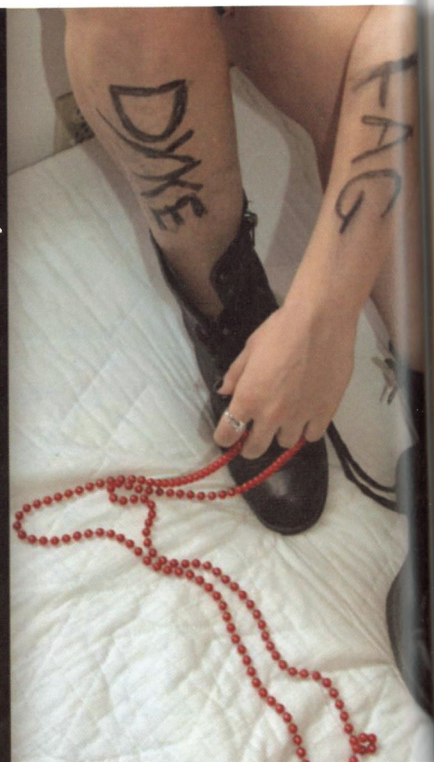
Maybe you can't see it, but it's there. ...

All the shit that gets written on me, in me.

All the times that words and hands have tried to slap warning labels on my body:

Queer.Freak.Faggot.Dyke.Tranny.Bitch

Maybe you can't see it, but it's there. ...





Most of my life will be spent in the dark.

Maybe one day the sun will shine on us.

The ones who have been

forgotten,

unwritten,

disregarded,

disrespected,

spit on,

turned away,

and hated.

I keep a small light on inside of me.

At least that way, I'll never lose myself.

No matter how dark it gets.

Ray Rhej



# The Milk Gown

On the morning before my senior prom, something peculiar happened. It happened when I spilled my milk. Along the familiar journey from the fridge to the kitchen table, my hand loosened momentarily, and the smooth, cool glass slipped from my weak grasp. The glass fell in slow motion, tipping to one side, before shattering into a million pieces across the tiled floor. I felt like crying.

I got down on my hands and knees beside the mess and looked at it for a long time. I thought about what the day held in store for me. I thought about the bus ride, my locker, my first period class. I thought about how I would spend my lunch hour. I thought about coming home, about getting ready. I thought about the smile that would be on my mother's face as she dressed me up and told me stories about her prom — her magical, wonderful, glorious prom. Then I did start crying.

I cried soft, silent tears that weren't worth wiping away. I watched as the curvy edges of the milk slowly spread outward, swallowing up the tiles around them. I reached out and suspended my hand over the milk, spreading my fingers apart as wide as they would go, admiring the bright white triangles that popped from between my fingers like paper cutouts. I slowly lowered my hand until it hovered just above the surface. I could feel the milk pushing out cool breath into the palm of my outstretched hand. Then I gently pressed my hand into the centre of the milk.

That's when the peculiar thing happened.

As I pushed my hand downward, I waited to feel the texture of the tile beneath — but I didn't feel the tile. I pressed harder, but something remained between my hand and the floor. The milk looked just the same as it had before I touched it, but it felt different. It did not rise between my fingers as it should have. Instead, it stayed flat beneath my hand. I lifted my hand and watched as the drops ran to the ends of my fingers and dripped into the spill below, causing its smooth surface to shimmer and shake. I lowered my hand again, and again the milk felt odd to me. I slowly closed my hand, and watched in awe as my fingers gathered the spill together into my palm. I lifted my fist and the spill slipped away from the floor and hung in one piece from my hand.

The strange milk cloth had an exquisite weight and smoothness to it, like nothing I'd ever felt before. I turned it over and over in my hands. It did not drip, nor did it leave my hands moist. It was thick, but softer than silk. When I draped it over my hand, it hung delicately over each of my fingers, displaying the lovely defined shape of my hand. The feeling was hard to describe. It was like running water. It was like that feeling — when you stick your hand under a tap that is running hard, and you feel the pressure, and it almost feels like there is something solid and smooth pushing against your hand — that is what the cloth was made of.

Just then my mother came down the stairs and I dropped the cloth at once. She looked at the mess on the floor. She did not look at me. She shook her head silently and moved past me to begin making her breakfast. I quickly got a rag and bent over the mess, quietly wiping away the milk and the glass with my head down.

I waited for my mother to leave, and once she had gone, I poured a small pool of milk onto the table, just the right size to keep in the palm of my hand — and that is where I put it before making my way out to the bus stop.



As I climbed on to the bus and searched for an empty seat, I tried to ignore the judgmental stares that burned my skin as I passed by all of the girls that I envied so much. I clutched the cloth tightly in my hand. Perhaps I shouldn't have. The bus lurched forward as I stood in the aisle and I lost my balance. I tried to catch myself, but I couldn't open my fist without dropping the cloth, and so I came down hard on the bus's dirty, unforgiving floor. As cruel laughter filled the small confined spaces around me, I glanced up to see if the boy from my grade was laughing too. He was. It wasn't fair. I wanted so badly to impress him.

For the entire bus ride, I kept my hand clamped tightly shut around the cloth. I carried it with me into the school, and into my first period class. I could not write, for I held the cloth in my right hand. The teacher asked my why I was not taking notes. He looked at me sternly. I did not respond, because I did not know how. I looked down at my hand, tightly clasped around the mysterious cloth, and I did not say a word. He asked me if something was wrong. I wanted to explain, but I knew that I couldn't, so I said that I had to go to the bathroom and rose from my desk. I left the room without waiting for permission to do so. I went to the water fountain but did not drink. I just watched the clear spout of water rush past my eyes like a beam of glass. I never went back to class.

At lunch I went to the library and sat at a desk in a far corner, away from the other students. When I was sure no one was looking, I slowly opened my hand and looked at the scrap of cloth. I set it on the desk and watched as it became milk again. Then I picked it up and passed it from hand to hand, and dropped it again. I watched it turn from milk to cloth over and over until a voice behind me caused me to jump and spin around. It was the librarian. She sharply informed me that there were no drinks allowed in the library, and that I needed to

clean up my mess at once. I tried to apologize, but all that came out was an incomprehensible mumble. She turned and disappeared. I scooped up the cloth and left the library.

I went to my locker and tried to make it look like I was there for a reason. I rifled through some papers, got out a textbook and flipped through it. I heard snickering and felt my cheeks growing hot. I told myself not to look, but I couldn't help it. Out of the corner of my eye I glanced a group of girls staring at me and whispering. They were laughing. I wanted to shout at them. I wanted to ask them what the hell was so funny. I wanted to understand what it was about me that was so hysterical to them. But I didn't say anything. Instead I pretended that I couldn't hear them, and continued to flip through my textbook. Just then, a voice right beside my ear said, "So what are you wearing to prom?"

I spun around. It was a boy. A big one. An ugly one. His breath stunk. His clothes were too big, and they were dirty. I tried to speak but I couldn't.

"Didn't you hear me?" he asked, "I said what're you wearing to prom?"

"Why?" I managed.

"Duh. So that we can match!" He smiled a terrible, yellow smile. The others laughed.

"I- I don't—"

"What's the matter?" He grabbed my forearm. His hand was big and warm and scratchy, and his grip was strong. "I thought you were gonna be my prom date! I thought you'd like that!"

His face was very close to mine, and I could smell his awful breath, see his awful teeth as he grinned at me mockingly. I tried to pull away but his grip tightened. The others kept laughing. I couldn't hear anything else. I couldn't see anything but those awful teeth, couldn't feel anything but that awful grip.

"Don't you want to go to prom with me?"

"LET GO!"

The laughter exploded around me. I had been trying so hard to keep the tears in but now they burst loose from my eyes and rolled in burning rivers down my face. The boy suddenly grabbed my shirt and slammed me against the locker. It made a terrible loud noise and my textbook flew from my hands, the pages fluttering wildly like a terrified bird, before coming to rest lying open on the floor. Someone picked it up and threw it into the nearby trashcan. The boy let me fall to the floor, just like the book, lying crumpled for a few moments before I got up and ran. I didn't even bother to close my locker door.

I ran down the hallway and burst through the door into the bright sun. I kept running, down the sidewalk and across the street, through the park and into the trees. I kept running even after I was far, far away from the school. It didn't seem to matter how far or how fast I ran – the laughter still followed me, ringing in my ears, rattling around in my head.

