

THE WAY WE LOOK MATTERS:  
WITNESSING. TRAUMA. PERSPECTIVISM.

by

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M.A., Brock University, 2012

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(Interdisciplinary Studies)

[Rhetoric/Philosophy/Performance Studies]

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

April 2020

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The Way We Look Matters: Witnessing. Trauma. Perspectivism

submitted by Logan Alexander in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

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## Abstract

This began as a film project. We took cameras and queer actors on a filmed/photographed walk in downtown Vancouver to demonstrate that people who look queer receive harsh micro-expressions when they are in public space.

The photos were taken in public space and the actors consented to having their images used for this project.

This is using the same public photography method used by Hayley Morris Caffiero (professor of photography) in her project *Wait Watchers*, where she photographed herself in public space and captured the micro-expressions of members of the public as a provocative statement about the type of treatment that fat people experience in public.

I wanted to use this photographic method with queer people to demonstrate how queer people are looked at in public, and I wanted to interview the actors afterwards using a photo-elicited interview method where we would review the footage together during a debriefing interview.

After I experienced an inter-LGBTQ-community trauma, I decided to incorporate a deeper layer of auto-ethnography into the project and turn this into a story about how we all look at each other imperfectly, including ourselves, including me. It became a process for me to document and move through a phase of existential resentment towards hope.

This work is intended as art. It is also intended to be provocative in order to prompt dialogue regarding the importance of the phenomenon of “looking at others” and “being looked at” vis a vis Gender and Power and Hope.

I used an interdisciplinary/mixed methods approach: philosophical inquiry, poetic inquiry, narrative inquiry, rhetorical analysis, auto-ethnography, photography, performance, conscientization and photo-elicited journalism.

My conclusion is that the way we look does matter, but so does the way we talk about the process of looking, and if we lapse into dogmatic controlling behaviors in response to being looked at harshly, then we perpetuate harm.

I also conclude that to some degree hope is an elusive, and mysterious, but nonetheless existentially, poetically, and even academically significant framework from which to perform inquiries about power and gender and witnessing.

## **Lay Summary**

The way we look matters because looking at each other and being looked at by others might be one of the oldest ways that human beings have been connecting and making meaning with each other. It's a phenomenon that's intrigued philosophers for centuries, and it's a tension that prompts questions for almost everyone in the era of multi-media/social media.

This is an investigation into looking/being looked at using interviews, photography, storytelling and poetry.

Thank you for reading, and welcome to my story.  
I hope you see something in here that makes you wonder.

## Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished work by Logan Alexander who acted as researcher/story-teller, producer and director in collaboration with photographer Ray McEachern, and actors Justin Saint, Taz Samorodin, and Melody Dawn.

Figures: 4, 5, 10, 11, 18, 19, 20 are photos taken by Ray Mceachern, who signed a release form.

Figures: 4, 11, 20 are photos of Justin Saint, who signed a release form.

Figures: 4, 5, 10, 20 are photos of Taz Samorodin, and figure: 5 is a .gif of Taz Samorodin, who signed a release form.

Figure: 19 is a photo of Melody Johnson, who signed a release form.

After submitting the project proposal for ethical review, the UBC Behavioral Research Ethics Board deemed it unnecessary to seek ethics approval for this project on the grounds that it falls under “creative practice.”

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1. #thewaywelookmatters .gif
2. Hope Stone .gif



## Acknowledgements

Many people helped me with this project.

Thank you:

- Carl Leggo: Thank you for helping me to branch into poetry, for holding me to my commitment to write from a place of hope, and for being a dear friend.
- Steven Taubeneck: Thank you for having so much patience and understanding while I recovered from PTSD and found a way to write again; and thank you for offering fantastic philosophical insight, which helped me to deepen the element of existential reflection in this story.
- Janice Stewart: Thank you for reminding me that while it is legitimate for me to critique academia, I am also immensely grateful for the frameworks that I've learned through academia.
- Barb & Todd: Thank you for housing/feeding/laughing/ideating with me in general, but especially while I finished this thesis.
- Lisa Baynton-Cairns: Thank you Mom, for offering so much support, patience and understanding for my strange and winding academic path.
- Ray McEachern: Thank you for being a fantastic photographer at our Gender Failure downtown photoshoot and for teaching me that there is a lot of value in getting the shot right.
- OUTLookTV: Thank you for training me in journalistic media production.
- Vancouver Art and Leisure: Thank you for being a strange and interesting organization to work for, where I learned quite a bit about queer event production and associated political fallout(s).
- Andi Grace Rose: Thank you for being a source of inspiration, and for suggesting fantastic articles related to queerness, magic and resilience.

## **Dedication**

I'm dedicating this work to the principle of healing through poetry, dialogue, and laughter.

## Introduction

“I realize that the English language is sadly devoid of names for people like me. I try to cut the world some slack for this every day. All day. And the day after that, too. But the truth is that every time I am misgendered, a tiny little sliver of me disappears, A tiny little sliver of me is reminded that I do not fit ... I remember that the truth of me is invisible, and a tiny little sliver of me disappears. Just a sliver, razored from the surface of my very thick skin most days, but other times right from my soul, sometimes felt so deep and other days simply shrugged off, but still. All those slivers add up to something much harder to pretend around.”<sup>1</sup>

- Ivan Coyote

“When language arrives at its own edge, what it finds is not a positivity that contradicts it, but the void that will efface it. Into that void it must go, consenting to come undone in the rumbling, in the immediate negation of what it says, in a silence that is not the intimacy of a secret but a pure outside where words endlessly unravel.”<sup>2</sup>

- Michel Foucault

“As a punishment in elementary school,  
my teacher required me to write lines,  
and for years, all my writing was linear,  
a composition of lines that began  
at the left edge of the page and  
marched with hypnotic fervor  
to the right edge of the page,

...

But in my linear writing I lived a lie,  
a fabrication tailored from a fabric  
of neat geometric lines  
angles corners planes  
founded on axioms theorems  
and precise measures of consistency,  
convention, comprehension, conciseness,  
coordination, correctness, and conclusion.

---

<sup>1</sup> Leggo, Carl. 2002. “Writing as Living Compos(t)Ting: Poetry and Desire.” (*Language and Literacy* 4 (1). <https://doi.org/10.20360/g2k59w>), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Foucault, Michel, and Maurice Blanchot. *Foucault/ Blanchot: The Thought from Outside* (New York: Zone Books, 2006), 22.

Now I know my writing  
is no linear composition;  
it is a living composting.<sup>3</sup>

- Carl Leggo

“[L]anguage is a species of action, symbolic action- and its nature is that it can be used as a tool.”<sup>4</sup>

- Kenneth Burke

““All that philosophy can do is destroy idols.” In a sense this is correct. Not in the sense that philosophy’s function is essentially that of analytic jousting. But in the sense that we can come to see a philosophical problem as the result of a way of looking at the world-- away of looking that can be changed.”<sup>5</sup>

- Jan Zwicky

§ 1

Greetings,<sup>6</sup>

This started as a project about calling out<sup>7</sup> the straight gaze<sup>8</sup>, and it morphed into a story about how queers suffer under that gaze, and sometimes simultaneously fail to recognize each other’s suffering and humanity.

Then in 2014 I did a #MeToo style call-out. I named the person who harmed me, I stated my name, and I described what they did. And I asked my community to witness this wound and support the person who harmed me to recover, and support me to get space from them.

---

<sup>3</sup> Leggo, Carl. 2002. “Writing as Living Compos(t)Ting: Poetry and Desire.” (*Language and Literacy* 4 (1). <https://doi.org/10.20360/g2k59w>), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Burke, Kenneth. 1973. *Language as Symbolic Action*, (Saratoga Springs, NY: Empire State College, State University of New York), 15.

<sup>5</sup> Zwicky, Jan. 2014. *Wisdom & Metaphor*, (Edmonton: Brush Education Inc.), §20.

<sup>6</sup> Some concessions were made in how I formatted this in order to fit with the University of British Columbia archival standards. In the end I like some of the changes and I find others irritating. So there will be form/content disconnect sometimes in places where I made these concessions. I see this as part of the art. These are some of the redactions I needed to make in order for this piece to be considered academic.

<sup>7</sup> “Call-ins” and “call-outs” are part of the queer lexicon. A call-in is private, and compassionate. It encourages someone to do better whilst still holding that they are a good and valuable person. Call-outs are more severe. They hold that someone has mis-stepped critically and that there must be serious reparations before things will be ok again.

<sup>8</sup> The experience of being looked at/judged/othered by heterosexual people.

What followed was a textbook rape culture-esque response from my community. This would not have been super surprising, if my community wasn't queer and social justice oriented. It left me with questions about my own queerness, my sense of justice, and my sense of place.

So I left the city, and started working on farms with animals. I put myself in stable environments where my morning routine consisted of walking the land, checking the fences, feeding the animals and checking their bodies for wounds.

I would often spend my afternoons sitting with goats in the shade or rubbing a pig's round belly.

I also worked on compost systems and learned about permaculture--- the sustainable use of space where pieces in the system feed into other nodes, with the goal of achieving a closed loop- total sustainability. I talked with farmers about interdependence, and the apocalypse, and their plans.

I kept mulling on my story from back in the city, and questions about how we look at each other.

I started asking questions about how permaculture as a practice can go so much further than feeding chicken poop to the compost and eventually to the garden from which you feed yourself. Farmers often have loops of exchange with other farmers, where one might have apples, and the other one has pigs. Where both can be happy if one offers apples to the other's pigs, and the other offers pork to the apple farmer. I wondered about how we need to look at each other in order to support each other's livelihood and basic needs, such an intimate type of support. a type of support I wish I could see in queer/social justice community.

I chose the title the way we look matters for a dual effect. because the way we look at people does matter. it affects them. and because of that, in spite of that, and for reasons of personal expression/creativity, the way we present ourselves in the world also matters. and when queer bodies walk down the street, or move together at a dance party, or post on social media, or start a land project, all of this is invoked.

~

## Part 1: Philosophical Groundwork for Looking at Looking

### § 2

Looking at how I'm looking at this:

Methodology: Interdisciplinarity: An Alchemy of Mediums

I am blending:

auto-ethnography<sup>9</sup> + poetry + trauma recovery

If you don't care that much about method(ology) discussions, or talking about talking before talking, and you'd rather get right to the story...

go ahead and skip this.

### § 3

Grammar Issues:

“You must bear in mind that the language-game is so to say something unpredictable. I mean: it is not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable).”<sup>10</sup>

- Jan Zwicky

### § 4

Minimal and Intentional use of Capital Letters:

Because: Descriptive, not Prescriptive Grammar

“Many writing teachers have the notion that they are guardians of the grammar garden. Some teachers see themselves as angels with flaming swords outside the garden, policing and securing traditions of correctness.

---

<sup>9</sup> Bochner, Arthur P., and Carolyn Ellis. “Methods of Collecting and Analyzing Empirical Materials.” (*Communication Theory*, no. 2 1992), 739.

“Usually written in first-person voice, autoethnographic texts appear in a variety of forms—short stories, poetry, fiction novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose. In these texts, concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness are featured, appearing as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure, and culture, which themselves are dialectically revealed through action, feeling, thought, and language.”

- Carolyn Ellis

<sup>10</sup> Zwicky, Jan. 2014. *Wisdom & Metaphor* (Edmonton: Brush Education Inc.) §112

They have grown up in a system where they are constantly grading students with letters and numbers and are constantly assessing students according to prescribed standards. I was happily surprised when I learned that the word grammar is derived from the word gramarye which is now called an archaic word related to the old French gramaire or learning. Gramarye means magic, occult knowledge, alchemy, necromancy, and enchantment. So, grammar is really about spells and spelling.”<sup>11</sup>

- Carl Leggo

Language is about “spelling.” It’s a material for building worlds.

Many cutting-edge linguists believe that “good grammar” is about facilitating communication. successful communication being when an idea/feeling makes it from person(s) A to person(s) B. So then, as long as a communication moment is a clear conveyor of an idea/feeling, it is grammatically correct.

That’s my understanding of descriptive grammar.

And the traditions around how language gets used can chain us.

Prescriptive grammar says we follow the rules even if it fucks up the flow of communication. Prescriptive grammar says it’s cool to cut someone off mid-sentence to demand they say “I saw, not I seen” or “Jaye and I, not me and Jaye”, only to have the other person feel shut down and maybe even forget what they were talking about. When people ignore the content of an entire post just to contribute a passive aggressive “\*they’re\*” to thread, that’s prescriptive grammar.

This kind of obsession with technical correctness can colonize our voice. Academic rigor can lead to rigor mortis.

A slow death by a thousand technical corrections until you don’t sound like yourself. At all. Not even in texting. You’ll realize one day that your voice is possessed by a textbook. The kind of voice you used to judge or rebel against maybe, the voice of your Dad, or Grade 3 teacher, or a caricature of an Oxford professor.

Language can be Liberation.<sup>12</sup>

I used to joke about this concept of rigor mortis as if it were something I was distant from. I don’t know if it was after or during my first logic class, or when one of my profs told me to record myself so I could hear myself up-speaking: raising my voice at the end of sentences that aren’t questions.

---

<sup>11</sup> Leggo, Carl. 2016. “The Unpredictability of Bliss.” *Poetic Inquiry II – Seeing, Caring, Understanding* ( [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-316-2\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-316-2_4)), 52

<sup>12</sup> Foucault, Michel. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. (New York: Vintage), 257- 293.

But at some point, part of me agreed that I was talking wrong. I levelled out my voice into more of an Albertan monotone. And I started saying “I think” instead of “I feel.”

“I’m wondering... how can we spell our way out of “rigor mortis”?”<sup>13</sup>

- Carl Leggo

So, to push against the currents of prescriptive grammar, I start sentences with “so,” and “and.”<sup>14</sup>

And, sometimes, (if it fits with someone’s preference) I use small letters for peoples’ names. But I use capital letters when referring to books/articles and to organizations or when I’m referring to an idea that has established qualities, like Philosophy- this isn’t to convey respect, it’s to identify power.

I text in small letters.<sup>15</sup>

Small letters are the way I connect to friends. And that’s the voice I want to inhabit when I write. I feel like it helps me connect to my heart. One of my greatest fears is accidentally channeling a lawyer. And that fear has me so afraid of how I might speak that I don’t notice what’s happening inside my heart, and so I can’t access my throat to describe it. When logic consumes me it’s easier to just blame the circumstances and say they made me use that part of my brain until I couldn’t feel anything anymore.

Care ethics is a branch of ethics that says that if we rely too heavily on logic to decide what’s right, we’ll end up with systems that can justify horrifying things like genocide (if an area is densely populated, and existing systems just kill a bunch of people, right?) Systems that prioritize ridiculous notions of efficiency and deny humanity. Systems that deny our feelings and our heart and prioritize efficiency without humanity, results in the horrifically absurd.

