







Special Thanks

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A Note from the Editor

OutWrite has become a piece of art in itself, a physical representation of the opinions and innermost feelings of the diverse individuals forming our community. I am honored to provide a space in which issues of sexuality and gender are investigated without restraint on part of the reader or artist. ■ As you delve into our ninth edition, I urge each of you to push your imaginations to their limits – feel uncomfortable, feel scared. Feel elated. Feel angry. Between these two covers lies an exploration of the divide in humanity between darkness and light, homophobia and acceptance, love and pain. ■ To our dedicated volunteers – I thank you. Your support keeps this publication alive. ■ To those who contributed – I entreat you to submit in upcoming years. Your talent is invaluable. ■ And to you, my dear reader – remember to let yourself experience what the artists and writers have so candidly unleashed.



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Odes to Girls Who Looked Like Love

Tess Klaver

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

I'm sorry. I jumped.

■ ■ ■

I read that dust from the moon smells like gunpowder, and I thought of you. Because we crashed into starlight like a high-speed car wreck, we threw ourselves all of sixteen and ready to explode like hand grenades against a town we could barely stand in, we fractured each other like tectonic plates slipping together in the nighttime. Your mouth was always lonely; you always tasted like vodka and cigarettes, strangers and ash. You always felt like sheer need. My hand would slip into your wild fire hair and you would cling to me as if you couldn't feel me burning, press yourself into me like a trigger, as if you didn't know my heart was an empty chambered gun, waiting for your bullets. Tell me, if I

could turn back time to the night when you told me I wasn't a boy, so I wasn't enough, tell me you wouldn't have done it differently. Tell me the moon will always be scented with napalm and shrapnel. Tell me on a cloudless night that you can still smell war.

■ ■ ■

We were twelve and I would love you for five years after that, had already loved you for a year, had no idea I loved you. Thought you had been born straight out of a storybook where the heroine is dark and doesn't know what's coming⁴ and doesn't need a brilliant knight to save her. You were the first and last girl I ever loved in daylight, threw you into a pond full of the sun and tadpoles that writhed amongst our feet, because we weren't damaged yet and everything was alive. Grabbed your hand and hauled you out to a half submerged bench, climbed up on it like we were planting a flag for our homeland, your hand in mine. Thought, oh, of course, and that was it for five years. Didn't know that later your parents would throw plates at each other's heads, didn't know that the boy who taught me to fight would never teach me how to fight him, didn't know we'd both end up carving into our own flesh, hieroglyphs of unintention. Didn't know we'd go off like a nuclear power plant, we weren't the chernobility yet, weren't the poisoned royalty of a skinny love. Didn't know we'd both end up broken and come out the other side whole. Didn't know I'd wake up one day, still with the ghost of your lips on mine, enormously happy. Because you had fallen in love with a girl. She isn't me, but God, how you smile.

Terminal Love

Christopher Rudan

"Is this your girlfriend?"

"My boyfriend actually," I remarked. Evidently the neck-length hair was deceiving. I felt his body quiver, and I instantly understood what I had just said.

"Oh." The woman paused. "Well there's nothing wrong with that, hell I used to fool around with girls."

I smiled, not wanting to appear rude. I suppose I was lucky to have gotten such a reaction, we weren't exactly in a very queer-friendly place.

"So where are you two headed?"

I wished this woman would shut up. But again, not wanting to be disrespectful and appreciative at her tolerance I answered.

"You know he'll have to come up and visit you next," she said in a friendly tone.

I replied again in agreement, turning my attention to the crying, shaking boy in my arms. "I'm sorry, it just...it just slipped out," I whispered. He didn't respond.

"So how did you like it here?" The woman asked.

Well, the people here are very welcoming. And you gotta love the accent." She gave a muffled laugh and lit a cigarette, joining the rest of her family.

I held him closer, trying to pry his face from my chest so I could wipe the tears away. "I will see you again, alright? I promise, alright?" He gave me a labored nod.

Five minutes earlier it had been him wiping the tears from my eyes. I think people would thoughtfully describe me as emotionally numb. Needless to say I surprised myself.

Finally the bus pulled up and I could feel his arms tighten around my waist. The woman said her own goodbyes and went to join the line. I looked at my friend and told him I loved him, gave him a kiss and went to join the line myself. Once on the bus I took my seat and looked out towards a sight that still haunts me, one that was so clearly implanted in my mind. As the bus pulled away he stared at me with teary eyes. I think it was then that it hit me. *Friends* generally don't French-kiss one other.