I grew tired of running and began walking. I walked all the way home. The walk was long and I got home in the late afternoon, exhausted. I climbed the stairs to my room, closed the door and fell onto my bed. Just then I remembered the cloth.

I opened my hand and there it was, just as it had been that morning, lying in my palm. My hand was stiff and sore from being clenched in a fist so long. I set the cloth on my nightstand and fell asleep.

I woke to my mother's voice as she called out from downstairs. I didn't feel like responding. I listened as she slowly climbed the stairs, then waited for the knock at my door.

A knock and a muffled, "May I come in?" then followed. I groggedly opened the door. The door opened, and my mother entered. I was facing away, so I couldn't see her. She sat on the edge of my bed and spoke quietly.

"You weren't at school this afternoon. I got a call. Where were you?"

I didn't answer.

"Were you here?"

"Yes."

"How come you weren't at school? Are you feeling sick? I hope you're not feeling sick. You can't miss your big night tonight. What's wrong with your stomach? Do you have a headache? A fever?"

"I'm fine, mom."

"What is it then? What's the matter?"

I turned over to look at her. The concern was visible in her eyes, but I didn't

care.

"Did they give you a hard time at school again?"

I rolled over and turned my back to her.

She sighed. After a while, she said, "It doesn't matter. Come on. Let's get you ready. You have to leave in an hour."

"I'm not going."

"Don't be ridiculous. Come on. Get up."

I sat up. "No, mom. I'm not going."

Her eyes grew stern. "Yes, you are. Now stop fooling around and get up. We've got to get you dressed. What do you want to wear?"

Something inside of me snapped.

"I'm not wearing any of the stupid fucking outfits you've prepared for me, ok? I'm not you, mom. I'm not. You may have been at the top of the food chain in high school, but I'm not. And nothing you dress me in is going to change that! Don't ask me what I want to wear unless you want to hear the answer. Do you really want to know what I want to wear to prom? Do you?!"

She was sitting there, an expression of mild shock present on her face. I wasn't willing to wait for an answer. I tore off my blankets and stormed out of the room. I charged down the stairs and threw open the fridge. Then I stood there in my underwear, waiting for my mother to enter the kitchen, holding in my hand the carton of milk. The moment my mother rounded the corner, I lifted the carton above my head and slowly began to tip it. I heard a quiet gasp escape from my mother's lips as she saw what I was about to do.

I did it anyway.

The milk came cascading down over my head and enclosed my body. It gathered around my legs and flowed across my back, covering me from head to toe. It encircled me, and began to take form.

As the last drop fell from the carton above me, I stood in the kitchen, not covered in milk, but wrapped in a gorgeous white dress made of that lovely cloth I had carried with me all day. The cloth had fallen to form the most beautiful gown that either of us had ever seen. It fit perfectly in every place, and hung like the finest silk.

My mother was frozen in shock and awe before the spectacle, and stared at my dress and me for a long time. At last her lips moved and four words slipped out, almost inaudibly:

"You are so beautiful."

She moved toward me, opened her arms, and wrapped them around me tightly. After a moment I dropped the carton and embraced her, allowing the heavy tears from my eyes to fall onto her shoulder. We stayed like that for a long time. At last I quietly spoke.

"I can't wear this."

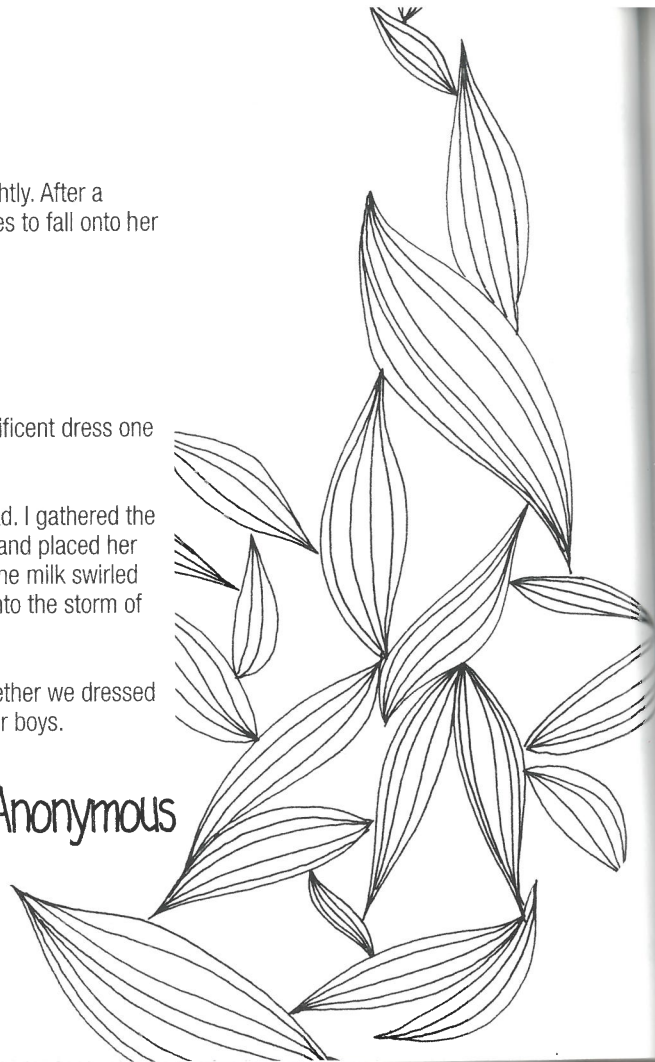
"I know."

My mother slowly pulled away. She stepped back to look at me in the magnificent dress one last time, her hands covering her mouth, her eyes glistening with tears of admiration.

I gestured for her to help me, and together we pulled the dress over my head. I gathered the great, heavy cloth in my arms and carried it over to the sink. She followed behind me and placed her hand on my trembling shoulder as I set the dress in the sink and watched silently as the milk swirled and slowly drained away, my hot tears splashing and disappearing as they fell down into the storm of white.

As the last signs of white left the silver sink, I turned to my mother, and together we dressed me in a lovely black suit, and I went to my senior prom dressed just like all of the other boys.

Anonymous





# May 1st, 2011 Auckland, New Zealand

THAT'S. SO. GAY.

Is our society so infectious? That of all varying lingos, of all the ways to say what we want to, the English language (when used to portray things like disgust, unfairness, silliness, or stupidity) is downsized to three loaded words. Three words that are nowhere close in describing any situation whether formidable or not. Three words that imply wrongfully the equivalency between the word "gay" and the dignity it encompasses and all things negative. Three words that, upon being thrown off your lips, unveil your level of ignorance and which pull apart the culture you so blindly grew up in. Three words that hurt my very soul, not just for the people my heart beats for and not just for my dashed hopes in our ever immovable societal ways, but because there exist 26 letters in our alphabet, and of all possible combinations we choose to do them an injustice.

That's so disappointing, that's so unfortunate, that's so slow, that's so unfixable, that's so frustrating, that's so aggravating, that's so unjust! hurtful! absurd! foolish! unimportant! boring! unentertaining! unstimulating! You are what you do and say--and everything you don't say.

To the unappealing teenage boys sitting behind me at the Auckland airport: you may be cute, but the words that escape your mouth have made you so. damn. ugly.

Vanessa Bui







by Laura Hughes





# Whisper

Meera Manghani





# I am to You as a Toothpick is to a Dragon

I know what you need, Amy.

You need someone strong enough to reach down into your throat

Reach into your insides and find the twist of wrongness

Untwist it so you can breathe again.

You need a cowboy, a gladiator, smoky gaze and hands rough

I'm so sorry you got me instead.

You make me feel like a paper cut out, Amy.

All I can do is trace our faint story on your shattered skin

And watch my lacy hand flutter uselessly against your chest.

My heart is kicking like a jackrabbit, Amy,

But that's impossible because I'm nothing but a paper girl

Heartless and gutless.

I bet you can't even see me from the side.