§ 5

No “One”:

Because: Fuck the Toxic Male Gaze.

In a piece on gender, pronouns matter.

---

<sup>13</sup> Leggo, Carl. 2016. “The Unpredictability of Bliss.” *Poetic Inquiry II – Seeing, Caring, Understanding* (51–69. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-316-2\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-316-2_4)), 55

I love this phrase. Thank you to Carl Leggo for coining it and using it often.

<sup>14</sup> According to the structures of logic starting sentences in this way is sound. It just isn’t considered correct according to the norms of traditional grammar.

<sup>15</sup> I also occasionally skip periods. Periods have a sense of finality and closure that don’t always feel appropriate for me. So sometimes I just end a sentence without one. See my section on poetic-inquiry for more justifications on this.



I won't be using universalizing and objective pronouns because I won't be trying to elevate things to the level of objectivity. I'm trying to call back pieces of my heart. I'm trying to bring this into feelings and story. And it's feelings that are deeply personal, about community that I've been steeped in since I was 18. So sometimes I'll say "you," and sometimes I'll say "we" when I'm talking about someone else's experience who is part of a group I am also part of, where it would make sense for me to be able to refer to a kind of collective/community experience. Mostly I'll be saying "I" when I speak from my memories/feelings/ideas. But never "one." The universal masculine "one" is actually a perspective that causes a lot of harm, and it's arguably the perspective that inhabits the critical gaze I'm most frustrated with and addressing here. So I'd like to address that perspective, and not inhabit it, as best as I can.



Figure 1: You will read this first.

§ 6

No Times New Roman either.

Times New Roman is symbolically associated with academic publishing and The New York Times. Both very exclusive and very authoritative.

Many legitimate online publishing bodies publish using a more personalized, less universalized font. But an intentional font nonetheless.

A font that is a suitable medium to the story at hand.

This type of font play<sup>16</sup> is a tool for voice distinction and working the narrative flow. It is a norm now for people to choose a font that fits their unique voice, and it is still considered professional so long as it is readable. Usually it is recommended that people choose sans serif fonts for ease of reading and contrast the body font with differentiated title fonts using both size and placement to make the flow distinction.

I'm going to be using:

---

<sup>16</sup> Part of the "language game" - Zwicky, Jan. 2014. *Wisdom & Metaphor*. (Edmonton: Brush Education Inc.), § 112.

Cabin for body font

Raleway Bold size 18 for title

Raleway size 16 for subtitles,

Raleway Bold, size 18, one indent, for sub-subtitles

Raleway, size 14, one indent, for sub-sub-subtitles

Raleway Bold, size 16, two indents, sub-sub-sub-subtitles

Raleway, size 16, two indents, sub-sub-sub-sub-subtitles

I punctuate the flow with a summarizing, personal take sometimes. Caveat Brush, size 18. One indent.

I also interject with crystalizing thoughts from other authors with Caveat Brush. Size 14 or 12 (depending on space allowance). Often with one indent but also placed wherever I feel it is impactful.

Raleway, Bold, size 11 for author names paired with quotes, positioned by my discretion each time.

§ 7

Inexact Descriptions of Things:

Because: “Gesture” and Metaphor.

No word can fully describe the thing it signifies in a 1:1 kind of way.<sup>17</sup> “Gesture” solves this problem by doing away with the illusion that that kind of precision is possible, and by motioning more generally towards the thing instead. The motion becomes less of a word and more of a continuum; a relationship between the letters and the thing, dissolving the line between word and described.

It's a non-binary way of communicating.

When the material is non-binary in nature, the way of feelings, and stories, and gender, it can be more effective to point at these things

from memories,

and from the body,

and from the heart.

---

<sup>17</sup> Saussure, Ferdinand de. 2011. *Course in General Linguistics*, (New York: Columbia University Press), 1681.

The founder of semiotics, a philosopher of language who said that words cannot have a 1:1 relationship with words.

she is water  
 soft enough  
 to offer life  
 tough enough  
 to drown it away

- rupi kaur



Figure 2: She is water.

Mind needs to be here too.

I just want to resist, (as best as I can) letting it turn this piece into too many syllables pretending to solve something about gender, enabling me to go on an inappropriate power trip, colonizing this material with my academic privilege. I feel that it's very important for people to question their academic privilege when they engage in research, especially research that involves working with members of marginalized communities.

“By ‘metaphor’ I mean the linguistic expression of the results of focused analogical thinking...

Strictly speaking, “x is y” is not a metaphorical claim unless “x is not y”<sup>18</sup>

- Jan Zwicky

§8

Gaps between Ideas:

Because 1) Aphoristic Reasoning,<sup>19</sup> 2) Poetic Inquiry

It is usually more effective to describe parts of a thing; the feelings around it, the body sensations, an encounter, memory flashes, rather than perfectly lay out all of the components of the thing. In

<sup>18</sup> Zwicky, Jan. *Wisdom & Metaphor* (Edmonton: Brush Education Inc., 2014), §5.

<sup>19</sup> Nietzsche writes in aphorism, poetically, with line breaks where he chooses, keeping the reader guessing not only by writing with a social critique that is /was outside the norm, but with a style that defied traditional text.

“Dancing in all its forms cannot be excluded from the curriculum of all noble education; dancing with the feet, with ideas, with words, and, need I add that one must also be able to dance with the pen?”

Nietzsche Friedrich, *Twilight of the Idols* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 40.

fact, if a poet did take this route, the ability, as readers to see ourselves in the wanderings<sup>20</sup> would be lost. With analytic writing, it is endless accounting, often until you aren't even sure you know what you're talking about anymore, where the analysis takes you further away from the thing, rather than closer.

With analysis there's always so much more to explain. The work is never finished.

Rupi Kaur talks about water,<sup>21</sup>

Conjuring to mind its physical properties, it's capacity to return force, and give way. She didn't submit an essay mapping the nature of emotional vulnerability to a psychology journal.

This is a principle that Derrida was getting at with his gift metaphor.<sup>22</sup> A gift, for Derrida, is something that isn't fully measured, where if it is deeply analyzed, it becomes an economic exchange- where in searching for all of the gift's components, it slips away and transforms into an invoice.

In Zeno's Dichotomy Paradox,<sup>23</sup> he explains that, since a thing can get from point A to point B, and since that distance can be divided infinitely, things can make infinite leaps.

Poetry does this.

Poetry makes radical leaps across gaps that pure logic would take eternities to cross.

Logic is usually still there  
in those jumps  
but it's felt, beneath and between the stanzas.

Poetry gets there faster.

So I will     pieces.  
                  miss

there will be           gaps.

And if you expected a finely tuned machine, where each paragraph follows perfectly from the last, with no meat left on the bone of the idea,  
                  then I will fail you.

---

<sup>20</sup> Deleuze, Gilles, Guattari Félix, and Massumi Brian. *Nomadology: War Machine*, (A.K. Press, 1994), 19.

For Deleuze and Guattari, to wander, like nomad, is to chart your own course, rather than adhere to a prescribed path.

<sup>21</sup> Rupi Kaur, *Milk and Honey* (Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2018), 129.

<sup>22</sup> Derrida, Jacques, and Peggy Kamuf. 1991. *Given Time*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>23</sup> Huggett, Nick, "Zeno's Paradoxes", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL =

<<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/paradox-zeno/>>.

I don't want to consume this content until there is no mystery left and rebuild it into a too-many-syllabled Frankenstein made of my own belly button lint, begging "LOOOOOOOOVE ME" to my advisors. I can't fully talk about this stuff anyway, because #trauma. So I'm going to use a poetic approach as a chance to go easy on myself, to heal my voice, to sit next to this information peripherally, and I invite you to build some of the connective tissue with me from your own mind/heart,

so this thing can breathe.

§9

Some Hope:

But only when it feels genuine and not when it feels compulsory,  
because: "Cruel Optimism"<sup>24</sup>

Mandatory hope says we must always see exciting possibilities. This kind of mandatory positive thinking requires dissociation from the reality of a situation.

To genuinely be hopeful requires open eyes, and a willingness to do an honest, brave inventory of what's going on -isn't that more exciting to write/read about anyway?

After looking at the available options, which might also mean looking at what is unavailable, and grieving, then you can build hope into the situation.

Sometimes the most exciting questions are about what isn't working, so you can figure out how to build something different.

§10

Very little time spent differentiating Sexuality from Gender:

Because: That's a false binary.<sup>25</sup>

Sexuality and gender are certainly related, it's an illusion to believe they are totally separate things, But sussing out the distinction/similarity is a massive task. Rae Spoon and Ivan Coyote focus on gender in their book *Gender Failure*, and they don't spend any time making a categorical distinction between sexuality failure and gender failure. They focus on gender, and in doing so talk about sexuality sometimes.

I'm going to take a similar tack here.

---

<sup>24</sup> "Cruel optimism" is a term coined by Lauren Berlant and it refers to the idea that it is unkind to expect people to feel hope for certain things that are simply unviable in under certain systems of structural oppression. That hope is a fundamentally helpful thing, but when the conditions are such that the thing that's being hoped for is possible.

Berlant, Lauren Gail. 2012. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

<sup>25</sup> Sex/gender are a false binary.

## §11

A focus on my experiences:

Because: Auto-Ethnography

A piece on how queers are looked at/how queers look at each other, from the perspective of a queer person, incorporating their lived experiences as context and content, makes the fact that I was sexually assaulted, and then publicly called my rapist out on Facebook, while this research project was happening, not only fair game, but those events become relevant content. Queers are at a higher risk of sexual assault than straight people. and within that group, gay transmen are especially at risk. To be a queer transmasculine person, doing autoethnography on queer content, means to talk about these hard pieces that are inextricably linked to the content but aren't always included in Master's theses. And to leave those pieces out would redact my voice so heavily, that I wouldn't be able to talk much about my own experiences around "queer looking" with very much authenticity. I need to be able to navigate into these strange and dark and not usually-included-in-a-Master's-thesis waters, in order to excavate this material in a meaningful way. In order to do autoethnography, making myself both the author and part of the work in a meaningful way. I need to talk about my sexual assault and usually more specifically, my subsequent public Facebook call-out.

## §12

My Auto-Ethnography might be too subjective, or incomplete, but it, hopefully, won't be a jargon maze.

In 1994 NYU Physics Professor Alan Sokal submitted a brilliant hoax article Transgressing the Boundaries - Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity, to the cultural studies journal *Social Text*, packed full of the latest jargon, claiming that gravity was a social construct.<sup>26</sup> He wanted academics to drool over it. He then published a second article explaining that what they were idolizing was an illusion of their own egos.

I love this story.

It reminds me of the tale *The Emperor's New Clothes*<sup>27</sup>, where the townspeople are led to believe that if they are smart, they'll be able to see the Emperor's new magical garment, and if they are stupid, the cloth would appear invisible. This was the con-artist's platform that allowed him to pretend to weave the Emperor a new outfit, when in fact he sent him out to see the townspeople naked.

Sokal submitted invisible clothes to *Social Text* to demonstrate:

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<sup>26</sup> Sokal, Alan D. 1996. "Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity." *Social Text*, no. 46/47: 217. <https://doi.org/10.2307/466856>.

<sup>27</sup> Andersen, H. C., and Michael Adams. 1990. *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Morris Plains, NJ: Unicorn Pub. House.

1.  
That academic writing uses that same platform:  
“if you buy this, you’re smart, if you question it,  
you’re stupid.”  
(does that sound Capitalist?)

2.  
That an audience can be glamoured into loving and supporting something that’s bullshit.

I don’t want to channel the worst of academia through my voice

I don’t want to have a disciplined voice

I want my voice back.

Foucault said, in 1976, in one of his lectures, in critique of academia:

“For the last ten or fifteen years, the immense and proliferating criticizability of things, institutions, practices, and discourses; a sort of general feeling that the ground was crumbling beneath our feet, especially in places where it seemed most familiar, most solid, and closest to us, to our bodies, to our everyday gestures. But alongside this crumbling and the astonishing efficacy of discontinuous, particular, and local critiques, the facts were also revealing something... beneath this whole thematic, through it and even within it, we have seen what might be called the insurrection of subjugated knowledges.”<sup>28</sup>

- Michel Foucault

The academic dialect is shifting.

Social media is decentralizing the publishing hegemony.

The hoarded knowledge is being redistributed on people’s personal blog posts and on websites like everydayfeminism.com. And even Everyday Feminism is coming under fire as being too academic in Francis Lee’s article Excommunicate Me from the Church of Social Justice

“Nearly all of their articles follow a standard structure: an instructive title, list of problematic or suggested behaviors, and a final statement of hard opinion. The titles, the educational tone, and the prescriptive checklists contribute to creating the idea that there is only one way to think about and do activism.”<sup>29</sup>

- Francis Lee

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<sup>28</sup> Foucault, Michel, Colin tr. Gordon, and Colin Gordon. 1980. *Power / Knowledge*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

<sup>29</sup> Lee, Frances. 2017. “Excommunicate Me from the Church of Social Justice.” Autostraddle. July 17, 2017. <https://www.autostraddle.com/kin-aesthetics-excommunicate-me-from-the-church-of-social-justice-386640/>.

We don't need to use an authoritative voice to be heard and to be relevant.

§ 13

Storytelling:

Because: Institutional Autobiography & Narrative Inquiry.

I'm struggling to figure out how to talk about my messy feelings in an academic paper. When I go to write I imagine professors who told me to speak differently, to

“Use more “ones” and “therefores”, less inflection, fewer metaphors,  
and no personal details.”

- so many professors

When I imagine writing to a non-academic audience, I imagine them flinching every time I accidentally use a piece of jargon.

Then I wonder what my voice would have sounded like if I hadn't gone to University for almost a decade.

Richard E. Miller, explains that we are all institutionalized, and that autobiography invites our personal aspect, our free self, and our institutionalized aspect, our imprisoned self, to tell a story. I think that's the best I can do here; because part of what I've realized in writing this, is that even if I want to break free from a certain kind of academic form. That form is in me now. So I can resist it. But if I want to talk authentically about my experiences, some of those experiences includes academic experiences, and part of my way of coming at raw experiences is academic.

§ 14

Raw, and unfinished:

Because: this is a “Process.”

“Human beings are works in progress that mistakenly think they're finished.”<sup>30</sup>

- Daniel Gilbert

This kind of personal excavation work isn't something that people do in one spurt with one concrete product in the end. It's ongoing and lifelong.<sup>31</sup>

So parts of this will seem unfinished.

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<sup>30</sup> Daniel Gilbert, “The Psychology of Your Future Self,” March 2014 in Vancouver BC, TED Recording, 6:36,

[https://www.ted.com/talks/dan\\_gilbert\\_the\\_psychology\\_of\\_your\\_future\\_self?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_gilbert_the_psychology_of_your_future_self?language=en).