*"Golden head by golden head,
 Like two pigeons in one nest
 Folded in each other's wings,
 They lay down in their curtain'd bed:
 Like two blossoms on one stem,
 Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
 Like two wands of ivory
 Tipp'd with gold for awful kings."*

*~ Laura and Lizzie
 in Rossetti's Goblin Market*



August

Lindsay Cavanaugh

It's that time of year
 I smile up inside

 a doll with two saddled feet,
 not ground

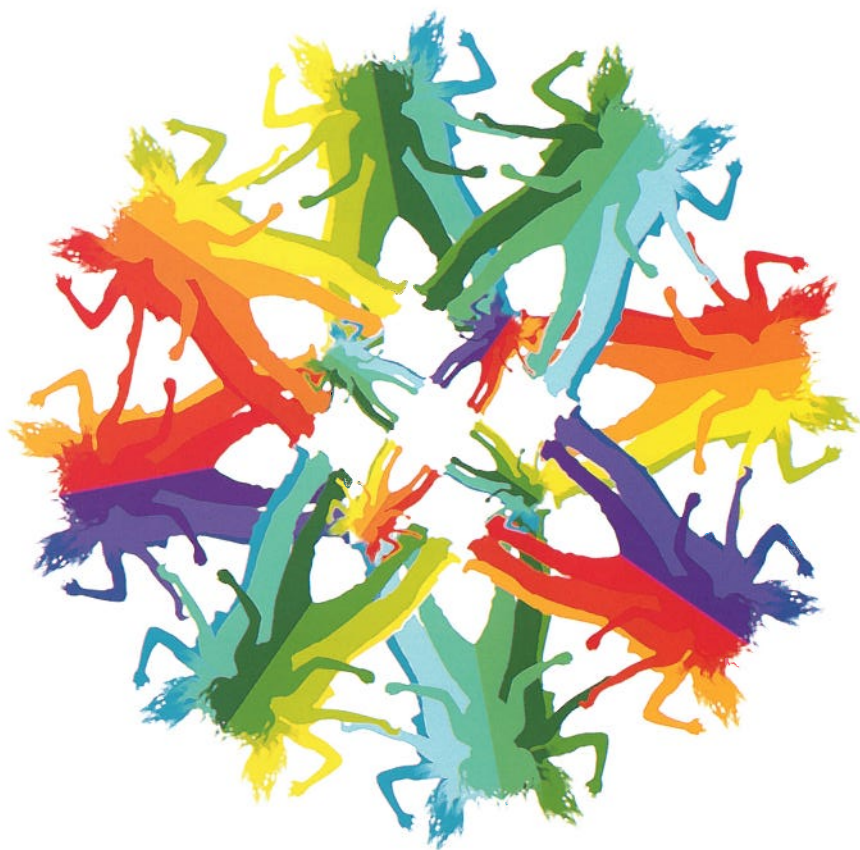
only a pink parade,
 flesh matching clothes

while late summer
 dances together

my sunburnt cause
 wrinkling down to wind

superfluous, uncurling present --
 the now of when you leave

freedom by the sea --
 to smile back outside.



A Room of Flowers

Lindsay Cavanaugh

She calls from the corner
of a glass pane, standing
still, red and blue.

She calls from the smile
that lingers in corners
of another's sweet smile.

She calls from the sheets
of white linen beds
lined with white linen men.

She calls from the wall.
It transposes moments –
a love to conform to love
as bouqueted by another.





photos by G.H.



Commonplaces

Anonymous

Words.

Words are usually my forte.

And yet, with you my speech is stunted.

Cut off.

Stuck forever in a realm of trivialities.

We only speak of commonplaces.

Work.

Class.

Assignments.

Meetings.

Nothing more, nothing deeper.

Why not?

What happened to us?

When I look at you, I feel it still.

That spark.

That connection.

But we've hit a wall.

Or, I should say,

You've erected a wall around yourself.

I rail against it—quietly.

Forever caught in the gray area of "just friends."

Why?

When we meet,

When we talk,

I feel it,

I can almost see it,

A transparent filament,

Pulsing with colors—emotions.

Stretching between us.

Even when we speak of nothing,

Your face is avid, engaged, full of feeling.

Mine, a careful mask of pleasantness,

Hiding, always hiding,

What I feel.

I tried to show you once.

Because I thought you felt it, too.

The unreasoning joy when I see your smile,

The nervous thrill I get when you hug me.

Wasn't it you who thought we had a lot in common?

Wasn't it you who wanted to share?

We do have a lot in common,

More so than even you guessed.

We both like girls.

So, what happened?

Did I come on too strong?

I'd never gone after a girl before.

Guys are easier.

They chase me,

I say yes.

Simple.

Low risk.

For once, I took the initiative.
And you started to pull away.
And I, afraid to ruin our friendship,
I pulled back.

The cord between us stretching taut,
Colors fading to black.
We part ways.
It shatters.

So here we are.
Talking.
You—seemingly unaware of the turmoil you incite
within my brain.
Me—smiling despite the feelings on the edge of
pain that suffuse my chest.