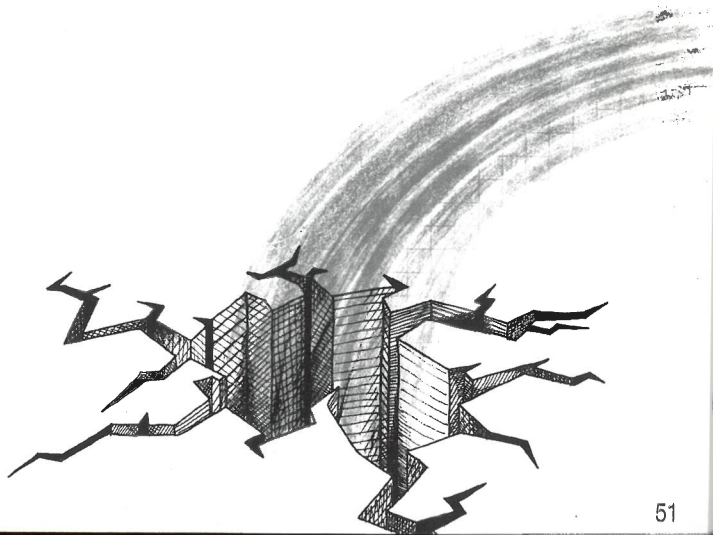
Your skin is starting to burn my fingers, Amy.

Wouldn't that be a dramatic ending,

For us both to explode into flames for my fearful, bitter crimes?

After tonight, it's not the worst thing that can happen.

Kat Rush



# Clitoral Stimulation

Clitoris. CLIToris. That's the right way to say it, I think. CLITORis sounds too much like a dinosaur. The I-promise-not-impossible-to-find clITORosaurus. Please don't get me wrong: I like dinosaurs too. A lot. In fact, if this were a show about Way Back When, then we could talk about our favourites, and... But that can happen later, if You like. Come find me after the show? For now, Down There.

Clitoris. (CLIToris -- right?) Clitoris. I'm not one for euphemisms. No little man in a boat for me, thanks. Hat or not. And no rosebud, please (do I look like Orson Welles?). I mean, if there's a term You're really-easily attached to, I can probably be convinced to play your name-game -- if You'll play mine too? It's the right word: clitoris. Clitoris. Clitoris clitoris clitoris. Say it with me? (If You like.) Enjoy it with me? Clitoris! That's it. Or, try this one: clit. Less word to enjoy, maybe, but sometimes I want to be quick, to let my mouth focus on... other things. Clit. It's a great tongue exercise, too: clitclitclitclitclitclitclit. Or for anyone who's done a drama class ever: the lips the clit, the teeth the clit, the tip of the tongue the clit (to get very poetry-nerdy-technical, this should scan: iamb iamb/iamb iamb/iamb anapest iamb).

And now that we're all warmed up... You might've spotted this already: get me talking about clits for a minute or so and You'll notice my tongue tip flick between my teeth as I smile. Maybe they'd get along, my tongue-tip, your clit? My teeth too, if You like -- gently? Your tongue, my clit? Your teeth (yes please)

Yeah, it should be reciprocable like that. And I think You're awesome for offering if You're into reciprocity, and believe me I understand if reciprocity's not all that's on your mind. But... it's silly.

So yes there's a right word for clitorises, I think. But I don't buy that porn-grade standard of the 'proper' vulva. (I don't buy much porn either, but that's just me.) No vulva -- no labia, no hood, no 'extra' folds, no clitoris is 'proper.' That goes for every other part of our bodies too, no matter what or who's being sold in tabloids, or fashion magazines, or on those parts of the internet worlds away from your favourite porn sites (if You have one or some of those, that is).

That's silly in that I make such a big deal about there being one right word for something that has no one right way of being awesome. Maybe You can accept that as an endearing kind of silliness? What's harder to deal with is that there's one vulva (and only one) I have a history of considering 'wrong.' It's the one vulva I'm ever shy to share in intimate moments. It's the one down there. And I'm really sorry I'm irrational this way, to be so

shy. It's a long time coming for me to be ready to share this part of me with You because as best I can tell that's just not something my body can do. Come, that is.

I hear it's fun. Believe me, I hear how much fun it is. I see it and smell it and feel it and taste it too. People (including me) talk about 'pleasuring' a lover, sure, but it's an our pleasure kind of situation, cunnilingus. And our mutual pleasure does depend on our respect for needs and desires, however irrational, I think. I'm not saying no; I'm saying not now, but later, maybe. As for right now, d'You think there's something we might both want?

Cunnilingus that splits us into exclusively a me-giver and You-recipient of pleasure simply doesn't exist. (I hope You're okay with that?) And even if that was the only touch between us -- a big, confusing 'if' for sure, but even if that -- isn't it obvious to You how lucky I am? It is so much to me, which is why it's always a mix of surprising and adorable if You wonder why I thank You too for this something we do.

The lips the clit, the teeth the clit, the tip of the tongue, the clit.

The tip of the tongue, especially. That's where most of my clitoris sense-memories live. So many lovers, so many shapes, so many tastes. And here You are, so generous, letting my tongue learn your shape and taste and swell and sensitivities. And our lips, our teeth, the tips of our tongues -- those are good for telling each other what we like, too.

Tell You something else: I love to recall (with the tip of my tongue) that certain texture, pressure, speed and/or spot a certain lover (past or current) liked especially -- certainly not always the same every time. But that's more for sola kinds of pleasure. In these moments we mutually desire and share, I hope You can tell what's on my mind, what's on the tip of my tongue? Say it with me? (If You like.) Enjoy it with me? Clitoris. I can't not smile saying it. And I'm so lucky to associate that smile -- lips, teeth, tip of my tongue and all -- with all sorts of different people and pleasures.

So thank You.

Kalanthe Khaiat

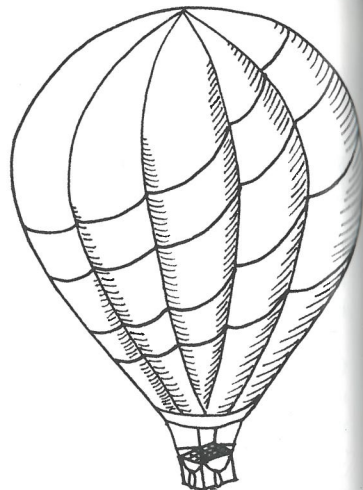
# Plane Ticket: A Rant

I do not want them there!  
I just want to buy them a one way ticket to anywhere they want to go in the world!  
And I keep telling them this... but they have not gone anywhere!

If you are wondering... I am talking about my chest.  
You see I am a trans-masculine genderqueer person.  
Basically I was born female but now I identify, and live as a guy, pretty simple right?  
No, not really. Because I still see myself as a third gender, that does not really fit, but fits in some ways.  
I know! I am that one puzzle piece that you cannot seem to fit anywhere in the puzzle!

So body dysphoria...  
Pretty much I did not have much gender confusion growing up.  
Then BAM! I hit university and all these other avenues opened up,  
I was meeting beautiful trans and queer folk who were going outside of every category I had ever known, and soon enough I was too... and that's where I am now.  
And I am happy with that. Minus the not so great parts of navigating the gender binary built world of bathrooms, forms, categories, boys here and girls there.  
And this whole body dysphoria thing... it's mostly just my chest. You see I feel the greatest and most liberated when I am binding, when there is no lump, no bump, I feel the most confident.

But then I catch sight of them...  
It's like they snuck up on me!  
They tricked me into looking down when I was in the shower or changing  
Then I am overcome with dramatic body dysphoria!  
and the thoughts of...  
Why are they there?!





Why do they exist?!

Why can't they just go away!?

I am not a real boi because I have a fucking chest!

And the frustration of not understanding where these thoughts come from or why they are occurring.

I get emotional, I get anxious, I get frustrated. However, these emotions are very tiring...

So I am starting to be more satirical and funny, have come up with different analogies like...

I will buy you guys a plane ticket anywhere in the world and you can just fly away!

Can you imagine just getting on a plane, and there were some boobies in the seat next to you? Would they jiggle? Would they need a chaperone?

OR human bodies should just be like puzzle pieces so you can just take off the parts you do not like!

OR we could be like maps and you can just visit the places that you want to go!

OR we could TRADE body parts with other people!

does anyone have any other ideas?!

Basically, top surgery would be awesome... however costs over \$6,000 and is commonly still seen as "elective surgery" even though this is somewhat of a life and death situation for many people.

And to get coverage, if you're lucky enough to have health insurance that is progressive enough to cover this kind of surgery, you have to go through a multitude of medical forms, referrals, and get diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder.