<sup>31</sup> A philosophical context for understanding this is through “becoming”



## § 15

An absence of a provable point:

Because: I want to focus on questions.

Answers are usually singular, and final, and testable; while questions and stories can be opening and vast.<sup>32</sup> I want to focus on things I'm wondering about and offering. I don't want to come at those things by way of trying to prove them.

There is however a reason for this writing--  
to name that the way we see others and the way we're seen by others is  
deeply significant.  
And we don't always do it well, even in the communities that pride  
themselves on inclusion.

## § 16

A Tone Shift as I go along:

I'm going to have to name logic, as I move away from it, because the burden that I engage the analytical is so high in academia and so trained in me, that I need to story tell my way out of it, and that means, for me, starting with logic. So I'll try to oil the mechanical tone out of my voice as I justify shifting out of a robotic state and into my feelings.

Hopefully you will hear my heart beating by the end.

## § 17

Looking at References:

I will be engaging majority nonacademic articles in this piece. Why? Because this is where the most relevant articles on liberation exist now. At this point, in 2018, the articles with the most cutting-edge insights and integrity on anti-oppression are also critical of academic privilege, and published in democratized settings; on personal blogs or on websites like autostraddle.com, thebodyisnotanappology.com, and everydayfeminism.com. And the proof of their relevance becomes clear in how they are taken up by Community in dialogue, and how the terms and ideas put forth in those articles are incorporated into the public imaginary. This is distinctly different from typical academic publishings that end up in dusty peer reviewed journals, for academics, by academics.

A case study of a person who underestimated the impact of democratized publishing is feminist transmasculine person Jack Halberstam who published an article You Are Triggering me! The

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<sup>32</sup> A philosophical context for understanding this is through “the totalizing fallacy”

Neo-Liberal Rhetoric of Harm, Danger and Trauma<sup>33</sup> that stated that students were responsible for managing their own triggers and that education was meant to be emotionally challenging. This idea was generally well received in academia, while a controversy about “victim-blaming” raged outside of academia.

Halberstam miscalculated how his ideas would be taken up in the public sphere, and because of this he didn't do follow up with dialogue or accountability on social media, and because of this he is no longer considered a broadly respected feminist outside of academia.

The ivory tower no longer has the vice grip on relevant ideas the way it once did.

If I want to write about survivors and gender violence, I need to engage the most relevant publishers, and some, or even most, of those people are publishing outside of academia now. So these are the people I will be majority sourcing here.

§18

Footnotes:

I'm going to include description and conversation and tangent in the footnotes. My goal for this is to criteria dialogue between my main points and my follow up points, so that readers can have the option to dig deeper into the onion layers of the story, or they can stay on the main artery of the story line.

§ 19

No Chicago or MLA style:

Another reason I won't be doing traditional footnotes is because I really struggle to organize information using that hyper detail oriented, excessive details method because of my learning disability. It feels more accessible to me to organize my footnotes also as a gesture, and a subtext conversation that handles tangents and sidebars and long descriptive parenthesis, that also perform the function of referencing, rather than as a perfectly collating the information into a rigid structure that is only readable to an academic audience. I feel that this will make my footnotes more readable to more people, and it involves bending the academic referencing rules.

§ 20

Dear Audience,

Full disclosure. Writing this is hard. This material is sore for me. There are pieces in here that I don't know how to make salient (enough for the ivory tower?). When I imagine an academic

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<sup>33</sup> Halberstam, Jack. 2014. “You Are Triggering Me! The Neo-Liberal Rhetoric of Harm, Danger, and Trauma.” Beacon Broadside: A Project of Beacon Press. July 7, 2014. <https://www.beaconbroadside.com/broadside/2014/07/you-are-triggering-me.html>.

audience I can feel defensive. Like I'm offering my wound up for assessment. When I imagine turning this into a blog post, I flinch, because there are details in here that feel too vulnerable to share on social media again.

Putting this down into words has been a kind of exposure therapy<sup>34</sup> for me, but I don't want to forge you into my therapist. I don't want to simply rebel against you or make you my feelings garbage can.

I want to offer up a narrative of my journey through trauma recovery as a study in non-dualism.

A lived, auto-ethnographic, choose your own adventure, study in poetic communication and post-structuralist thought. Working my way through a culture of academia and counter-culture, and counter-counter-culture, asking questions about how we see our trauma and belonging and witnessing.

I hope this story inspires curiosity and questions.

“To develop the symptoms of PTSD,  
you need to first experience a traumatic event.”<sup>35</sup>  
- Matthew Tull

“Words, words...”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> “... exposure is, in many ways, is the opposite of avoidance, and it's one of the best treatments for PTSD.”

- Matthew Tull

Tull, Matthew. *Cognitive Behavioral Coping Skills Workbook* (Milton Keynes: Speechmark Publishing Ltd, 2013), 65.

<sup>35</sup> “Although there wasn't a lot of research done on PTSD prior to 1980, the disorder has always been around... The symptoms have been described in literary works throughout the ages even as early as the either century BCE in Homer's Iliad and Odyssey.”

- Matthew Tull

Tull, Matthew. *Cognitive Behavioral Coping Skills Workbook* (Milton Keynes: Speechmark Publishing Ltd, 2013), 72.

<sup>36</sup> “when the server asked  
what I was writing,  
I told her, I'm a poet and professor  
like that explained something  
when I should have said,  
like Hamlet, Words, words...”

- Carl Leggo

- Hamlet (and Carl Leggo)

§ 21

This is not a typical Thesis:<sup>37</sup>

Why I'll fail to explain gender failure, existentialism, post-structuralism, interdisciplinarity etc.

A thesis has a clear and valid and defensible point. And that is not what I'm doing here<sup>38</sup>.

If you expect to be able to fully understand the gender binary after reading this, I will fail you.

The burden of proof is too high. To fully explain the gender binary, I would first have to fully explain gender. Debates are still thick across science-based disciplines, feminist oriented networks and the blogosphere, as to whether gender is primarily a thing of nature or nurture. Most theories point to the idea that gender is a combination of a nature/nurture. That gender is felt, and it is performed<sup>39</sup>. That it's an idea system that informs our conditioning, and that it is also a series of impulses, and behaviors. People who study gender their entire lives, and who have bodies and lives where gender is a constant focus still struggle to define it. But generally, there is some agreement that gender is complex, and personal.

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Leggo, Carl. 2002. "Writing as Living Compos(t)ing: Poetry and Desire." *Language and Literacy* 4 (1). <https://doi.org/10.20360/g2k59w>.

<sup>37</sup> This is a poem

"...the poem must, on whatever scale, dislodge assumption, not by simply opposing it, but by dismantling the systematic proof in which its inevitability is grounded. In other words: not "c is wrong" but "who says A has to lead to B?... Poetic intelligence lacks... focused investment in conclusion, being naturally wary of its own assumptions. It derives its energy from a willingness to discard conclusion in the face of evidence, its willingness, in fact, to discard anything."

- Jan Zwicky

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Zwicky, Jan. 2014. *Wisdom & Metaphor*. Edmonton: Brush Education Inc., S20

<sup>38</sup> I want to focus more on questions.

<sup>39</sup> Beauvoir, Simone de, Constance Borde, and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. 2015. *The Second Sex*. London: Vintage Books.

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir said "no one is born, but rather becomes a Woman," do indicate primacy of social constructionism over determinism with regards to gender and power.

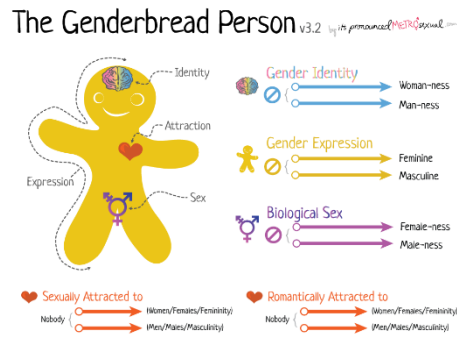


Figure 3: The Genderbread Person.

## § 22

### A Glance at the Gender Binary:

In 2013 Sam Killerman published a book called *A Guide to Gender*,<sup>40</sup> where he included a picture called The Genderbread Person. It quickly achieved viral status on the internet, and soon became a staple image in classrooms and workshops about gender. It distinguishes gender from sex, and sexuality,<sup>41</sup> and emphasizes the role of appearance/performance.

I would also need to define binary systems, which is also something that theorists struggle to do neatly and in unison. I can give a brief window into a couple staple theories, but I won't be able to fully define binary systems here.

Deconstructing binaries is an approach that can be traced back to Ancient Greek thought. Back to Zeno's paradox.

Where, if infinity is taken as a given, then the space between a location "A" and location "B" can be divided into infinite parts, then the process of shooting an arrow from point A to point B proves that infinity can be traversed.

Not only is there infinity, but we can traverse infinity.

We don't need to be trapped on one side with an unimaginable distance to cross. We don't need to choose an either/or approach.

Deciding to think in terms of both/and comes from the realization that we can dance in the in between.

<sup>40</sup> Killerman Sam, *A Guide to Gender: The Social Justice Advocates Handbook* (Impetus Books. 2013), Cover.

<sup>41</sup> I know I said I wouldn't focus on such distinctions, but Killerman's photo is useful to have in the background of this conversation.

Helene Cixous talks about how binary oppositions lead to hierarchy, because often one half of the binary is elevated above the other where it then oppresses the other.<sup>42</sup>

This is a great reason to unlearn binary thinking.

In 2012 Ivan Coyote and Rae Spoon published *Gender Failure*, a book exploring both the ways in which they fail to fit into the gender binary, and the ways the gender binary, in all of its rigidity, fails to recognize all of us.

When we adopt a nebulous view of gender, where it is difficult to define, but generally there is an agreement that there seems to be two poles, and layer into that the idea that there is not only infinite space between those poles, but that there is also infinite possibilities for movement- we arrive in the reality that genderqueers, genderfucks, gender anarchists, gender retirees, choose to live in. And it is difficult to describe to people outside this culture, because the bedrock of these identities requires a movement towards non-binary thinking- an existential shift towards viewing the world less in black and white terms, and less in fixed terms.

It means living a life of faith in the grey and the changeable.

§ 23

Seeing in Black/White:

This kind of spectrum-based, fluid way of thinking can very healing for certain disordered thinking patterns

Mechanisms of thinking/feeling/being, caused by trauma, where a person becomes vigilant to their environment, constantly assessing for danger, and the mind/body switches to categorizing all stimulus as being either safe or dangerous without much room in between. Because in a state of fear, in a pattern of learned vigilance, there isn't any time to wonder. And this belief that things are either safe or dangerous, and that danger could arise any time, bleeds into the rest of that person's lens to view the world, and it fosters a deeper black and white thinking. It fosters binary thinking. And one of the ways of healing this stress response is to use cognitive behavioral therapy to remind ourselves that there is room for grey and for movement between the extremeness<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> Cixous, Helene, "Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays," *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 148.

<sup>43</sup> Hesse Herman, *Siddhartha*, Bantam.1981.

In Zen Buddhism people are encouraged to see the middle way between extremes, where things are neither entirely fixed nor completely changeable. Nietzsche also talks about looking to nature, which is inherently fluid, as a working metaphor for the broader nature of things. Evidence of a fluid universe on both a micro and macro level. And if we buy the premises that the nature of things is fluid, then in the spirit of form/content symmetry, then why not play with fluid mediums to express content that we already know can't not be fluid. If we take fluidity as a given, then poetry makes more sense than analytical writing, which takes a false hidden premise (enthymeme) that words have a 1:1 relationship to the concepts they represent. If we buy the idea of gesture, that

Interestingly, many queer people develop BPD, as a result of their gender performance being persecuted. This persecution creates a very real and justified fear of strangers because there is a very real possibility that strangers will cause some degree of harm to visibly queer people. This plays out as genderqueer people walk down the street, confronted with people who stare at them and make rude and degrading comments. People who receive stares like this can become extremely literate in body language because their safety depends on it. And they can find themselves in a state of vigilance walking down the street where they are looking for micro-expressions of disgust, fear, curiosity, confusion. Because basic dignity and physical safety can depend on being able to read micro-expressions.

So, a non-binary perspective, for queer people, is often both the cause of trauma, and the healing salve. Because to be ourselves, for genderqueer people, is to be beyond one of the most primal binaries our culture is steeped in- “male” vs “female.”

**A queer body’s way of being in the world is beyond binary categorization.**

A queer body’s way of being in the world is a catalyst for cognitive dissonance. And bodies that cause cognitive dissonance instigate hateful behavior from ignorant people who don’t know how to sit with mystery and greyness and the in-between. And the persistent feedback from people on the street/bus/line-at-the-bank etc. can prime the queer mind to see strangers, and sometimes everyone, as either a friend or an enemy.

Queers often dance in between male and female, and in between enemy and friend...

And every weekend, queers dance in clubs, warehouse parties, and drag shows.

Something to wonder about: conceptual dancing and literal dancing are integral to queer culture.

~

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words and ideas are moving changing principles and that spectrum and nuance apply to everything, so the idea that one word can represent one concept for all time, doesn’t add up.

## Part 2: Topic of Study: The Way We Look Matters.

§ 24

Looking at Being Looked At:

Justin and Taz: Genderqueer Gender Performers

“Phenomenology can offer a resource for queer studies insofar as it emphasizes the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready-to-hand, and the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds.”<sup>44</sup>

- Sara Ahmed

Justin and Taz are both genderqueer.

They both use “they” pronouns.

They both dress and act in ways that fall outside of the gender binary.

In that sense,



Figure 4: Justin and Taz: Gender Failures.

<sup>44</sup> Ahmed, Sara. 2007. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press), 2.



They are gender failures  
(self-described).

They wanted to document their failure to live up to the binary expectations of ‘male’ and ‘female’ with me.

So we went for a walk in downtown Vancouver, and took some pictures...

We experienced rubbernecking: entitled watching; unfounded staring; voyeurism.



Figure 5: #thewaywelookmatters

Taz is walking down the street, while a couple stares.

This .gif is my favorite artifact from the shoot.

**This is the kind of image I was most interested in catching.**

This method of public photography is riffing off of the work of Haley Morris Cafiero, who specializes in bullying photography; where the goal is to catch the facial expressions of passers-by and spread awareness of fat-phobia.



Figure 6: Haley Morris Caffiero: *The Watchers*.

“The attribution of feeling toward an object (I feel afraid because you are fearsome) moves the subject away from the object, creating distance through the registering of proximity as a threat”<sup>46</sup>

- Sara Ahmed

All we did was go for a photographed walk with people who are visibly queer,<sup>47</sup> and the queer bodies morphed from being the subject of the shoot, to the object of staring. This switch from subject to object, and the distancing involved in this demotion is “othering.” We didn't need to schedule or arrange for any staring. This is the nature of how queer bodies are typically read in space. This is what many queer people know they're going to be faced with when they go out in public.