We only speak of commonplaces.
Work.
Class.
Assignments.
Meetings.

Why do I still feel it, then?
Why, whenever we see each other, does that fiber
fuse itself anew?

I'm tired of talking.
I wish you'd just—
SHUT UP!
And kiss me.

My feelings for you are anything but commonplace

The Gay Christian

Chúk Odenigbo



“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

There is no commandment greater than these.”

MARK, CHAPTER 12, VERSE 29-31

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"I am the Love that dare not speak its name."

- Lord Alfred Douglas



Double Consciousness and Pro-Sex Black Feminist Theory

Patricia Louie

Bell hooks (1989) argues that black women's musical legacy is a way to understand history and contemporary black women's consciousness (in Skeggs, 1993, p. 9). Beverly Skeggs (1993) research on black female rappers suggests that this is a medium in which the silencing of black women's sexuality can be challenged. The female rappers "talk back, talk Black" (hooks, 1989) to the colonialist system that attempts to contain the expression of women's sexuality. Skeggs (1993) contends that black female rappers are creating a public space in which women can express their sexuality powerfully as a demand, need and desire. Springer (2002) acknowledges that while not all of these songs are "feel good," or positive, and that while not all artists are explicit about their political stances (if they claim to have one at all), music is a powerful tool for stimulating discussion about gender, sexism, and masculinity/femininity from a black perspective (p. 1078). The Grammy award winning black female rap artist, Missy Elliot rose to prominence in the late 90s. She claims that she faced difficulty obtaining a record contract early in her career because, she "wasn't 5'6", size three, with a tiny waist" (in Godfree, 2005, p. 63). Instead, Missy embodies a brand of femininity that is very different from that of conventional artists like the Spice Girls. In the song "Work It" (2002) Missy Elliott expresses her own kind of sexuality, effectively creating a dialogue for us to rethink our analyses of black women's sexuality. She claims her body for a site of desire and empowerment. Missy Elliot's hit song "Work it" is a celebration of the black body, active female desire and hip hop culture. In refusing to agree to containment of their sexuality, black female rappers are challenging the discourses that are used to control them.

*"Understand that sexuality
is as wide as the sea.
Understand that your morality
is not law.
Understand
that we are you."
- Derek Jarman*



A Harsh Lesson for the Adolescent Male

Jordan Gregoris

What drives the youthful man? Is it the pleasure centers whirring within him? Or the fear of inadequacy? Or perhaps the deep, often repressed arrogance, vying viciously to prove itself relevant. The youthful man often acts without inhibition on the faintest impulse. Recklessly, and all too typically, he dives into situations without caution.

▪ His feet are not on the ground but hovering a few inches above it. This height fills him with the notion that if something terrible happened on the imperfect earth below him, he would carry on without notice—standing as tall as before wearing blinders that were manufactured in naivety.

▪ Until of course, all of a sudden and without warning; God turns reaching to his left and flicks the switch marked “gravity” on masking tape written in capitals with a black Sharpie maker. Our vain vigilante’s feet crash to the ground; however, they continue to sink down through the ground, until he is engulfed in despair up to his chin; it is then, that he first feels vulnerability and morality, that he learns to work- to fight. Humbled, he has tortuously learned a new perspective. He struggles and eventually surfaces, his youth washing out of him. And onward he walks, with a slightly more defeated stride, and a wiser soul.

"What is straight?

*A line can be straight, or a street,
but the human heart, oh no, it's curved like a
road through mountains."*

*- Tennessee Williams,
A Streetcar Named Desire, 1947*



Untitled

(previously published in *Lake Effect 6: An Anthology*)

Sherry Huang

Let's get closer to this thing we're already in. Find the middle of a fog and not end up on the other side. Sometimes we get there sometimes only kissing matters. Beer from a bottle - your lips and all its different aliases. It's a really good apology. This is how I say you're pretty: "Look at the sky behind electrical lines, broken by angles." An argyle pattern of relief from It, round and black, that dilating eclipse inside of you. It feels good to touch. I hold my hand up to a sunbeam and really dip my fingers in. Slowly, like candle wax. You know this is funneling towards some moment that is all dust: I'm right here, I'm right here, I'm right here. I can hear light when it shines. You can stay lit and in the middle still have a dark little iris where your entire human is.

"To define is to limit."

Oscar Wilde,
The Portrait of Dorian Gray



Without

Lindsay Cavanaugh

Be quiet, my child.

Do not dampen the sound of your feet

With new feet.

Laughter that rings like bells in snow

Socks that slide along cold cement floor.

How can I paint you like that

Have you stand soft and blue

Curled and uncurling. The wind.

Be quiet, my love.

You distract me with your distracted existence.