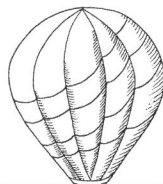
This is also dependent on the surgeon you go with and the fact that you can access trans friendly healthcare and do not face discrimination on the way... and if you can even get the money together.

Thus, a multitude of barriers. Compounded often by people's intersecting identities.

So does anyone have a plane/train ticket they want to offer my chest? There is obviously someone out there who wants them!



Beckham Ronaghan



## Karen Kelly

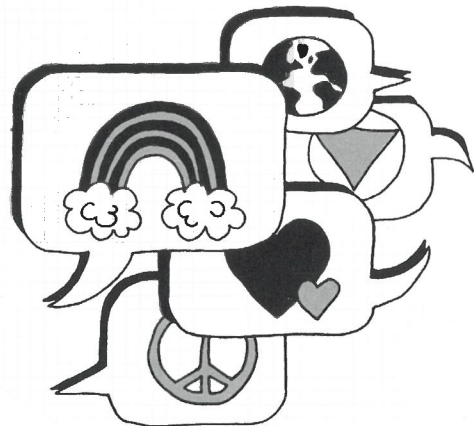
My partner Vibeke Vale and I attended Kingston Pride for the first time in 2011. We were planning to just watch the parade but when we arrived at the park that day, we decided to join in and walk. They were asking for people to help carry the flag and I volunteered us. This is a picture I took of Vibeke as the parade went through the downtown area. She commented afterwards that she has never felt so out, proud and gay in her whole life. This was a day and a feeling she will cherish forever. I think it looks brilliant on her.



## New

You look highly accomplished  
After kissing me.  
Quite satisfied,  
As am I.  
We talk about your eyes-  
How big and black they are!  
But you already know.  
And my smile-  
The way it begins with only one side of my face.  
But I already know,  
And we fall back to kissing,  
Sleepy, hungry exchanges  
Of touch and new familiarity,  
Hands travelling but restrained.  
I pull away to look at your lips,  
As soft as my hands are rough.  
I imagine the listening to come

When you slowly unclench your life.  
Neither of us has ever tried so much as a cigarette,  
We discover,  
So it seems good to leave before your hands find my belt buckle.  
Want itself is my desire tonight,  
When it looks so oddly friendly.  
Driving away, I savour your enigma  
And realise my restlessness for admission into your confidence.  
My empty house regards my return with effusive distance,  
As if I have returned from a long holiday,  
Causing me to wonder afresh  
Who we could be.



Rob Parry

# Banish Gay Bashing

Canada, 2011, 300 LGBT kids took their lives.  
One of them was Jamie Hubley, age 15, from Ottawa, killed himself  
because he couldn't stand the bullying anymore.

Kids need role models.  
Hey, it's time to get rid of the closet.  
Queers are here. Queers are special.  
Everybody needs to confront bullies.

I.

Kids need role models.  
If you're gay, show who you are to teens, any chance you get.  
They'll thank you from the bottom of their hearts  
Even if they can't say so, outright.  
All kids need role models to get comfortable in their skin.  
Gay teens, even more, with emotions raw, senses screaming.  
They need everyday nearby examples of who they can be.  
Besides KD Lang and Rick Mercer, they need support, up close  
and personal  
from a cousin, a neighbor, a corner store clerk who's gay.  
Teens need hope. We need to be there.

II.

It's time. Yes, it's time to get rid of the closet!  
Gays, queers, trans, Come out, come out wherever you are.

Let's all come out,  
Gayly out and about, everywhere we can.  
If we all came out, the 'normal' world will see, it's 10% Gay!  
Hey, if Chely Wright came out to the Nashville bible thumping  
country music scene, maybe a lot of us need a little more courage.

First wave gay activists have paved our road with their courage.  
Forged self-acceptance and gay pride, every day, all day, all their lives.

Now, 2012, time for a second wave push - show society  
presumed heterosexual just doesn't cut it anymore.  
It's a fantasy. Sexuality is immensely varied.  
Male and female are NOT absolute categories,  
Not black and white, but all colours of the rainbow in between.  
And all choices are ok. Lesbian, gay, bi, trans, straight but queer.  
Let's let Kingstonians know they've got plenty  
Of queer doctors, lawyers and Indian chiefs.

Once everybody knows their sister and their minister are gay,  
They begin to see, hey, we're ok.  
Then what's to fear?

III.

Gays are special.  
We're A OK awesome. Yea, in traditional aboriginal culture we're special...



Two-spirited, carriers of both masculine and feminine inside one person.  
Isn't this what humanity needs? ... More androgyny.  
Men who own their softer, vulnerable side.  
Women who validate their inner power out in the world.  
Shouldn't we get rid of those little boxes on forms?  
The ones that say M or F. Maybe they should say...Sexual or Not

Plus, us queers are creative, fun loving, artistic, often spiritual types.  
Yea, we're like THAT...special.  
Come on, straight folk, couldn't you enjoy some of our joie de vivre once  
in awhile?

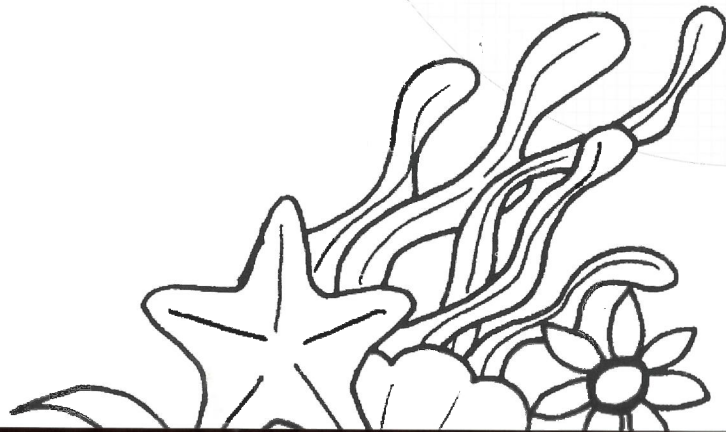
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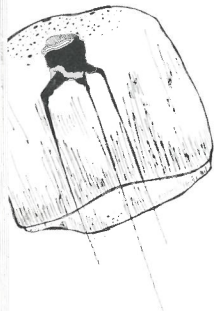
Everybody needs to confront bullies.  
Bullies prompt despair so strong, teens are killing themselves.  
Yes, bottom line, everybody needs to confront bullies.

Everybody.

You see somebody being bullied, they're in harm's way, you stand  
up and act.  
You see a toddler running for the street, you act, right?  
You pull him from harm's way. Same here. Step up to the plate.

Hey you, straight folk, you know that young guy who dances like  
lightning,  
Swishes his ass, sings outrageously as Lady Gaga?  
Or the gal tough as nails who plays hockey like a pro?





Do you cringe a little, hope it's just a phase?  
Do you find some trans people just...well, a bit too weird?  
That queasiness you feel. That judgment.  
That's what bullies, in their insecurity, act out.

You're not gay bashing, but your denial  
and prejudice are part of the problem.  
Straight folk need to confront bullies.

Everybody needs to confront bullies.  
We're Canadians, a country of inclusion.  
We're a country that says, gay love is sanctioned and sacred.  
So how can we allow gay youth to destroy themselves  
Before they even reach adulthood?

Parents need to confront bullies.  
Support your kids...include their choice.  
Everybody's sexual life has challenges. You know that.  
Don't close your minds. Open your hearts.  
Enlarge yourselves for the sake of love of your kids.  
Do you love your kids, or do you love convention?

Teachers need to confront bullies.  
Teens need your example to confront bullies.

Don't just 'tsk' disapproval in the corridors and carry on.  
This isn't good enough.  
Step up, confront what you see...say clearly, "That's not right..."  
Say "Does torturing somebody make you feel good?"  
Call an assembly. Bring in the authorities, the police.  
Apply tough love.

Gays need to confront bullies.  
Bash      Bullies      Back      with your authentic self.  
Speak up. Stand up. Be the change you want to see.

None of us are off the hook. We all have an obligation to the young.  
If you have a heart that's beating,  
Stand up to bigots and bullies.  
Come out. Come out, wherever you are.

Carole TenBrink





# Who Do You Think You Are?

Ebonnie Hollenbeck



# Do Not Cry

Last Friday in my media studies class we watched beat poetry performed by a young, male artist. I was sitting beside a boy while we watched the last video, where the performer recited something detailed and beautiful about a loved one. The room was dark.