In order to do the kind of shoot that was in alignment with the letter of what I applied to do, I would have had to discard shots, change the framing to exclude members of the public, and ask the photographer to change the focus.

A redacting. a compartmentalizing, a repressing of something.  
A repressing of a certain kind of looking.

The staring is overt, unkind, and unnecessary.

<sup>45</sup> Morris-Caffiero, Haley. *The Watchers*. Ontario, Canada: The Magenta Foundation, 2015.

<sup>46</sup> Ahmed, Sara. 2007. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press.

<sup>47</sup> This is all I applied for with UBC Ethics Review- to do a photographed walk with visibly queer people. The proposition was to treat queer bodies as photographic subjects in public space. But we knew that the queer subjects would become objects, without our consent or control, and this is what we actually wanted to document- a kind of queer subjectivity failure: the othering of queer subjects, the turning of queer subjects into strange objects in public space.

It is a tangible event<sup>48</sup>  
and it does tangible damage.

At the end of the .gif you can see one of the gawkers look up at the camera. They are now seeing themselves be seen- turning them and their gawking into the object.

Does this replicate the harm of the gawking? Are we now gawking at them?

I think it depends how we have this conversation. It depends how much humanity we leave gawker.

### **After all, haven't we all gawked?**

As I was describing the process of describing myself describing gawking in this piece to my partner, who is familiar with how visible queers are gawked at, they told me about how earlier that day they had been gawked at.

They identify as an invisibilized femme, where femme is a queering of feminine. and that queering is invisible to those with binary eyes. Most normy people see a 'woman,' but they don't identify as a woman. Their energy and capacity and resilience go beyond what Simone de Beauvoir would describe as 'the second sex'.<sup>49</sup>



Figure 7: They/Them/Their pin.

They were in a liquor store:

and at the checkout the cashier asked them about the pin on their vest. It said  
"they/them."

They responded by saying,  
"That's my gender pronoun."

The cashier said,  
"I thought that was a plural pronoun, for multiple people."

"No they changed it"

"Well I should really do some research on that"

"Ya, the internet is full of resources on the legitimacy of they as a pronoun"

<sup>48</sup> Term I thought of: an event that is real that we need to un-gas-light ourselves to believe is real.

<sup>49</sup> My take on "The Second Sex" is that de Beauvoir wanted us all to view everyone as being beyond the second sex because she was using that term to refer to a socially constructed second-class citizen.

"Wait, do you mean urban dictionary?" he asked skeptically.  
 "No, I think it was Oxford," they said as they walked out of the store.

Returning to the disciplining quality of prescriptive grammar (where people believe that if "they" is prescribed to refer to multiple people in the dictionary), that trumps the reality of "they" being used for singular genderqueer people in queer culture, and the validating quality of institutional stamps of approval (where the difference between urban dictionary and Oxford dictionary determines the validity of word usage. We should also consider the ways that we allow rules of grammar to trump other dialects or communication. We should probably consider that we might be acting like Donald Trump when we correct each other's grammar---we are expressing that one way of talking is more supreme & legitimate than other perfectly understandable ways of communicating. We don't need to build walls of exclusion around language. Rhetoric is about bridge-building.<sup>50</sup>))

So invisibilized queers are gawked at too<sup>51</sup>

The dynamic is the same, but the mechanics are different

If gawking means to interrupt social flow  
 to do deep skeptical questioning  
 of a person's being

To degrade them by interrogating, putting on trial  
 asking whether they should exist as they are

In many ways a gawking moment is a saturated moment<sup>52</sup>  
 for the gawker. Time slows down.

There is more meaning in what they are looking at than they can fit into their current reality.  
 Cognitive dissonance occurs.  
 And rejection or integration, or some combination of both follows.

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<sup>50</sup>"In general, rhetoric- and rhetorical theory!- is motivated by the urge to decrease division and (the illusion of) isolation."

- Judith Segal

Segal, Judith. "Patient Compliance, the Rhetoric of Rhetoric, and the Rhetoric of Persuasion." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 23, no. 3-4 (1994): <https://doi.org/10.1080/02773949409390998>, 98.

<sup>51</sup> When I first conceived of this project, I was interested in dealing with visible queers only, because I was assuming that only visible queers are glared at. Where I was limiting glaring to a certain set of mechanics (which wouldn't account for the reality that many invisibilized queers are literally glared at on the street for reasons of misogyny) but in opening glaring up to a broader kind of gawking, it includes the skeptical gaze that invisible queers live under a gaze that says "I don't fully see you, and when I get glimpses, my confusion makes me angry at you."

<sup>52</sup> Jean Luc Marion's "saturated phenomena" refers to an event that is so full of data that the entirety of it is imperceptible to the human senses.

§ 25

Looking at the Wound/Wounding:

“...the truth is that every time I am misgendered, a tiny little sliver of me disappears.”<sup>53</sup>

- Ivan Coyote

Sometimes when you're trying to find a witness and can't it's because people don't have the conceptual framework to see you.

“Structures of language fundamentally shape, rather than merely reflect, cultural assumptions.”<sup>54</sup>

- Kimberly Emmons



Figure 8: Lost Voice.

The process of asking for witnessing from people who can't see you can damage your voice.

It becomes a crisis of audience.

A rhetorical impossibility.

<sup>53</sup> Coyote, Ivan E. *Gender Failure*. (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2014), 47.

<sup>54</sup> Emmons, Kimberly. *Black Dogs and Blue Words: Depression and Gender in the Age of Self-Care* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 7.

<sup>55</sup> Samaran, Nora. 2020. “Psychological Harm Is Physical Harm 2: Why Survivors Lose Their Voice.” Dating Tips for the Feminist Man. March 3, 2020. <https://norasamaran.com/2016/10/24/why-dont-survivors-speak/>.

Nora Samaran writes in her article *Psychological Harm is Physical Harm 2: Why Survivors Lose Their Voice*, that it is very common for victims of abuse to lose their voices. Like Ariel from *The Little Mermaid*.

This happened to me. I could feel it as my voice went. First I started saying that I was getting burnt-out from defending myself. Then I started opting out of certain topics because “I just couldn't go there right now,” and then it wasn't opting out anymore. I couldn't talk about anything that felt like I was holding more than one piece of information at a time, as if my need to always be holding what people couldn't see about my story right there in case I needed to leap to my own defense. I was a burnt-out defense attorney who couldn't stand up for myself anymore. So I left the city to work on farms and be with animals and plants.

And as I sat under a tree one day, as a donkey paced back and forth in front of me, trying to get me to play, asking me to see his silly cheerfulness,

I realized that  
a lot of normy people can't fully see queer people<sup>56</sup>  
and often  
queer people can't see each other.<sup>57</sup>

We can get burnt out and dissociated and forget how to play.

**Many queers exist in a steady state of solidarity scarcity.**

We sometimes trade our dignity to walk on  
the surface and feel normal.

As I was reading *Gender Failure*,<sup>58</sup> I came across a section in a story that made my stomach feel cold/hollow. My queer PTSD was getting tripped. It was the feeling I get when I'm in proximity to queers who might have bad blood with each other. It's not rational because most of the time this dynamic will have no impact on my safety. But I've developed a vigilance towards that vibe now because of the times that it has affected my life, it's been devastating.

I could recognize my friend's energy in the description in one of Rae's stories, and then when it got to the dialogue, I could feel his syntax. Rae was talking about a person who was also a trans guy, but who was on hormones long enough to “pass.”<sup>59</sup> And Rae does not take hormones, so Rae experiences passing differently. In fact, they explain many times in the book, that since they do not

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<sup>56</sup> The language they use to describe gender is both the cause and the effect of this.

<sup>57</sup> Samaran, Nora. 2020. “Psychological Harm Is Physical Harm 2: Why Survivors Lose Their Voice.” *Dating Tips for the Feminist Man*. March 3, 2020.  
<https://norasamaran.com/2016/10/24/why-dont-survivors-speak/>.

<sup>58</sup> Coyote, Ivan E. 2014. *Gender Failure*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press.

<sup>59</sup> “Passing” in queer community is a controversial term. it refers to bodies/behaviors that fit the normal standards of the gender binary. people who pass are typically not causing members of the general public to have the cognitive dissonance that leads to the staring/judgement.

pass by way of being in alignment with the rules of the gender binary, they fail on a daily basis in the eyes of people they interact with. And this is why they've retired from gender. To reject the binary that rejects them.

At this point in their story, they hadn't started using a "they" pronoun yet. They were still using a "he" pronoun and identifying as a man. The conversation they had with my friend was a pivotal changing point for them. Because in that conversation, Rae realized that my friend didn't see them as fully male, because they weren't performing their gender in the same way he was. I texted my friend after reading this section, to ask if he was the person Rae was referring to, and to see how he felt about Rae's process.

Maybe my friend was failing to see Rae's gender.

Maybe Rae was failing to see that my friend wasn't totally failing. (And maybe being a good gender audience is pass/fail? Or is that too binary?)

I wanted to hear what was going on for my friend in that moment.

We texted and processed it. He said he's a very different person now that he stopped drinking.

Sometimes queers fail to see each other.

(and being invisible to your own kind can be devastating)

Maybe I'm failing to see my friend in this moment, and maybe he's either not failing at all, or maybe he did fully fail to witness Rae in this conversation (stressful thinking can breed binary thinking).

There are probably gaps in my ability to interpret both of their experiences.

I've started including gaps in my storytelling around my assault, because I can predict where I will lose people. And feeling someone's attention drop because of boredom, misunderstanding, and/or dissociation is painful when I feel like I'm showing someone a gaping bloody hole in my heart.

I notice I keep the rawest details to myself now.

Something about having the police officer ask me to write it all out in more detail than I ever had.

Something about how she told me there was nothing she could do with that information because it contained no evidence.

(I was hemorrhaging details everywhere, but not enough to drink.)

Something about how I hoped she would be able to do more than nothing because she was a woman. And maybe she would be able to sympathize because maybe she or someone she knew had been raped too.

So I have a vigilance now, where I notice that I assume someone will find my assault details simultaneously too heavy, and yet not solid enough to count.

I struggle to imagine an audience I can reach. If I imagine a non-queer audience then I feel like talking about my journey through gender pronouns (something that can feel like both a basic, yet advanced and abstract aspect of myself, depending on who I'm talking to) is too much of a Gender

201 type conversation, and that it would be best for me to use the most entry level gender language. This is a safety calculus. I am assessing where I will lose you. If you aren't queer I guesstimate that I will lose you when I start talking about how I go by "he/him/his" now, but that I do not like when people call me "a man" because I perceive it to be the most binary of the masculine pronouns and although identify as masculine enough to fit masculine pronouns like "guy," "dude," "him". I don't feel that I fit well with "man" when it's used more formally, but it's ok when it's more casual like "thanks man." But even then, sometimes I catch my ear listening hard to hear if that last syllable was a "n" or an "m." There's so much meaning in that letter.

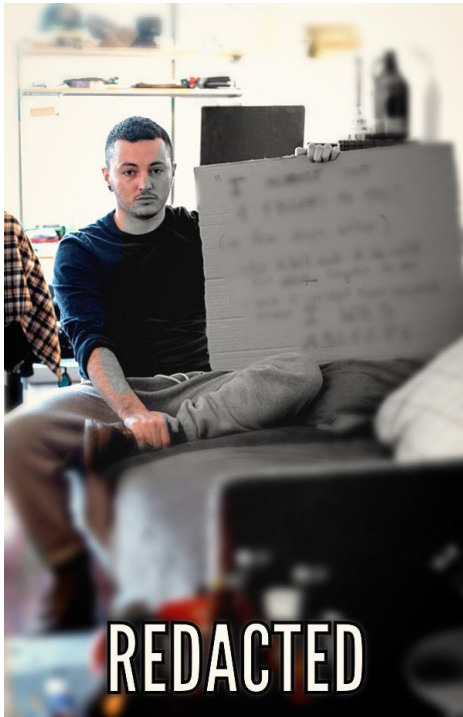


Figure 9: Redacted.

If I imagine a queer audience, I flinch at the idea of sharing the information that I publicly called out a trans guy for rape. Even though this isn't written in stone as a commandment, there is an expectation that we don't call each other out horizontally. That members of the same tier of power within the LGBTQ alphabet soup don't get each other in trouble. So a white passing trans guy, calling out another white passing trans guy, is challenging for queer community to understand and show support towards. I believe both the perpetrator and the survivor deserve support, and I believe healing and resolution can come about that way.



“It often isn’t the initial harm that is the most damaging in conflict---it’s the way the thing is responded to that often does the most harm.”<sup>60</sup>

- Michael Dues

I included this photo in my call-out. I was using the medium started by Project Unbreakable, where victims of sexual assault take a picture of themselves holding a sign with a quote from their rapist. The idea is that in doing this they are reclaiming agency over the moment, and making themselves whole again, and thus unbreakable.

I don’t feel able to share a photo like that again. But I do feel able to share the ways in which sharing that photo felt vulnerable, and the ways in which my silence has changed shape. At the time of the original photo, I wanted people to know the intimate details. After sharing those details publicly and feeling like I didn’t receive the response I wanted, I don't want to share about this wound with that much graphic vulnerability anymore.

I would rather share the ways in which the sharing process itself hurt.

The ways in which I'd rather cloud over the most painful pieces now (represented by the fading/greying), until I'm sure that I trust someone.

And sharing about that blur has been having an unbarring effect.  
It’s un-redacting...

This is where I imagine there being expectations that I will edit my personal narrative into a clear causal chain with a minimum degree of hope and clarity and empowerment. When in fact my experience around most of the pieces that lead to being able to write this were bloody, doubt-filled and confusing.

This piece will likely be perceived to be too subjective and sloppy. Someone might mention losing the forest for the trees

§ 26

Looking at Reaction/Reacting:

“The arousal that goes along with PTSD can make all emotions more intense--and this intensity can be more difficult to regulate.”<sup>61</sup>

- Matthew Tull

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<sup>60</sup> Dues, Michael. *The Art of Conflict Management: Achieving Solutions for Life, Work, and Beyond* (Chantilly, VA: The Teaching Company, 2010), 54.

<sup>61</sup> “The good news is that there are a number of skills for regulating emotions.”

- Matthew Tull

§ 27

Looking for Safety:  
Community Climate Crisis<sup>62</sup>



Figure 10: Looking at looking.