I heard a quiet snuffle coming from the boy next to me. I began to wonder if he was tearing up, but before I even finished the thought I pushed it aside thinking he just had a cold. A boy wouldn't cry in class, in front of people. They just don't do that.

I used to believe I didn't think that way. But the mainstream media had gone right through my eyes and into my brain.

The video ended. He was crying.

I was shocked.

And then I realized how stupid it was for me to be shocked. We just watched something emotional, moving, powerful. I felt like crying.

Another girl came over and put her arm around him. I put my hand on his shoulder and felt bad for not checking on him earlier. I would have assumed he was crying from the first snuffle if he was a girl.

School ended and I went to the gym.

I got on a treadmill. I felt horrible.

Why hadn't I checked on him?

A line from the poem came back:

"A really beautiful girl just doesn't give a fuck..."

Why was I on this stupid treadmill then?

I felt rotten on my insides, and the fluorescent lights and miserable looking people weren't helping.

I left the gym. I sat outside on a bench and started crying.

I was just as under the influence of the media as anyone else. I believed all the bullshit about the way men were and the way women were. Raised by a feminist mom, in a gender studies course, and part of my school's Gay Straight Alliance. And yet I was still brainwashed, still enforcing stereotypes, and still ignorant of what I really believed.

I realized how much I didn't know.

I sat on that bench for forty minutes crying and noticing how beautiful everything was in the yellow light of the sun going down. I had opened up. I felt that everything in the world was so beautiful and so painful, but that our own society tells us we must not show our appreciation, our pain, our openness. Boys don't cry. And people don't sit outside the gym in tears



either. I was getting a lot of funny looks.

And no support.

Most people gave me sad glances, looked dumbfounded, and even averted their eyes.

What would they have done if i were a boy?

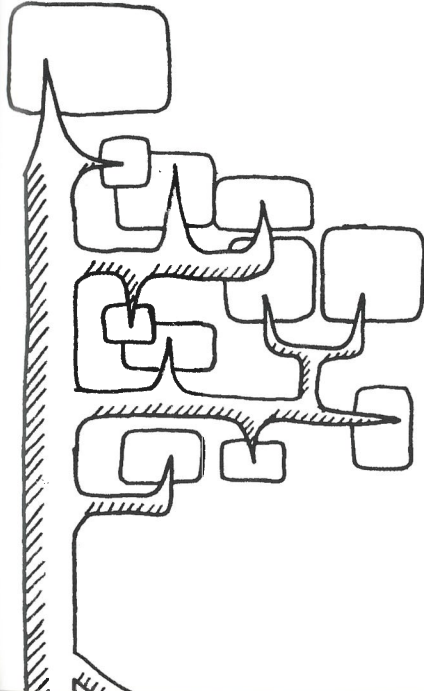
A few years ago I watched a women and a man break up. The man stormed down the street in anger and the woman huddled in a corner and cried. Are these the reactions we, as males and females, are born with or were we taught to react to strong emotions in certain ways?

Men are told anger is all they are allowed to feel. A man who cries is called a woman, because women are expected to cry. However, if a woman shows anger she's a bitch.

The rules aren't all that natural.

I sat there and cried and people ignored me.

I wished there weren't rules.



Sage Irwin

# Biohazard

My guts are on the floor. Splayed out in front of me, spilled from me.  
Fanned out and exposed but pointing back to where they came from.

I see them and my stomach drops. That flops onto the floor too.  
I watch the scene, try to remember when, how, this happened.  
Blood drains from my face, a sickening sink that descends and leaves a  
cold as it passes.  
A clear pink pool creeps out around the pile of my insides. I see this  
motion and it occurs to me that I am not watching, I am being done in.

My heart pumps at this realization.  
Fluids circulate around a broken circuit.

The pool widens.

My heart pumps.  
The pool widens.

Like a war bugle, a call for action.

Hastily I fall to my knees and sweep my tender guts toward me. I mount  
them into a greedy pile that cannot sustain itself and intestine topples  
over intestine. Juices sieve from my arms, squeeze out from their proper  
place as I hold on too tight.

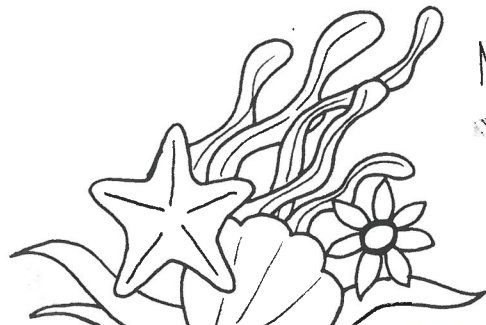
Fluids must be hitting critical minimums. I see spots. I breathe  
harder and faster but get less air. Spots that linger at the edges of  
my juices, they bend over to sip at the shore. Sipping from my juices.  
Replenishing themselves as I drain.

All at once I lift my guts and stuff them back into me. I plunge the first  
armfuls deep so the rest has enough room to fit. I am hyperventilating;  
my lungs heave as my arms heave in chain after chain, link after link  
of myself. A spot lingers, lands on a slinking colon. I give it a vicious  
yank that whips the thing off. I shove in the last of my insides.

Zip me up.

♦ Do I look the same?

How neat and clean and efficient a casing the body is for all the large  
consuming things that go on inside of you.



Mandy Jor



Can't. Escape.  
Anonymous

# I Fell In Love With Her

You'll log onto the computer, scroll through the albums. Thank God for social networking. Thank God for some higher technological power which has preserved these scattered proofs of your friendship. There will be no more memories.

Two linked arms. Two linked lives. Staring at the photograph, you realize the girls have no idea what's about to happen. You wish you could tell them to hold on a little longer; a little tighter. Don't let go once the camera flash goes off.

If I had known those moments would end, I would never have let go.

You don't know what the other girl was thinking, but you know what you were. You were thinking, Does she feel that too? That feeling like every nerve ending touching her arm is shimmering? It's like hugging lightning, you'll think. You will twist your face and look away and hope that no one will notice.

But they notice.

For months, you'll stumble along, blissfully unaware. You'll simply be consumed by how happy she makes you.

Even at that moment, your past self will not acknowledge what it is that she's feeling. It won't resurface till months later.



Staring at the photograph, you wish you could go back in time and tell that girl what's going to happen.

Tell her she's going to fall in love with her best friend. Tell her she's not going to plan for this one, not expect it, nor work for it to happen. It will simply consume her.

You wish you could tell about the moment she'll finally realize she loves that girl. You can pin point it exactly. It's the moment she's lying on her friend's window seat, crashing there after a night of drunken revelry. When she realizes that the girl is the only one who would have come to rescue her that night while she was too intoxicated to find her own way home. That this is the crux of their friendship, and the reason she is head over heels, 100% in love. They take care of each other.

You wish you could tell the girl that as she lies there, she'll realize how much she cares about that person, lying in the bunk bed. That the person is more precious to her than anyone she knows. That she never wants to ruin it.

You wish you could tell her she will ruin it.

She will ruin it for a hundred reasons underlying who she is and where she's come from.



She will ruin everything with her abandonment issues and her fear of being bullied again. She will give up the best person she's ever known because she's too much of a coward to tell the rest of the world that she loves a girl.

But it won't happen that night.

No, that night the girl will turn over and try to pretend the feelings do not exist. And when the person lying in the bunk bed whispers for her to come and sleep beside her, she will whisper back her refusal. And then she'll pretend to fall asleep herself, because she's terrified, more than anything, of losing her best friend.

The truth will not come out till months later. Not till another drunken night, when she can no longer suppress the feelings she has for this girl, this person who has taken over every thought, every waking minute.

You wish, more than anything that you could tell that girl to go home. Don't call your friend to rescue you again. Don't hold her closer in the middle of the night, when you should both just go to sleep. Don't turn your face towards her. Don't look her in the eyes as she tells you she has feelings for you too. Don't listen to the overwhelming impulse that says, kiss her.

She won't listen.

You wish you could tell that girl to hold on to her friend a little longer that night. To enjoy the one last night of pure, unadulterated happiness, because it's the happiest moment she will experience for months.

The next morning, you wish you could tell that stupid, stupid girl, not to let the fear of losing something safe cloud her judgment. You wish you could shake her with your bare hands when she says, "No, no I will not be your girlfriend. I will not tell anyone. This can't happen." You wish you could erase the hurt on the friend's face as she takes in this statement. You wish you could tell the friend that the girl is simply afraid of losing her. Of being bullied for loving a girl. Of what her religion and her culture and her family will say. You wish you could tell the friend that the girl's decision has nothing to do with the friend herself, and everything to do with how terrified the girl is.

You wish the best friend would know how confused that girl is as she sits there, hugging her knees. Of the truth, the pure and absolute truth, of her confession that she is in love with her best friend. Unquestionably.

You wish the best friend would realize what it does to the girl to hear she does not love her back. Of how it tears at her heart because now she's ruined the friendship.

You wish you could explain to the friend that when the girl takes back her confession of love days later, it is the only lie she has ever told her. You wish that the friend would realize the girl is sitting there, lying to both of them as she announces, maybe she was wrong. Maybe she doesn't actually love her.

You wish that the friend would realize THIS is the lie; the denial of love, not the confession. You wish that the friend will realize that the girl is only lying because she thinks it will save the friendship. If the friend does not love her in that way, maybe she can deny herself so that they can share

equal feelings again. Her only goal is to fix things, not to hurt the friend. You wish the girl will realize what it is that she's doing.

But she won't.

She won't.

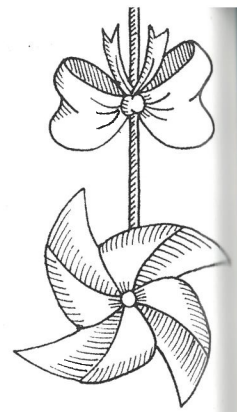
She won't.

None of this will happen as you wish it will. The girl will feel pain. The friend will feel pain. Later that night, they will both realize how deeply they must have cared for each other. That now, it is too late. They will both cry that night.

It will never be the same. The friend is going to leave the girl. They will not speak again.

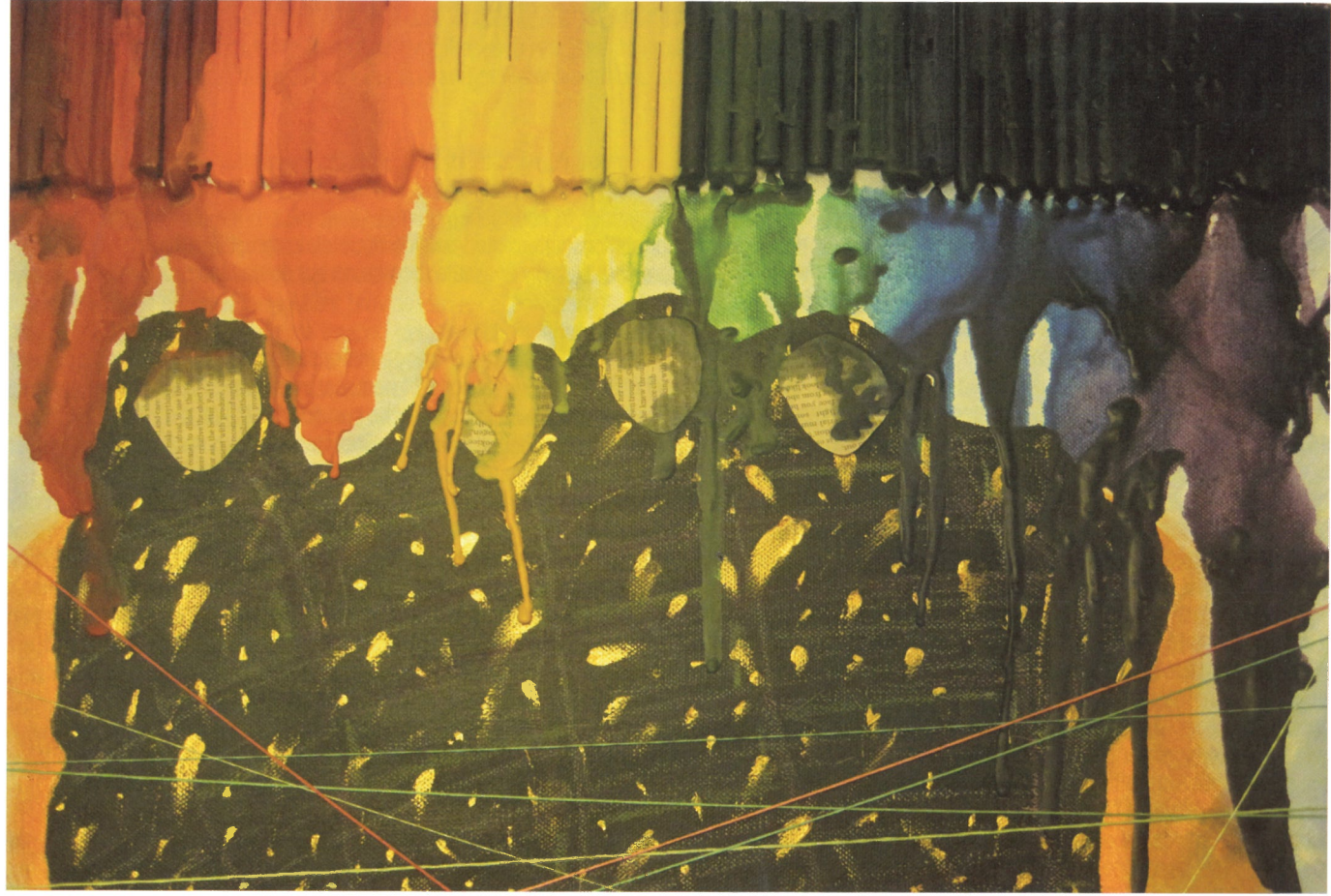
But the girl will never forget how she feels. How she is still feeling. She will never stop wishing that her friend would forgive her. She will never stop wishing that the friend will come home. She will never stop loving her. And even when she dates someone acceptable, and even when she's in his arms.

The whole time, she'll wish it was her.



CSLD





Anonymous

# Where Are All The Lesbians?

There are very few lesbians in the historical records. One reason for this is general adherence to a flawed model for acceptable evidence within the historical discipline. There is a common reluctance among historians to identify female relationships as sexual unless there is explicit proof of a genital relationship in the historical record. This is one small part of a larger debate in the historical field over what should be considered truth in history and what constitutes valid historical evidence. Much of what historians study is up to subjective interpretation, and it is accepted that assumptions must be made. Unfortunately, it would appear that no one is willing to extend these assumptions to lesbian relationships. This, among other factors, conspires to create the false impression that female same-sex relationships did not exist in the past.

Due to the subjective nature of the materials used by historians, it can be difficult to determine the degree of physicality in any relationship. One of the greatest obstacles to historical interpretation of female same-sex relationships is ambiguity in available resources. Historical records are generally open to various interpretations, and this problem is compounded in sexual history by the private nature of the subject. In the past, in addition to having very different conceptions of "sexuality," people were extremely reluctant to speak about intimate relations and emotions. This is especially so in the case of women, who have been idealized as sexually neutral until the latter half of the 20th century. Given the added complexity that

these relationships existed outside societal norms, it is entirely understandable why available records do not contain explicit sexual content.

The bulk of the reference material depended upon by sexual historians is in the form of personal correspondences. Although one might expect such sources to be candid, this is not always the case. The problem is that women deliberately wrote in such a way that would conceal suggestions of a non-platonic relationship. This widespread use of enigmatic language has inevitably led to divergent interpretations of the same texts. An excellent example of this is in the case of the relationship between Charlotte Whitton (a mid-20th century Canadian politician) and Margaret Grier. The ambiguous language in Charlotte Whitten's letters has resulted in two contradictory versions of her personal life. Her biographers Rooke and Schnell, finding no explicit sexual content, believe the letters between Whitton and Grier to simply be friendly correspondences. Conversely, adhering to less restrictive standards of evidence, Cameron Duder believes there is ample evidence to suggest that Whitton and Grier were in a romantic relationship. Many would suggest that it was entirely fair of Rooke and Schnell to conceive of the relationship in non-sexual terms without more concrete proof. However, in the study of history one cannot always hold out for absolute certainty. The reality for the historian is that not all parcels of historical evidence are so black-and-white, and



piecing together oblique clues to formulate hypotheses is requisite. In most cases, the historian must learn to draw the line and make assumptions at a certain point.