When you know that people in the world are going to scowl at you, you're faced with the idea that the larger group, your environment, isn't right. And then this makes the stakes very high that your little pocket of trees be safe. One characteristic of queer culture is the belief that "normy world," the forest, isn't safe. So we reclaim safety as a promise for each other as "chosen family." In the 60's we called gay/lesbian bars "safe space" in response to anti-sodomy laws.<sup>63</sup> The concept of safe

space has been hash tagged into oblivion. It's often taken as a given that queer events will be "safe spaces" today, and when we fail to deliver on that promise of safety, it can feel like we have no home.

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<sup>62</sup> If we agree with the premise that everything is connected, "as above, so below," which is the motto associated with the Tree of Life in Celtic Paganism, then to some degree maybe our human-social-climate is destabilized in a similar way to our environmental climate - ie. if plastic is in the ocean, it is also in us, if the salmon are depleted and the trees are starving, then so are we

"The salmon feed the trees that make the air we breathe."  
- Alexandra Morton.

Morton, Alexandra, and Billy Proctor. *Heart of the Raincoast: The Life of Billy Proctor* (Victoria, BC: TouchWood Editions, 2016), 36.

<sup>63</sup> Harris, Malcolm. "What's a 'Safe Space'? A Look at the Phrase's 50-Year History." *Splinter*. Accessed April 12, 2020. <https://splinternews.com/what-s-a-safe-space-a-look-at-the-phrases-50-year-hi-1793852786>.

As I was working on this piece, one day, my partner called me to them in the bath where they were reading “The Remedy”. They’d just finished a story by Amber Dawn that sounded like a story I had told them. It was about showing up to a queer party, just as a femme and a drag queen were making fun of sex workers.

Amber Dawn explains that it was literally blocks from where sex workers she knew had disappeared. She talked about feeling betrayed by queer community. Feeling unsafe in her body. I recognized that story partly because that kind of scenario is typical of lateral aggressions at queer parties. Queer partying is 1-part liberation, 1-part anxiety, and 1-part daggers cutting into lifelong wounds to the pulse of house music.

Queer social anxiety is often a mix of excitement and well-founded fear.

The other reason I recognized the story was because I was there that night. I was standing outside. I watched Amber Dawn arrive. I watched the femme and the drag queen, who were my friends, make the joke. I watched Amber Dawn tell them to never ever talk about those women like that. I said “Ahh not cool.” Quietly. And in that moment, it functioned as basically saying nothing. It was too quiet. My femme friend was already weaving an apologist story about why Amber Dawn was overreacting, and I didn’t call her on that in the moment. And that wasn’t ok.

Amber Dawn writes about the particular devastation queers can feel when they show up to events with the hope that they won’t experience more of the same shit they get from normy people as they walk down the street.

“No blood test can detect grief or disgrace. No research survey can quantify the harmful impact of having your queer communities-- your so called safe inclusive spaces -- other you again and again.”<sup>64</sup>

- Amber Dawn

Queers live in an environment of cultural crisis.  
A cultural/environmental crisis.

It’s becoming more common to promise “safer spaces” in queer community now. Where safety is considered a collaborative process, and where absolute, binary safety<sup>65</sup> is considered unattainable. This revision focuses more on promising to increase safety, rather than promising total safety. This feels more honest. Less gas-lighty.<sup>66</sup> The promise of total safety sets people up to experience vibe failure, and since people at parties are motivated to see partying as light and fun, I think it also sets

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<sup>64</sup> Dawn, Amber. *The Remedy: Queer and Trans Voices on Health and Health Care*. (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2017), 126

<sup>65</sup> Where safety is understood to exist if and only if all danger is removed, in a safety or danger, never safety and danger framework.

<sup>66</sup> Gas-lighting is a psychological abuse technique where someone denies someone else’s accurate perception of reality. It results in someone losing faith in their own perspective. It damages eyes and voices.

people up to dissociate from the degrees to which they are not feeling safe. It encourages fake smiles and forced stories of good times. But the modification to safer space can let people laugh and dance and talk about what felt “off” at the same time. It breaks down the party or suffer binary and let’s us party and talk about our pain, hopefully so the next party can be better.

I wanted to talk about how my friend who insulted sex workers could be both an uplifting part of the overall vibe of the party, and also, in that moment, an undermining quality. In an environment where total safety has been promised, a breach in that safety means total failure. I wished there was a way in which we were expecting degrees of failure that night.



Figure 11: More Looking.

“There are always ways to intervene against othering. And when I say othering I don’t mean those pop-up reality tv shows about addiction, I’m talking about holistic and preventative care.”<sup>67</sup>

- Amber Dawn

And I wish that people like me were more skilled at naming what feels off in the moment, setting boundaries in the moment.

If queer party space could be cued in such a way that peoples’ pallets would have been more open to a call-in in the moment,<sup>68</sup>and also a call-in days later. People would have been more open to

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<sup>67</sup> Dawn, Amber. 2017. *The Remedy: Queer and Trans Voices on Health and Health Care*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press. 126, 119

<sup>68</sup> I can speak for myself at least and say that I would have felt more open to doing a call-in in a space that hadn’t promised total safety. But I also would have felt more comfortable calling-in in the moment if I wasn’t already known in the community for making a call-out. I felt like I was under scrutiny to see if I was just trigger happy and oversensitive. And I had already gone unheard, in the sense that I didn’t feel supported *enough* after my call-out. I wasn’t sure if I would be able to navigate gathering an audience, in the heat of a moment. I was unsure. And in flinching, and letting the moment pass me by, I was a bystander. and that was not ok.

resolution, to missteps, since missteps would already have been accounted for and expected. The promise of total safety sets us up to be perfectionists and dissociated and open to excommunicating that which doesn't align with total safety,  
 and that is very unsafe.

§ 28

Looking for proof:

When Seeing is Believing.

“...when we feel fear, we feel fear of something.”<sup>69</sup>

- Sara Ahmed

That's why I wanted tangible proof of the stares, because otherwise we are just sharing our feelings about being glared at, trying to convince people that these looks are micro-expressions connected to very real feelings of disgust/fear/hate.

And that those feelings lead to very real joblessness/homelessness/friendlessness. That micro-expressions aren't of micro-importance. They are tangible.

That's also why I came out publicly about being sexually assaulted. Before coming out I'd talked about the experience privately with friends and acquaintances, but there was always something that felt kind of hypothetical about what I was sharing. I was sharing the feeling about being sexually assaulted, which was being disregarded just as easily as my feelings-based way of being in the world has been countless times. Sharing the feelings wasn't enough to prove to people that something significant had happened and that I was living in significant danger.

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I did however talk to my boss the next day and I told him that something had happened, and that we needed to make a plan to address it. I suggested meeting with the person who made the sexworker-phobic joke, talking with her, letting her know that we know she is fundamentally a good person, and that what she did wasn't ok. At the time I suggested this, my boss agreed. But he said he wanted to have the conversation with her privately. I didn't hear from him for a week. I contacted him. His response was that confronting our friend about what she'd done had caused her massive anxiety and that he wished I had just dealt with it in the moment. I quit after that conversation. And I wonder if that was the right decision every day. Maybe I could have worked it out with him. Maybe I could have gotten him to understand that it wasn't worse to point out the harm done, than it was to do the harm. But, I think what is more likely, is that I would have just slowly adapted to an environment when I felt more and more unable to name when things didn't feel ok for me, because I was living under a constant question mark- did he overreact? Couldn't he have just gotten a mediator to sit with him and his rapist and they could have all held hands and said namaste? That's me giving words to the ambient, felt skepticism. Real or imagined- it would have worn me down.

<sup>69</sup>Ahmed, Sara. 2007. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press. 3

But by creating a story, describing myself in relation to the person who assaulted me, describing the scene of the event, and describing the slow boiling of the frog<sup>70</sup> that were my boundaries in relation to this guy, I had created something tangible. And when I published it, more people believed me. Many people did not, and eventually their skepticism created an acid fog that made it impossible for me to continue living in Vancouver with any shred of self-respect or dignity. But even as I was existing under their skeptical looks, I could tell they felt they were looking at something. They were engaging with something real. Even if they wondered about the realism of the details in my story, they weren't doubting the reality of my call-out. They had likely read it or heard about it. That piece was real. Afterwards he went into hiding and left the city. That piece is real too.

I had gotten them to see something. Even if I wasn't being held deep enough or warm enough. Sometimes people don't understand what they see and reject it, and sometimes people know what they're seeing but the reality of what they're looking at is too much to integrate, and so they scowl or look away.

## § 29

The way This Project Came About, in 2013:

As I drove past the Spy Store on Broadway in Vancouver it occurred to me that I'd love to be able to wear the kind of glasses that James Bond would wear in old movies, where he'd have a tiny camera hidden in the glasses. I wanted to be able to show other people what it was like to be looked at the way I was getting looked at. My friend who didn't receive those looks could see. They could see people glaring at me on the bus or rubbernecking as they walked past me on the street. But I wanted to be able to show people what it's like to hold eye contact with someone who is glaring at you. I wanted to have physical evidence that it's possible to walk down the street every day and receive hundreds of those glares.<sup>71</sup> I thought if I could show people who don't have those experiences the footage, that they would have an embodied reaction. That there would be something about it that would make it feel like it was happening to them. I was counting on people being able to have more sympathy for their own pain than empathy for other peoples'. But during the process of my transition, I stopped receiving the dangerous looks of confusion/curiosity/disgust/fear. Because I started to look like I fit in a gender box. And so on the day of the shoot I decided I'd out myself by holding up a sign that said "I have a vagina." In order to cause myself to fail, to instigate my own failure, knowing that the average person walking down the street in downtown Vancouver would think it was absurd that someone with a beard could have a vagina. And I did receive glares.

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<sup>70</sup> A frog boiling slowly is a classic metaphor for abuse. the idea is that if you drop a frog in already boiling water it will jump out. But if you put a frog in tepid water, and then increase the temperature slowly, the water will eventually come to a boil and the frog will stay in the pot and die.

<sup>71</sup> As I researched the subject of radical public photography further, I came upon the work of Haley Morris Cafiero. I found her blocking particularly inspiring. The way she positioned herself, doing mundane activities, in public space. I also really appreciate the concept behind her next project: capturing the looks of surprise on people who notice she is taking pictures of people. She also takes her pictures to art galleries which brings in another layer of audience looking at the looking.

One person even stopped me to yell at me. The confusion triggered anger in him. He wanted me to explain myself to him as he yelled at me. He thought his need to understand my gender had priority over the dignity I was losing by enduring his pointing and his questions.

After I took a break from this project to work on my PTSD, this medium became a genre. After the viral video of the woman walking through New York,<sup>72</sup> there were countless videos of a similar nature; documenting how gay men, disabled people and fat people are looked at as they walk down the street. People were hungry to explain to the world that micro-expressions can amount to micro-aggressions, and microaggressions matter.

The way we look matters.

§ 30

Looking at Being Looked At:

I interviewed Justin, about a month after the shoot, to talk about how they felt about doing that kind of public performance. We talked while we looked at the footage together.<sup>73</sup> They explained that after doing this shoot, they had become hyper-aware of the way they were being looked at on a daily basis. Before the shoot, in our first interview they were excited. They knew they had a gender performance that attracted a lot of staring. They said they were going to “femme it up” and have fun with it, to really draw out those stares. They said they were interested in documenting and seeing that.

After the performance, one month later, they were more masculine than I had ever seen them. I felt bad for noticing that. They brought it up, without me asking, so I feel like it’s ok for me to share that piece here. The first time we met they were in an amazing floor length turquoise dress, and they were singing “Let It Go” for TV cameras in front of nerdy queers in a coffee shop for gamers. That day Justin was talking about how queer visibility is hard in the gaming community. They were making themselves abundantly visible to help those who were afraid to be seen feel like there was someone else holding that spotlight. When I saw them one month after our shoot, they were standing adjacent to that spotlight. We talked about that too. They said they were pulling that part of themselves in for a bit, to take a break.

So they don't burn out.

§ 31

Looking at/for Trauma:

How do queers heal when trauma is at the root of our identity?

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<sup>72</sup> Rob Bliss Creative. “10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman.” *YouTube* video, 1:56. October 28, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1XGPvbWn0A>

<sup>73</sup> This is photo-elicited journalism. The idea is that photographs are more evocative than words, and that photos transport us somewhere. I wanted us to feel transported back to the scene, to feel those eyes again, and to talk about it.

Sometimes we install ourselves in a victim mindset so we can have a framework to understand ourselves as always right, and everything else as owing us something.

Not all of us are doing this all the time. There are very legitimate moments where queer/anti-oppression minded folks are being wronged and they need to be able to access social justice language to slam down the hammer of Thor into a situation for their own protection and dignity.

And sometimes queers weaponize their victim statuses against each other. This could be called “Power Under Abuse.”<sup>74</sup>

§ 32

This is what Power Under Abuse can look like:

A checklist:

- Using shame and social justice language to justify entitlement to someone else’s time, skills, resources or capacity.
- Telling someone that their basic needs or boundaries (which is distinct from their comfort) are not valid because they hold an identity that is more privileged than yours.
- Pressuring or forcing someone to have sex with you and then making claims about their politics when they say no or name that you were sexually violent towards them.
- Accusing someone of controlling or abusing you because they are requesting accountability or transparent conflict resolution with you, for harm you caused or participated in.
- Accusing someone (often publicly) of harming you in ways that did not happen.
- Refusing to absorb or validate reality checks offered by friends and loved ones who witness abuse in your dynamic and justifying this deflection by stating that abuse "can only exist when power or privilege is held over someone else."
- Refusing to accept support from anyone other than the person you are being abusive towards and leveraging shame or guilt at their power and privilege to pressure them not to set boundaries with you.
- Denying, erasing or minimizing the support you receive from the person you are being abusive towards, both in private and in front of other people.
- Acting confused or dismissive when the person whose care you have erased or minimized expresses feeling frustrated or hurt by you (often this is done in front of other people and the person experiencing the abuse is framed as over reacting or just having an unrelated hard time).
- Accusing someone of abandoning you when they set boundaries or reach limits of capacity to care for you.
- Refusing to set your own boundaries (when it was possible for you to do so) and then making statements like “you made me do this.”

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<sup>74</sup> Grace, Andi. “Power Under Abuse.” The Witch Cabinet, September 27, 2018. [https://witchcabinet.com/blogs/andi-grace/power-under-abuse-what-it-is-and-how-to-heal?ck\\_subscriber\\_id=80520395](https://witchcabinet.com/blogs/andi-grace/power-under-abuse-what-it-is-and-how-to-heal?ck_subscriber_id=80520395).



- Calling for ostracization or punishment that is not proportionate to the harm done (i.e. 'going nuclear' when situation does not call for this or simple conflict resolution would have sufficed).
- Constantly accusing other people of being oppressive, while simultaneously being unwilling to unpack your own privilege or examine how you harm or hold power over others.
- Not acknowledging the oppression experienced by the person you are abusing and/or convincing the person you are abusing that they have more power (in general and specifically over you) than they actually do.
- Refusing to acknowledge care, labor and resources given to you by the person you are in conflict with and instead characterizing them as only ever having harmed you.
- Refusing to address conflict in a way that honors the integrity and humanity of everyone involved.
- Stealing from the person you are being abusive towards and either denying you stole, or claiming you have a right to the thing you stole because you are more oppressed than the person you stole from (which may or may not actually be true).
- Accusing someone of triangulating or breaking confidentiality when they seek witnesses or support to navigate the abusive dynamic they are in with you.
- Claiming to be 'getting support' and 'calling in witnesses' when you are spreading rumors and triangulating.
- Weaponizing and applying pop psychology terms like "toxic", "narcissist" and "empath" to create a hyper-simplistic narrative of what happened between you and the person you were abusive towards, where in you lack an understanding of what these terms were intended to describe.
- Labelling confusion, miscommunication or difference of opinion as gas-lighting.<sup>75</sup>

When I came out about being sexually assaulted, there were people in the community who perceived my call-out to be power under abuse. They thought that I was struggling to handle rejection and that I wanted revenge. The reason someone coming out about sexual assault can be perceived that way in the queer community is because of how rampant this kind of behavior is.

Some people weren't wrong to wonder if I was retaliating, when I was steeped in a retaliation-based community that uses social justice language to publicly execute people. And in this climate, naming someone a rapist is a public execution, or it leads to public denial because we don't have a spectrum of options available to us. We don't have robust restorative justice circles, or a bro-culture of calling each other in when people get predatory.

It has to escalate to the level of a call-out because there are gaps in our collective protocol around how we as a culture respond to sexual assault. In the fall of 2017 #MeToo is taking over the internet because there's a bottleneck opening up and a massive pressure release is happening.

I'm excited to see what will come from making conversations about sexual assault more normalized.

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<sup>75</sup> I co-wrote this article with Poplar Rose for the Tarot and Social Justice themed organization Little Red Tarot. It has since been taken down after the blog closed.

§ 33

Resting Bitch Face:

The Scowlee becomes the Scowler.

Sometimes queers are assholes.

And lots of them are that way for very understandable reasons.

And sometimes this doesn't make the assholery ok.

And sometimes it does.

Resting bitch face falls along these strata.

Resting bitch face,<sup>76</sup> if you are unfamiliar, is when someone's baseline facial expression is cold.

They're always glaring at the world, to some degree.

In the queer community it's part of the culture to know that lots of queers have resting bitch face.

And it's also part of the lore to believe that the reason for this is because normies do us wrong (won't hire queers, won't rent to queers, won't look at or treat queers nicely, the degree and visibility of this varies based on the degree of gender failure and geography).

### **When you know you're going to be glared at, why not glare back?**

There are so many understandable reasons for resting bitch face and so many tragic consequences.

Scowling can invite scowling

Scowling can calibrate us to feel dark emotions

Scowling can make people think we hate them

Scowling can scare people off

Scowling can make someone think we want to fight

and

Scowling can scare someone into not fighting us

Scowling can keep people who shouldn't be close at a distance

Scowling can be armor

And sometimes that scowling, when turned inward, can make us monstrous.

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<sup>76</sup> Grushkin, Rebecca. "I'll Smile When I Want To: Why Resting Bitch Face Is Sexist." Accessed April 12, 2020. <https://www.hercampus.com/school/american/ill-smile-when-i-want-why-resting-bitch-face-sexist>.

This article deals with the problematics\*\*\* of thinking women shouldn't have resting bitch face, which is related to men feeling entitled to women's affection and insulted by their rejection. I think a similar logic can be used to understand resting bitch face in queers (many of whom identify as women, or who have feminized experiences).

I just watched a documentary called *Party Monster*.<sup>77</sup> It's about the rise and fall of club kid culture, which was characterized by gay men taking over public spaces in glam rock<sup>78</sup> outfits for after-hour parties with lots of drugs and sex. The leader of this movement was Michael Alig who then goes on to end the movement<sup>79</sup> by murdering his social competitor and roommate. The narrative of the documentary suggests that it was childhood bullying that forged Alig into a Disco Murderer.

Maybe it's because queers often experience rejection at fundamental developmental times that we have trouble holding each other gently.

Sometimes we become party monsters and devour each other.

§ 34

Once I worked in a Gay/Queer club:



Figure 12: Queer Map of Vancouver.

I lived in EastVan, and I was attracted to gay men in the West End.

<sup>77</sup> *Party Monster*. Bailey Fenton. New York: World of Wonder, 2003.

<sup>78</sup> Glam rock, which was hugely about colorful flamboyant outfits, happened in response to the previous hippie movement, which rejected high fashion.

<sup>79</sup> This is the idea supported by the documentary, but many queers in urban centers dress up in fabulous outfits and spend a lot of time in clubs identify as club kids today.



Figure 13: Culture Clash.

Although both sections of the city are LGBTQ, during the 3 years I lived there,<sup>80</sup> EastVan had more people who were assigned female at birth and may now identify as: lesbians, transmen, nonbinary etc. And the West End has more people assigned male at birth who are attracted to other people assigned male at birth or transmen.

I found it particularly challenging to move east and west, from queer space to gay space and back. Gay men say “hey girl” to their people... if they see you as a gay man they say “hey girl” ... but if you say “hey girl” to a masculine of center person in EastVan it can be seen as critically offensive misgendering and a violation of “safe space.”

I felt like I had to calibrate and recalibrate my social/language apparatus as I rode the Skytrain to hang out in these culturally distinct, yet LGBTQ, parts of the city.

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<sup>80</sup> How can we ever talk about queer culture in a stable way when it is different in every major city/town/village around the world; it’s different for people of different generations (even micro-generations across spans of 3-5 years). Nonetheless we have tangible experiences in these communities, and it can be helpful to talk about our experiences in these changing micro-cultures like they are nonetheless real even though they are multifaceted, multiple, and changing cultures. The LGBTQ community is not a static or unified community. We do not have one consistent agenda. So I’m speaking about my experiences of queerness here like they are concrete experiences, because they were tangible for me, but I also see this epoch that my experiences happened within as a changing fluid epoch amongst other cultural queer epochs on a fluid tapestry we are all simultaneously interpreting and creating.



Figure 14: Everybody. Every Body.

Vancouver Art and Leisure Society was supposed to be a space where everyone could party: gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual, kinky, festival-goers, club kids. LGBTQ and more!

I started working in this organization by reaching out to the owner who was being inundated by a public call-out. I told him that I might be able to help him out, because it appeared as though he had made a faux pas without knowing. It appeared as though, although he was gay, he did not speak “queer.”

He had forgotten to do an accessibility audit of his venue. This was normal on the West End. It was social suicide in EastVan.

It is expected that if you are putting on an event for one member of a marginalized group, that you will be making room at the table for everyone. This means knowing how people in wheelchairs are going to experience your event and making those details clear to people as you advertise your event.

In the West End people want to know 1) who is performing, 2) who else is coming out to party that night, and 3) is there a cover charge, and maybe 4) what are the drink specials?

### **Gay and Queer are distinct yet overlapping cultures.**

Queer has emerged from queer theory and academic feminism  
 Even if someone hasn't been in academia,  
 if someone identifies as queer  
 chances are they study their identity and identity politics in general  
 with an academic vigor.

Gays were traditionally cis-men  
 who were persecuted in gay bars.  
 Their liberation involves happily partying without getting beat up or killed.

But the term queer is being universalized in the LGBTQ community.

People who used to be gay now identify as queer;

The cultures are mixing.

~

So I ran his Facebook account for a few days  
I made the appropriate minimal apologies  
I avoided invitations to debate

I later helped him come up with the tagline  
Everybody  
Every Body

A more accessible way of talking about accessibility politics, I thought  
His spaces weren't fully wheelchair accessible though,  
so I guess it wasn't technically correct.  
But the spirit of the message was that we wanted people from east and west to converge on main  
street to mix with bisexuals and straight festival go-er



Figure 15: Vancouver Club Kids.

81

I was standing to the left of the photographer when this was taken. I remembered thinking it seemed like an iconic moment. The image seems to call to mind a timeless club kid, unbothered by the goings on of the 9-5. Nocturnal, and living in the underground.

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<sup>81</sup> Cameron, Baron S. *Night Visions: Beyond Good and Evil*. Vancouver, British Columbia: Culture Thug Photography, 2016.

“We must face ugly truths about ourselves, the company we keep, and the company we kept. We are not responsible for the actions of others but cannot pretend problems don’t exist because we are not directly involved... some of the people I photograph are way out on the margins... I do not seek to romanticize their situations. Nothing could be worse or more dangerous. Worse, in the sense that to romanticize their situation is to give it a false nobility and no onus for anyone to push for change. Dangerous because you are ill-advised to stop counting sheep when wolves are about... I am here to insist you stop turning a blind eye to far corners of our society. We are all our brother's keepers. If not, then who will come for us when we need help?”

- Cameron S. Baron

These guys were gender failures and gender fucks too.

Having a multi-disciplinary (music/art/performance) and multi-cultural space sounded amazing to me.

What could go wrong?

## Suspected arson puts Vancouver Arts and Leisure Society on ice

By Simon Little and Robyn Crawford

CKNW



82

Figure 16: Arson puts Vancouver Arts and Leisure Society on ice.

It was speculated that this was retaliation for stealing customers from the West End.

It turns out that members of the LGBTQ umbrella can't just be mish-mashed together in a creative/party space without complications.

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<sup>82</sup> Little, Simon, and Robyn Crawford. "Suspected Arson Puts Vancouver Arts and Leisure Society on Ice." Global News. Global News, January 8, 2018. <https://globalnews.ca/news/3951066/arts-group-arson/>.



We are not endangered pandas who can just be thrown into an enclosure together in the hopes of cuteness. (That isn't even realistic when it comes to the pandas. Sometimes they cannibalize.)

We are not unanimous about the gay agenda.

We are not unanimous about whether we're having a party or a protest<sup>83</sup>

We are not unanimous about how we party or how we protest.

The gays prefer screaming, body contact, sarcasm.

The queers prefer conversations about consent.

Bisexual people can party with any of them.

But they also feel left out a lot.

In my time working there I witnessed women coming to me to report consent violations (I guess the limited conversations about consent was a complicated policy).

~

Sometimes we're able to heal enough that we can march and dance beside each other.

I think we are able to hold each other well when we look at our trauma and rework it.

I think that applies to everyone, not just queers.

§ 35

Why are Queers so mean to each other?

“...the community that I have spent my entire adult life working and living in sometimes feels even more dangerous and volatile than the mainstream, cis and heteronormative world that I spent my teen years trying to escape. After all, I can at least blame the cruelty of straight, cis society on homophobia and transphobia. But why are queers so mean to queers?”<sup>84</sup>

- Kai Cheng Thom

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<sup>83</sup> Arguably the most effective protests are fun and the most powerful parties affect social change. (some kind of quote about social movement theory). The right party can be a powerful dialectic between action and theory. The right moments at a parties have profound butterfly-effect-esque impacts on cultural trends.

<sup>84</sup> Thom, Kai Cheng. 2019. “Why Are Queer People so Mean to Each Other?” *Xtra Magazine*. August 16, 2019. <https://www.dailyxtra.com/why-are-queer-people-so-mean-to-each-other-160978>.

“What happens to a community of people who have been raised with a sensation of constant, looming danger, of being fundamentally wrong in the way we love and express ourselves? What impact might that collective trauma have upon our bodies and spirits?”

- Kai Cheng Thom

Scholars of the brain are fond of saying “what fires together, wires together,” which refers to the brain’s tendency to form neural networks (pathways in the brain that form certain thought, feeling and behavioral responses) that become stronger and stronger every time they are used. Trauma theory holds that traumatized individuals — and, I hypothesize, queer and trans community as a whole — have well-worn neural networks shaped around the deeply held physical sensation that we are constantly in danger, that we are bad and unlovable, that others are untrustworthy and violent. Every time we are abused, discriminated against or neglected, those neural networks become stronger, while our neural networks associated with safety and loving relationships atrophy. We become physically less capable of imagining a world where being with others is not synonymous with being unsafe.”<sup>85</sup>

So queers are super-saturated in call-outs

We have replicated a police state within our own saf(er) space

“[Language] can precipitate action by mapping the cognitive terrain and persuading us that we are (or are not) in need of treatment, and it can shape the forms of treatment to which we are willing to subject ourselves.”<sup>86</sup>

- Kimberly Emmons

Words got us here  
Identity label words  
Imperative words  
Thou shalt words

Words casting broad strokes  
And mobilizing armies

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<sup>85</sup> Thom, Kai Cheng. 2019. “Why Are Queer People so Mean to Each Other?” *Xtra Magazine*. August 16, 2019. <https://www.dailyxtra.com/why-are-queer-people-so-mean-to-each-other-160978>.

<sup>86</sup> Emmons, Kimberly. *Black Dogs and Blue Words: Depression and Gender in the Age of Self-Care* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 40.

“If you can’t love yourself, how in the hell are you going to love somebody else?”<sup>87</sup>  
 - Ru Paul

“Unfortunately, humans often do not completely discharge the vast energies mobilized to protect themselves.”<sup>88</sup>  
 - Peter A. Levine

§ 35  
 Looking at Cults:<sup>89</sup>

As I was leaving Vancouver, I watched *Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief*,<sup>90</sup> a documentary about people leaving Scientology.

There was something that I found strangely familiar about the behaviors and nature of the cult of Scientology, and cults in general.

The repeating of the approved phrases.  
 The look of tense fear in the eyes.  
 Conditioned behavior.  
 Tangible consequences for stepping out of line.

“A typical cult has a charismatic, unaccountable leader, persuades by coercion and exploits its members, economically, sexually or in some other way.”<sup>91</sup>  
 - Rick Ross

Francis Lee identifies some key ways in which the social justice community (which has massive overlap with the queer community) behaves in a similar way to a religion on the basis of

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<sup>87</sup> *Ru Paul's Drag Race*. “Drag on a Dime.” Episode 01. Ru Paul. OUTtv, February 9, 2009.

<sup>88</sup> Levine, Peter A. *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma Through the Body*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1997. 176

<sup>89</sup> Warning: slight conflation between cults and extreme religiosity. There’s enough overlap between the two to justify the blending of the conversation, I believe.

<sup>90</sup> “Going Clear: Scientology & the Prison of Belief.” Alex Gibney, IMDb.com, June 25, 2015. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4257858/>.

- Also see the documentaries “Mad Mad Country”, and “Tiger King” for depictions of communities who believed they were not cults, when in fact the communities existed under the dominating rule of one charismatic leader.

<sup>91</sup> Ross, Rick. “What Makes a Cult? | Rick Ross.” *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, May 27, 2009. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/may/27/cults-definition-religion>.