The problem with assumptions is that there is ample room for personal biases. The fact is, unlike in the case of female same sex relations, historians do not require an explicit demonstration of genital contact to assume heterosexual intercourse. Based on the same historical evidence, Rooke and Schnell probably would have assumed a relationship if Grier had been a man. Elaine Miller provides an excellent example of these varying standards which are applied to historical evidence of sexual relationships. Miller asserts that Charlotte Brontë was in a long-term same-sex relationship with a woman named Ellen Nussey. However, in the wider historical discipline, this relationship is ignored in favour of a brief heterosexual relationship with Constantin Heger. Miller attests that there is considerably less evidence to prove a relationship with Heger than there is with Nussey, yet it is the Heger relationship which is considered legitimate historical fact. Miller states that Brontë's letters to Heger "contain remarks which denote affection... on the other hand, they are almost nothing compared to the passionate affection of her letters over an incomparably longer time to Ellen." Miller states that "on the evidence of language alone it is clear that any word or phrase that can be construed as expressing affection to Heger can be easily matched by similar words and phrases expressing affection to Ellen." Again, evidence which would be compelling enough for a heterosexual relationship to be established is deemed insufficient for proof of lesbianism.

So how does the historian overcome this obstacle of proof? Much of the answer lies in a redefinition of what should constitute evidence of a physical relationship. Duder suggests that the historian "must learn to

read sources for the linguistic clues that reveal physical relationships." Intimacy is something which can be demonstrated in many ways, an explicit description of sexual behaviour is only one of them. Under a new expanded model of historical proof it is clear that Brontë's relationship with Nussey is more plausible than her relationship with Heger; and Whitton was certainly more deeply involved with Grier than Rooke and Schnell believed. The problem with this model is that the historian must be conscious of a specific type of evidence in historical documents. Historians who are not open to the idea of a particular historic personage engaging in a physical same-sex relationship are likely to ignore the sexual connotations in a document.

Clearly, there is a fundamental problem with the way relationships are studied in history. The overly rigorous standards of historical evidence demanded of female same-sex relationships renders it unnecessarily difficult for historians to establish them as historical truth. The fact that it is far easier to establish a relationship between a man and a woman (often based on tenuous evidence), as seen in the Brontë example, underlines the dominance of heteronormativity in the historical academy. We may never be able to definitively prove past sexual relationships, however historians should be evaluating relationships according to a more democratic standard of evidence. It is unacceptable to demand more rigorous standards for one form of relationship than over another. If the study of sexual history is to move forward historians must re-examine these outdated standards to create a new framework for identifying historical relationships which takes into account the full diversity of human sexuality.

Caitlyn Langille

# No Such Thing As Bliss

There's a girl I've been dying to kiss  
Or be kissed by; that's okay, too.  
Either way, I'm sure I'll die in bliss.

Stubble against my chin makes me hiss.  
Too rough, reminds me of mildew.  
No, no, I'd much rather have her kiss

Any day, over any princes'  
She's on my mind, like a tattoo.  
Her words are poetry to me (bliss).

But there's just one thing: she doesn't know this.  
In dreams I tell her, "I love you."  
She smiles and we cross oceans to kiss--

Then I wake up in a dark abyss  
Called "life." Here, my dreams are taboo  
And there is no such thing as bliss.

I'm choking as if in a bodice.  
I--I don't even know if you  
Would want another girl's kiss  
Because, you know, there is no such thing as bliss.

Annabelle Wu

Open letter to other white gay male-identified folks:

Your pride won't tear down that  
apartheid wall or uproot that settlement.

But those stilettos and some emotional vulnerability might  
help, a bit.

Don't forget whose land those stilettos are marching around  
on,  
and how they came to be here in the first place.  
Your history begins before Stonewall,  
it begins with Columbus, Champlain, and all those other  
motherfucking  
colonizers and settlers.

Remember,

Your pride won't tear down that  
apartheid wall or uproot that settlement.

But those stilettos and some emotional vulnerability might  
help, a bit.



Anonymous

# The Return



The room didn't seem so big, anymore. When James was young, it had seemed like all the space a boy could ever need; certainly enough room for all the games and imaginary adventures as they grew up.

But now, the room seemed so small; the room was so cluttered with memories that he could barely take a step.

James closed the door behind him, taking a deep breath. He knelt down, smiling as he traced along the initials etched into the back of the door at knee-height. The letters "EM" and "JS" were scratched roughly into the paint; above them, the initials were repeated, this time neater, smaller, with the two pairs of letters set closer together. James' smile faded as he traced the second set.

He glanced around the room, feeling like it was the first time he ever really noticed the place. The old white bookshelf, the upper shelves bending under the weight of too many books. The somewhat newer desk, with a darkened computer screen gazing back at him over piles of post-its and loose sheets of paper. A jacket lay over the back of the computer chair, right where he had left it months ago when he was last there. He sat down in front of the desk, fighting the urge to sort through the scraps of paper, wanting to leave everything exactly as it was.

James looked up to the wall behind the monitor; four photos had been crookedly taped onto the wall. Two were group pictures of James and his friends; one an old birthday party, everyone's faces smudged with cake underneath paper hats, and another from the summer with the whole group smiling, laughing, and dripping wet as they posed in front of the lake.

Only a few faces were present in both pictures, and James couldn't help

but smile when he compared how those faces had changed over the years. Amy probably hadn't worn a dress since that long past birthday party, and Evan had gone from a chubby little ten year-old to a skinny, gangly teenager. James could barely recognize himself and Emily in the older photo, though Sam looked exactly the same as he always had, with that ridiculous Cheshire cat grin he always wore for pictures. The next two pictures didn't hold James' attention for as long. The third was just a gathering at a family reunion, the fourth a photo of a pair of dogs, one of whom had sniffed at James' heels when he had returned to the house that morning. He did stare for a while at a noticeable gap between the two sets of pictures; the absence of the fifth picture made him sadder than he'd like to admit.

James spun slowly around in the computer chair, pausing to take note of the wooden chest of drawers; its top was, unsurprisingly, littered with more notes and papers, but it was the lowest drawer that drew James' eye. There was a noticeable dent in the wood from when he, Evan, and Sam had gotten into a play wrestling match that got a little too serious. He briefly wondered if Evan's scar had ever faded. He sat down and swung his legs up onto the bed, laying his head back. James frowned, reaching behind the pillow and pulling out a folded up photograph.

James bit his lip, unfolding the picture; he already knew what he would see. It was him and Evan, on the day the beach picture was taken. Evan's hair had dried to a golden blonde, while James' was still wet, midnight black and dripping to either side of his face. They had their arms around one another, and James remembered how much he had



been shivering when they tried to take the picture. But in spite of the cold, they were both smiling brightly, with Evan looking as happy as he had ever seen him.

The picture was taken a mere four months ago, but it felt like it had been years.

James dropped the picture to his chest, closing his eyes tightly. He opened them, and blurrily saw the popcorn ceiling above him. He couldn't believe how familiar, how powerful such a simple, unimportant detail could be.

James knew the whorls and patterns intimately. Ever since they were kids, he and Evan had spent hours just lying on this bed, looking up at the ceiling, talking. When they were young, it was stupid little things; baseball and hockey teams, upcoming school events, how girls were icky.

But as they got older, and their childhood friends drifted and high school started, their talks grew more infrequent for a while. They met other people, didn't see each other as often as they should have. It wasn't until last year, when they were re-introduced by mutual friends, that they started talking again.

"James?"

James bolted up, his eyes turning to the door.

A petite blonde woman, dressed in a plain, simple black dress, stood in the doorway. She curled her fingers through unruly blonde hair. Her eyes were red.

"Mrs. Mason." James let the picture fall to his side, wiping his tears away in shame. He stood up, straightening out the pleat of his dress pants. "I'll go, I'm sorry, I shouldn't —"

"No," she replied, her voice catching. She held her hand to her mouth, screwing her eyes shut for a moment. James waited. "You should be here." James sat down slowly, hesitantly. After a moment, Mrs. Mason came over and sat next to him.

"May I?" she asked, holding out a shaking hand. James handed over the

picture. Mrs. Mason carefully flattened out the picture for a moment. "You two look... You look very handsome, James."

James stared at the picture in her lap, not really listening to her words. She slowly handed it back to him, her hand shaking.

"I'm so sorry James." Mrs. Mason was shaking all over, but she slowly stood up. "I know that... I know now that what I did was wrong. I can't... I don't understand it. But if I knew..."