- 1) Seeking Purity- “social death follows when being labelled a “bad activist” or ”problematic””
- 2) Reproducing Colonial Logics - “the experiences of oppression do not grant supremacy”
- 3) Preaching Punishments - “telling people what to do and how to live their lives is endemic to dogmatic religion and activism.”
- 4) Sacred Texts- <sup>92</sup> “Nearly all of [the latest mandatory reading] articles follow a standard structure: an instructive title, list of problematic or suggested behaviors, and a final statement of hard opinion.”

“God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?”<sup>93</sup>

- Friedrich Nietzsche

One of Nietzsche’s social critiques is that we have dethroned God by stepping away from religion as a primary source of information, but he believed that we still had religious tendencies. He wondered what we would do to move beyond religious ways of seeing and being with each other. I think we’re still figuring this out...

§36

Seeing Freedom/Liberation<sup>94</sup> in the Stars:  
Queering<sup>95</sup> my Saturn Return.

It's not controversial to say Astrology is part of queer culture.

When queers get to know each other they often lead by asking about sun/moon/rising signs.

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<sup>92</sup> Lee, Frances. 2017. “Excommunicate Me from the Church of Social Justice.” Autostraddle. July 17, 2017. <https://www.autostraddle.com/kin-aesthetics-excommunicate-me-from-the-church-of-social-justice-386640/>.

<sup>93</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich and Walter Arnold Kaufmann. *The Gay Science with a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* (Brantford, Ontario: W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library, 2017), 81.

<sup>94</sup> Foucault, Michel. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage. Foucault on Language and Liberation: we need a minimal amount of freedom to articulate our liberation. Power affects how we see our freedom.

<sup>95</sup> Queering is when you take something and upend it, make it strange, make it different, reverse it, take a radically different perspective.

MA thesis + Saturn Return discussion = kinda queer.

Astrology is a framework that means something to me. Ever since my grade four teacher called me to the front of the room and asked when my birthday was and told me I was a Cancer. And I didn't know what a Cancer was, except that I knew people could get cancer and that that was bad. I was sure I wasn't bad, so I wanted to know what a Cancer was so I could prove it wasn't bad. It turns out Cancers are a sign that get characterized and treated rather simplistically as overly emotional/sensitive. And I've been living with this struggle my whole life-- having feelings about things that I'd like to share except that I know I will likely be sharing to an audience that doesn't want to talk that much about feelings.

When I was in undergrad a feminist philosophy professor took a liking to me and told me that she thought I should practice speaking in a firmer, more monotone voice, and that I should say "I think \_\_\_\_\_," instead of "I feel \_\_\_\_\_." Then I started studying non-dualism and post-structuralism. I loved how these frameworks could undermine the mind/body division of Descartes' super reductive "I think therefore I am" metaphysics, which also cascades into undermining the mind/heart division. It felt good to know that there were ways of relating to the world that didn't just need to be mind/analysis based, but that a heart/poetry relationship to the world was valid too, and that actually sometimes the heart/poetic is more effective at conveying things than the mind/analytic.

After studying Astrology more I learned that my sun sign is actually Gemini/Cancer cusp. Which is a placement that bridges mind and heart, where Gemini is mind and Cancer is heart. So the worlds that I try to bridge in philosophy and poetry are reflected in my stars.

I think I would be missing something to talk about how queers see each other, and how I see myself in queer community, and leave out Astrology.

According to Mythology, Saturn is a planet whose energy asks us to look at structures and systems and ask if they have integrity. And when Saturn returns to the same place in the sky when we were born, it asks us if what we've built so far is load-bearing. It asks us to wonder if we want to keep building in the same way. It asks if our projects and plans follow from our heart and our hopes. Saturn tests our castles.

Saturn returns when people are 28-30, and again when people are 58-60. This is often when people have quarter and mid-life crisis, as they reflect on the significance of what they've built thus far.

My Saturn return happened immediately after I publicly called out a trans guy for sexually assaulting me (at the time of the call-out it was his Saturn return). Then when my return started, I was hacked and cyber-Ostaked by one of his friends. And then I had a falling out with one of my best friends/project-partner/boss around an ethical issue that played out at a fundraiser/party for our project.

Saturn returned to look at me, and it could see with fullness that there were gaps in the structure of my life.

So I deconstructed the rickety structures, and left to the woods to live in a trailer in a goat pen, where I woke up every morning to the sound of them sharpening their horns on the door of the trailer. Saturn, represented by the goat, was feeling ignited.<sup>96</sup>



Figure 17: Goat Love.

And then a 70-year-old dorm on a commune on Saturna island, where they build fences around their vegetation to keep their free-range pigs/chickens/cows out, rather than building cages to keep their animals in.

And then a room in a 100-year-old farmhouse on Cortes Island, where a would-be cult leader from Toronto taught me what he had googled about raising the biggest pigs on the island.

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<sup>96</sup> In Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra goes up the mountain to contemplate, and he comes down the mountain when he's ready to re-enter society, after he's integrated what he needed to integrate back up on the mountain. I feel like I can relate to this story in how I dealt with my trauma. I feel like I needed to go off away from everyone I knew, up the mountain. And I wasn't ready to talk about it until after I had had some time away and I'd come back down and I'd been bumping shoulders with people for a while.

<sup>97</sup> There's a simplicity to being with animals that I find very healing for my PTSD. A social injury that was caused by socializing with humans.

In those rural spaces, I missed queer vibe. I was starting to identify as having queer PTSD. I wasn't sure how I could ever write about queer content or engage with queer audience again. So I went to a queer land project in the interior of BC. I think in my traumatized state, I was hoping that other traumatized queers would be able to see and hold me. I fell in love with a genderqueer femme witch, and I witnessed the collapse of their epic relationship to their femme trans pregnant partner. The aftermath of that left deep gashes and scorched earth. Leaving me feeling that queer + rural isn't in itself a place of holding and seeing.

**I want queer + rural + stable**

**I want a queer permaculture.<sup>98</sup>**

Which requires healing, which requires talking/witnessing. Which requires genuinely safer space. Which requires being able to look at structural flaws in the flow and fix them. And it requires that we learn how to live in reciprocal relationship with each other.

It requires that we integrate Saturnine teachings.

“Only great pain, the long, slow pain that takes its time... compels us to descend to our ultimate depths... I doubt that such pain makes us "better"; but I know it makes us more profound... In the end, lest what is most important remain unsaid: from such abysses, from such severe sickness, one returns newborn, having shed one's skin... with merrier senses, with a second dangerous innocence in joy, more childlike and yet a hundred times subtler than one has ever been before.”<sup>99</sup>

- Friedrich Nietzsche

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<sup>98</sup> As opposed to a queer climate crisis.

<sup>99</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, and Walter Arnold Kaufmann. *The Gay Science with a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* (Brantford, Ontario: W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library, 2017), 72.

§ 37

Here's a Saturnine Sub-Plot...

### So.. Your Friend got Called Out for Sexual Assault? 3 things You Can Do\*

\*Suggestions from a trans masculine survivor.

“I believe that passively reading about or otherwise witnessing injustice injures us - it widens the disconnect. The part of us that is hurting does not heal in the dark; we must turn on the light to look at it. We must pay attention.”<sup>100</sup>

— Amber Dawn

A post-Weinstein Listicle:



Louis C.K. Responds to Accusations: 'These Stories Are True'

Kevin Spacey to Seek Treatment as Sexual Accusations Grow



Figure 18: #MeToo.

<sup>100</sup> Amber Dawn, *How Poetry Saved My Life: A Hustlers Memoir* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2013), 24.



We are in a post-Weinstein era. #MeToo stories are becoming normal.

In this new world, people are named publicly for committing sexual violence.

Lots of people.

People you love.

Maybe even your friends/partners/family/co-workers/ role models.

The friends of someone who is called out for sexual assault play a significant role in shaping the aftermath of the call-out. Friends form the jury in the court of public opinion and can make a life or death difference to both the survivor and the person being called out.

A few years ago, I did a #MeToo-style call-out.

And I lived through painful aftermath. from that journey, I learned what meaningful support for survivors can look like.

So, I have some ideas to offer...

Please take what feels right and leave the rest.

If you have a friend who was called out for sexual assault, the way you respond matters.

Here's 3 things you can do:

#### 1) Support the Survivor/s

- \*Believe that harm happened\* Sexual harm often happens without outside witnesses, so it's important to give the survivor's account of the situation credibility.
- Contribute to the public discussion and lift up the survivor and their story. It's ok to be unsure of what to say - but minimizing, retaliating, or being silent is not the answer.
- Consult the survivor/s - check in with the survivor or one of their close friends to let them know that you are working with your friend on an accountability process. Ask what they need to feel supported and offer to give them space.

## 2) Support your Friend

- The time immediately after a sexual misconduct call-out is critically important. Consider being by your friend's side to help them emotionally regulate. They may become unstable or at risk of self-harm or retaliation - if the situation looks risky, call your local suicide help line.
- Encourage your friend to engage with restorative justice - work with a restorative justice counsellor and/or join a restorative justice support group. Many of these counsellors and support groups offer support to communities as they address sexual violence. This is where folks with sexually harmful behavior can do the work of figuring out #HowIWillChange (a hashtag parallel to #MeToo that emerged October 2017)
- Encourage your friend to apologize \*genuinely\* - genuine apologies include: identifying harm, acknowledging impact, and outlining a plan to heal and learn healthier behaviors. Genuine apologies do not include minimizing the situation or sending the survivor/s under the bus.

Supporting your friend means helping them step into accountability.

It's in your friend's best interest to heal their wounds/behaviors and repair their relationship to community.

## 3) Support Yourself:

- This process requires significant amounts of energy and emotional labor. It will probably be a huge moment in your life. Take plenty of time to reflect, integrate, & restore. Check in with yourself. are your basic needs taken care of? Are you in a fight/flight/freeze/fawn trigger loop? Are you feeling regulated/grounded when offering support?
- Check in with your counsellor/support team re: debriefing, managing your triggers, and your boundaries/energy. You don't need to give endlessly to this accountability/healing process, but it is important to show up in a meaningful way that is available to you.

\*This is an introductory conversation, not a comprehensive sexual misconduct response kit.\*

I want this article to help folks resist the pressure to be silent and perpetuate shame in the aftermath of revelations of sexual misconduct.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> My original advisor, Carl Leggo, didn't like this article. He felt that I had drifted away from asking questions and that I had wandered into the realm of lecturing. He was very gentle but firm in supporting me to realize that I had started to weaponize myself in response to my trauma, and

§ 38

This is a website layout for a business idea that I had to start an online peer support group for masculine people wanting to live in a “masculine nurturance culture.”<sup>102</sup>

I was focusing on the concept radical masculinity.<sup>103\*\*</sup>

Radical masculinity is a way to present, perform, play with, celebrate, and liberate masculinity, in thousands of multi-dimensional expressions. It is still being created, recreated, formed, and reformed, and I want to be a part of its ongoing evolution.”

- Sinclair Sexsmith aka SugarButch

A gathering space for masculine folks who want to work on themselves in community.

In the wake of #MeToo, it is has become widely accepted that the norm for masculinity is toxic: competitive, judgmental, and threatening...

people with masculinity need to do better...

My name is Onyx Rose, and I’m a masculine survivor.

When I sought support, I wanted to join a masculinity group that was:

- Welcoming of people of all genders
- Encouraging people to heal and take accountability
- Offering space to learn theory and practice healthy masculinity

I wasn’t able to find a community that held all of these different pieces. It’s common to find spaces for cis-masculine or transmasculine folks that place more emphasis on either healing or accountability..

It’s also more common to focus on theory over practice, except in retreat spaces.

I believe we can bridge these both/and’s

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that part of that weapon was to take on an authoritarian tone. I don’t want my PTSD to result in me being too afraid to be vulnerable enough to ask questions, and be in dialogue with people as opposed to living in my own monologue where I have created a false sense of safety through routine and lecture.

<sup>102</sup> Samaran, Nora. 2019. “The Opposite of Rape Culture Is Nurturance Culture.” Dating Tips for the Feminist Man. December 11, 2019. <https://norasamaran.com/2016/02/11/the-opposite-of-rape-culture-is-nurturance-culture-2/>.

<sup>103</sup> Sexsmith, Sinclair. 2009. “A Manifesto for Radical Masculinity.” Feminist Philosophers. December 9, 2009. <https://feministphilosophers.wordpress.com/2009/12/09/a-manifesto-for-radical-masculinity/>.

and I believe it is possible to heal #ToxicMasculinity by cultivating space for diverse, nurturing and transformative masculinity.

So I created radicalmascs.com

A radical online peer-support community for people of all genders with any kind of self-defined masculinity.

We support each other by:

- sharing our stories
- listening with open hearts
- encouraging each other to grow

Do you crave belonging to a community that encourages people to have a conscious relationship to masculinity?

Join Us?

\* Mascos are: anyone who is engaging with masculinity in their gender performance and wants to consciously curate their masculinity so that it is nurturing rather than toxic.

\*\* This system is inspired by:

- the #MeToo movement
- A Manifesto for Radical Masculinity,<sup>104</sup> describes a masculinity that is powerful yet not oppressive.
- The Masks We Live In,<sup>105</sup> a film about masculine people reckoning with their masculinity.
- The Opposite of Rape Culture is Nurturance Culture<sup>106</sup>, Nora Samaran's viral essay about masculine people disrupting rape culture.
- Excommunicate Me From the Church of Social Justice,<sup>107</sup> an essay that describes the ways in which social justice culture replicates dogmatic behaviors.

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<sup>104</sup> Sexsmith, Sinclair. "A Manifesto for Radical Masculinity." Feminist Philosophers, December 9, 2009. <https://feministphilosophers.wordpress.com/2009/12/09/a-manifesto-for-radical-masculinity/>.

<sup>105</sup> "The Mask You Live In - A Film From The Representation Project." The Representation Project. Accessed April 26, 2020. <http://therepresentationproject.org/film/the-mask-you-live-in-film/>.

<sup>106</sup> Samaran, Nora. "The Opposite of Rape Culture Is Nurturance Culture." Dating Tips for the Feminist Man, December 11, 2019. <https://norasamaran.com/2016/02/11/the-opposite-of-rape-culture-is-nurturance-culture-2/>.

<sup>107</sup> Lee, Frances. 2017. "Excommunicate Me from the Church of Social Justice." Autostraddle. July 17, 2017.

- Reflections on Enabling in Queer Culture,<sup>108</sup> validation is not the only valid method of support.

If you are a content-creator, artist, and/or healer of some kind who would like to contribute to radicalmascs\* in some way, please send a message with a description of your work and some of the ways you would like to participate.