"I know," James said firmly.

Mrs. Mason peered at him for a long moment. James didn't look up from the picture.

"In some time..." Mrs. Mason said slowly. "I was hoping we could talk about him..." James looked up, tears running freely down his face. Mrs. Mason turned away, covering her mouth, but continued. "I was hoping we could talk. So I can get to know my son."

She walked away, returning to the rest of the group downstairs.

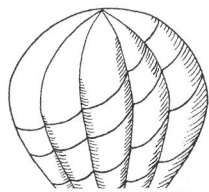
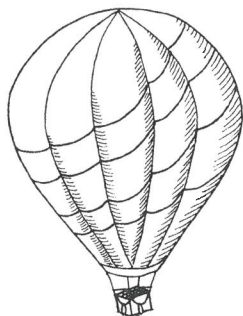
James sat on the bed for a long time. He carefully placed the picture on top of the pillow, facing up to the popcorn ceiling.

"Goodbye, Evan."

Colin McMillan

# Open Minded Ignorance

I walk the line.  
In between,  
In some spaces one  
In some spaces the other or both or a mix of everything.  
Constantly navigating this abyss of discovery, danger, instability and unknown.  
Fielding questions, glances, glares, and stares.  
Sometimes physical eviction from spaces I thought I could access.  
I do not choose this,  
I came to this on my life path.  
This is NOT an alternative lifestyle for you to inquire about, and then move on.  
This is MY life.  
This is MY everyday.



I go by Beck.  
I go by he or they.  
I am not a woman or a man,  
I am a transguy,  
an anomaly boi.  
I may not fit your stereotype of masculinity,  
But I fit my own.

I am not asking for your pity.  
I may ask for an open ear,  
your solidarity,  
your understanding,  
for you to acknowledge your privilege.

I am Beck,  
I love who I am.  
And I would appreciate  
an effort for you to recognize  
and take some time to see where I am coming from.  
Because I do that for you.

Beckham Ronaghan

My face is in the water  
It feels like a palm  
Hushing me.  
"Be still," she whispers.  
My ears are on the surface

Always exhaling. Hearing her breath

She caresses my breast,  
Quieting my blood.

Water ripples away from my body  
And toward it.

My limbs spread out

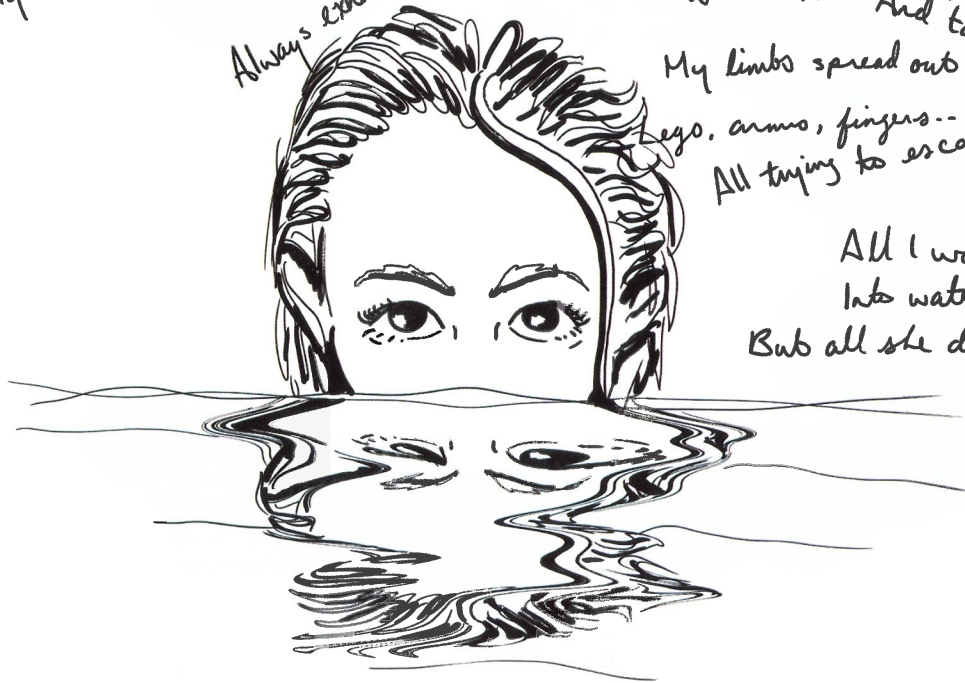
Legs, arms, fingers...

All trying to escape.

I don't need  
them

All I want is to fall  
Into water

But all she does is lift me.



# sister shadow

I was seven years old the summer night when i first saw her/my sister shadow/  
dad was out and mom was crying again behind closed doors/i couldn't stand hearing  
that muffled sound so i was listening/to the radio/aretha, queen of soul/  
and i  
didn't know what i was feeling/oh/summertime sang softly that night/  
crickets  
chirping and a bottle being broken outside/aretha and my mother's sobs  
scoring the inside air/i couldn't breathe/didn't know what i was feeling  
cept i was thirsty, so i  
went to get a glass of water/moonlight was pouring through and it felt warm/  
filled up my glass, and i thought/moonlight/i'm drinking moonlight/and  
then i looked down  
and saw my shadow, edges blurred, flowing liquid  
over the floor/took the shape of a woman, grown/  
and i dropped the glass/ran to the bathroom mirror/and there she was:  
my sister shadow, arrayed in silk, skin gleaming, lustrous/her mouth red  
as a wound/  
singing moonlight with all of her might/  
and i stood transfixed/transfigured/transposed/stood staring/  
at the goddess in my boy-body self/in silence/  
until dad came in/and bellowed, WHO BROKE THIS GLASS HERE ON THE FLOOR/  
and my sister shadow smiled/put a finger to her lips/and whispered run/

and i ran out the back door, laughing to myself

from that night on, she was there/whenever i looked down/whenever i looked in the mirror/in the daytime she slept under my skin/at night, she awoke, luminous & full of grace/filling me with her song & dance  
till i thought i would burst  
for silence/she was my comfort and my power/my destiny, my direction/my sister shadow/  
my shadow self/she was my singing through the dark times/and lord, dark the times were/at school they smashed my slender body/they punched my tender mouth/  
all cuz i sat with my legs crossed & wouldn't play basketball or bloody knuckles/  
cuz of my lisp/my limp wrist/my swaying walk/oh, how daddy hated my delicate looks  
and swaying walk/he tried to make me walk talk run hit like a man/  
how to hit like a man/  
one day i got hit too many times, and my sister shadow whispered,  
run/so i ran out the back door/  
and never came back

i sought out shelters and part-time jobs/read about hormone treatments & dreamed of going  
to New York/tentatively tried applying make-up and value village gowns/came  
a few steps closer becoming the woman in the mirror/felt giddy with



joy with each new lipstick  
and new hairstyle/i made friends with other trannies/who praised and urged  
me on/  
gave me courage enough to consider going onstage in stilettos and plastic  
jewels/  
and so one amateur drag queen night/i took to the spotlight/and my sister  
shadow/oh  
my sister shadow/how she sang/how it felt/oh/alive at last/in my body, at  
last/my body/my  
body/mine

giddy on happiness, i walked home alone that night/there was a ring of red  
light around the moon/  
a blood moon/but i didn't notice/until i heard a crunch/of broken glass/  
scoring the outside air/voices/men/catcalls & jeering/HEY BABY, HOW'S IT  
GOING/HEY/FAGGOT/  
NICE DRESS/oh/protect me, sister shadow/she whispered run so i did/but  
not fast enough/  
and they beat me that night/night of the blood moon/or rather, they beat  
her/  
my sister shadow/i faded inside her grace/vanished inside her warrior song  
that screamed defiance at their fists/and when i woke up/bruised & broken/  
in my boy-body-self/she was dead/they killed her/my sister shadow, full of  
grace/ my fearless destiny and infinite possibility/killed the goddess in me

i live in the  
world of men now/my shadow is nothing/but my own self/  
on friday nights at drag bars, sometimes i try to bring her back/  
paint my mouth as red as a wound/dance in heels &  
outrageous hair/no use/she died in me that night/when i dance, i can see  
her corpse  
sleeping beneath my skin/my sister shadow/close-eyed, she sings only  
silence now/  
moonlight trickling from the corner of her mouth

Kai Cheng Thom



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