“brave space” not safe space

Radicalmasc Peer Support:

A space for folks with any past/present/future masculinity, to support each other to heal and grow

“The opposite of masculine rape culture is masculine nurturance culture: [people with masculinity] increasing their capacity to nurture, and becoming whole.”<sup>109</sup>

- Nora Samaran

This is where theorizing about being heart open and accountable meets practice--. this is where we cultivate nurturance culture.

We support each other by:

- Sharing our vulnerable stories
- listening with open hearts
- encouraging each other to grow

Pay what you crave:

This payment system is based on the idea that if we are entering into exchange with each other based on clear communication and healthy cravings that we have cultivated; we can achieve balance.

Part of this work is to re-calibrate our cravings so that we are mutually supporting each other.

Masculine people are trained to receive unreciprocated emotional labor.

Membership in the group is offered sliding scale with a suggested \$20/month.

But no one will be turned away for lack of funds.

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<sup>108</sup> Sintrayda. “Reflections on Enabling in Queer Culture.” Who will walk these wooden streets? December 7, 2017. <https://sintrayda.tumblr.com/post/168290415968/reflections-on-enabling-in-queer-culture>.

<sup>109</sup> Samaran, Nora. “The Opposite of Rape Culture Is Nurturance Culture.” Dating Tips for the Feminist Man, December 11, 2019.

Part of mutual support is to meet each other where we're at. So if you are unable to afford the suggested \$20/month, please choose an amount that works for you. You can return the support by participating in the group and by sharing my work.

Community Agreements:

“I don't want to listen just actively, but also mindfully, compassionately, critically, lovingly. And i want to be listened to in those ways by my friends and family. I have come to believe that support, or at least the kind that comes from long-term relationships between loved ones, is not only validation, but also grounding. Containment. authenticity. willingness to enter the space of conflict and the knowledge that we will also emerge from it.”<sup>110</sup>

- Sintrayda

We listen:

- Mindfully
- Compassionately
- Critically
- Lovingly

Mindful Communication: we notice context, content and methods of communication. Who is here, what is being said, how are we showing up? We notice community agreements. We notice what is coming up in our body.

Compassionate communication: we hold that people are strong. We also tend to ourselves- we take space when we need to

Critical Communication: we examine what's being said. Hold it up against different ethical frameworks, including our guts. We start dialogues. We unpack things that come up.

Loving Communication: we hold that other

We speak:

- From our own experience

We grow:

- By unlearning
- Asking questions
- Sharing stories/ideas/resources

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<sup>110</sup> Sintrayda. “Reflections on Enabling in Queer Culture.” Who will walk these wooden streets? December 7, 2017. <https://sintrayda.tumblr.com/post/168290415968/reflections-on-enabling-in-queer-culture>.

- Processing emotions
- Re-writing patterns
- Becoming accountability buddies

In conflict we:

- Don't call-in/out. We call-to:
- Instead of focusing on the person who did something, we focus on the topic

Not safe space, brave space.

- "Assume good intentions, and attend to impact."<sup>111</sup>
- FatFeministWitch

§ 39

Looking at Deadlines

I've been reflecting on timing. In some ways I was too late to publish this work and contribute meaningfully to the public dialogue on #StreetHarassment. And in some ways I was too early when I told my own public #MeToo story, two years before it became a movement.

In a post-Weinstein climate, I wonder if my story would have been heard differently if I waited a couple years. The public imaginary has been primed to hear these stories now.

These stories teach a protocol of right and wrong ways to hear a sexual assault story. They're teaching people how to be a receptive audience. How to see each other's stories without repressing the information and moving one with the day.

This kind of seeing is preventing people from falling through the cracks

It never seems like the right time to share bad news. And these stories are felt as bad news. They are traumatic to tell, and traumatic to hear.<sup>112</sup>

But when we integrate information that is challenging to our current reality it becomes revolutionary<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> TheFatFeministWitch. "Interview with Andi Grace." The Fat Feminist Witch, November 27, 2017. <https://thefatfeministwitch.com/2017/05/04/interview-with-andi-grace/>.

<sup>112</sup> It has also been somewhat traumatic for me to write about.

however, shifting to the rubric of: 1) asking questions, instead of seeking answers, 2) finding realistic hope somehow, 3) engaging more perspectives than just my own into this discourse, 4) using auto-ethnography to discuss my own experience with the topic of: traumatic gaze(s)... I have found the process healing to my own personal story and how I talk about and see myself. it has been narrative therapy.

<sup>113</sup> Nietzsche's "free spirit" would inflict a helpful wound on society by offering up information that would force outdated data to be flushed and for healing and new integration to happen around the site of old ideology.

The timing around this story has been a challenge for me.  
 I'm doing a social critique from a personal place.  
 I've needed to step away and take breaks and come back with a different perspective.  
 This is why I have written about this somewhat chronologically  
 Somewhat linearly  
 So that you can see my voice and perspective change.  
 I have felt moved more than once on the position of what tone/framing feels right to use on this material.

I felt very confused when I saw the #MeToo controversy erupt at my university.  
 A professor in my Department was called out by a student.  
 A famous Canadian author weighed in.  
 The #MeToo conversation played out  
 In some expected ways and some unexpected ways  
 And I don't feel able to write about it  
 It needs to stay redacted  
 But I will say that it impacted my ability to sit down to this story for a few months.

§ 40

Looking at failure: Is this a Thesis?

Rae Spoon's<sup>114</sup> gender retirement is an empowered, intentional failure.

“To me gender retirement is the refusal to identify myself within the gender binary.”<sup>115</sup>

- Rae Spoon

My original intention with this project was to make a performative argument that the way we look matters, with a focus on how queers are looked at in public, using footage of queers getting glared at as proof. I ended up becoming part of my own performance when I made a call-out that wasn't received in the way I would have liked, which hurt, proving again that the way we look matters. This time with a focus on what it's like to be witnessed by queers.

if we gawk  
 if we only look  
 if we look briefly only to return to texting  
 if we look over and over again but say nothing  
 if we look and then say something, but not about the thing we're looking at  
 if we look and say something about what we see but somehow in putting words to it, we miss the mark so terribly and reveal that we don't actually care, not in the way we need to

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<sup>114</sup> Another person who prefers lower case letters.

<sup>115</sup> Spoon, Rae. *Gender Failure*, (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press. 2014), 249



In investigating “looking,” I realized a kind of obvious corny thing which is that we all crave witnesses to our truths, to some degree. Our painful truths, our exciting truths, our weird and boring truths.

I realized in collecting this footage that everyone can be looked at like this. I wasn’t looked at with disgust until I held a whiteboard reading “I have a vagina,”



Figure 19: I have a Vagina.

And then again when I held a cardboard sign quoting my rapist.

Fundamentally, having unsympathetic eyes on us hurts. Glaring hurts. I think it hurts anyone who is aware it is happening, because I believe we are pack animals who thrive with healthy connections and feel pain in strained hostile relationships.

In showing people how easily queers are gawked at I hope I made a point that those who aren't looked at like this all the time should have some sympathy for what it must be like to live under a gauntlet of that kind of harshness,

squinting eyes,  
tight lips,  
shoulders  
and heart turned away



Figure 20: Looking at the bus stop.

But in processing this I realized that I don't need to prove that glaring in and of itself hurts, because everyone has been on the receiving end of that kind of coldness at some point. And I realized that although queers are very literate in naming when they have been viewed in a way that's not ok, that doesn't mean that all queers are automatically experts at witnessing people. Some queers develop amazing resilience strategies in response to their trauma/oppression that has them being very emotionally intelligent, powerful yet kind in their ways of relating to others.

Some don't.

And I realized, as I am healing<sup>116</sup> my PTSD, that we all look like this too. I started to recover memories of times I hadn't looked at people kindly. When I had held them with harshness, with black/white eyes.

It helped me remember why people do that.

I think it's fear mostly.

So witnessing, I think, is something we're all craving and we're all learning at.

This has been an exposure therapy and my voice is coming back.

~

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<sup>116</sup> It might always be an "ing."  
it certainly isn't an "ed."

### Part 3: The Way We *Talk* About the Way We Look Matters

§ 41

Feedback:

My advisors think I need more:

- 1) Hope
- 2) Questions
- 3) Existentialism

Hope:

Maybe I've taken on an armored approach that is painful for my audience. I wonder if anyone really needs another instructive listicle. When I ask myself why I included a listicle in here, the answer that comes to me is -Because You Needed To Say It- I needed to be able to delineate harm and wrongful action. And now that I have, I want to talk about something else. And I want to talk differently. I want to let go of some significant resentment and cultivate hope.

“[crafting alternative futures where we don't have to fight each other for resources and care] might mean checking in with myself about how I have let my heart grow hard.”<sup>117</sup>

- Frances Lee

Questions:

In a piece that's been supposed to be focused on questions rather than answers... I lapsed into dictums....

Ironically, my only question was - will you “join us?”-  
Was I accidentally trying to start a cult?

When you focus on answers  
it can lead to culty-ness.

Is this what happens at the extreme end of the spectrum when we switch from asking questions to fighting for answers?

We start getting dogmatic?

We want to start a group for our teachings?

I was given a book on religious masculinity because I think the person who gave it to me thought I could use some help

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<sup>117</sup> Lee, Frances. 2017. “Excommunicate Me from the Church of Social Justice.” Autostraddle. July 17, 2017. <https://www.autostraddle.com/kin-aesthetics-excommunicate-me-from-the-church-of-social-justice-386640/>. Frances Lee, Excommunicate me from the Church of Social Justice

It said things like:

“...a man wants to be the hero to the beauty...”  
- John Eldredge

and

“This is every man’s deepest fear” to be exposed, to be found out, to be discovered as an imposter, and not really a man.”<sup>118</sup>  
- John Eldredge

I remember laughing because I thought that I was taking a much more evolved approach to gender but, with an answer heavy approach, it could come across like I’m basically saying that:

all queers are hurt  
and all hurt people hurt people

and all gays hate the queers

and all bisexual people are confused

and all normy people oppress the entire LGBTQ community

and I’m not trying to say that

But maybe I’m not as far away from the religious way of relating to gender as I would like. Maybe I need to work harder at asking questions about gender.

Existentialism:

Existentialists have been reckoning with how we see ourselves since WWII.

Hitler gave the world an existential crisis

and many thinkers had quite a bit to ponder after that.

Let’s look more into some of the core issues surrounding how humanity views itself.

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<sup>118</sup> Eldredge, John. *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man’s Soul*. Nelson Incorporated, Thomas, 2011.

§ 43

“The Look:”

“Looking” in Existentialism.

Existentialists have been saying that “looking” matters for a long time.

### **Sartre’s “Look”**

we cannot see the other as our self  
that’s projecting

when we stare at another,  
it is easy to reduce them to an object

and yet,  
if we say the other is unknowable,  
we cannot connect<sup>119</sup>

### **Merleau Ponty’s “Phenomenology of Perception”**

we sense each other  
we project meanings onto each other  
as we project  
we forget that we are even looking  
and we believe the projections  
so we need to reinterpret our perceptions  
we must look at how we look<sup>120</sup>

### **Simone de Beauvoir’s “Other”**

when we see women as secondary  
we make them less than  
less knowable  
less relatable  
less human

other

we cannot see people as secondary  
we must learn to see everyone as having  
agency

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<sup>119</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul. 2003. *Being And Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology*. Routledge.

<sup>120</sup> Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 2018. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Nevada: Franklin Classics.

and value<sup>121</sup>

§ 44

What about the magic<sup>122</sup> of Liminal Bridge-work?<sup>123</sup>:

Letting go. Moving on. Shifting the vibe?



Figure 21: Hope and Drag Queens.

“Stop for a minute or two - take a breath with the land beneath you, breathe in the sky above you, and deeply breathe with the rhythm of the seas that surround the shores of your land. Imagine a bridge that crosses a stream or a river; this is the epitome of liminal space, neither on ground nor in the air, not on earth nor water. It is betwixt and between. In your vision it is midnight; sense a silence that sings of magic. Feel the particles of water that rise from the river below, and glance down at its inky blackness, flickers of starlight glittering on its surface. What does it mean to be liminal? Why is this essential for magic? Standing at the center of the bridge, look to your right. This is the world of ordinariness, or word and cars, obligations and bills. Now glance to the left; soft grass and the whispers of aspen sing the songs of the lands of magic. The expanse between is crossed by the bridge of liminality.

<sup>121</sup> Beauvoir, Simone de, Constance Borde, and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. 2015. *The Second Sex*. London: Vintage Books.

<sup>122</sup> Hughes, Kristoffer. 2014. *The Book of Celtic Magic: Transformative Teachings from the Cauldron of Awen*. Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Publications), 31.

According to Hughes, in Celtic Druid tradition, to do magic, I must “clarify, state, and maintain my intent.” this has been a powerful mantra for my healing. it helps to be de-escalate out of a triggered, activated state, and find a quiet focus.

<sup>123</sup> “Liminality--from the Greek limen, meaning “threshold”--brings a subtle power to the magic by utilizing the subtle forces that linger between the seen and unseen, apartment and unapparent. Liminal places, times and spaces are effective tools that ready the mind for magic and serve as a conduit for projection of will and desire. when we move into liminal space or time, the world may feel slightly different--and most importantly, so will the magician.” (10). I wonder about the power of spending time in liminal space, the “betwixt and between”, to heal the black/white, traumatized ways of seeing the world.

feel, sense, and be here now. With a deep breath and loud sigh, arise from your vision and record your thoughts in your journal.”<sup>124</sup>

- Kristoffer Hughes

§ 45

Looking at Recovery:

See Me! A Drag Queen Inspired Ritual.

“Intimacy is the feeling that comes from revealing our inner self to be actively witnessed by another.”<sup>125</sup>

- Justice Schanfarber

I'm thinking about wearing eye makeup again.

When I go to do it, I get a little dissociated and procrastinate-y

Butterflies in my belly

I just moved to a small town.

I know I would get looks at the check-out if I was wearing stubble, plaid & eyeliner.

Drag queens are brave.

Not boys-don't-cry brave.

Vulnerability-as-a-strength brave

The vulnerability vs bravery binary  
haunts most people with masculinity, I think.

I feel like I'm constantly calibrating my vulnerability.

My heart & throat say:

I want to express myself!

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<sup>124</sup> Hughes, Kristoffer. *The Book of Celtic Magic: Transformative Teachings from the Cauldron of Awen* (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2014), 35.

<sup>125</sup> Schanfarber Justice, “The Re-Connection Handbook for Couples - The Book by Justice Schanfarber.” Justice Schanfarber Counselling - Relationships, Sex, Intimacy. Accessed April 28, 2020. <https://www.justiceschanfarber.com/the-re-connection-handbook-for-couples/>.

And my head says:

but... how much?

When ?

With who?

§ 46

Asking to be Seen:

More Reflections on Drag Queens:

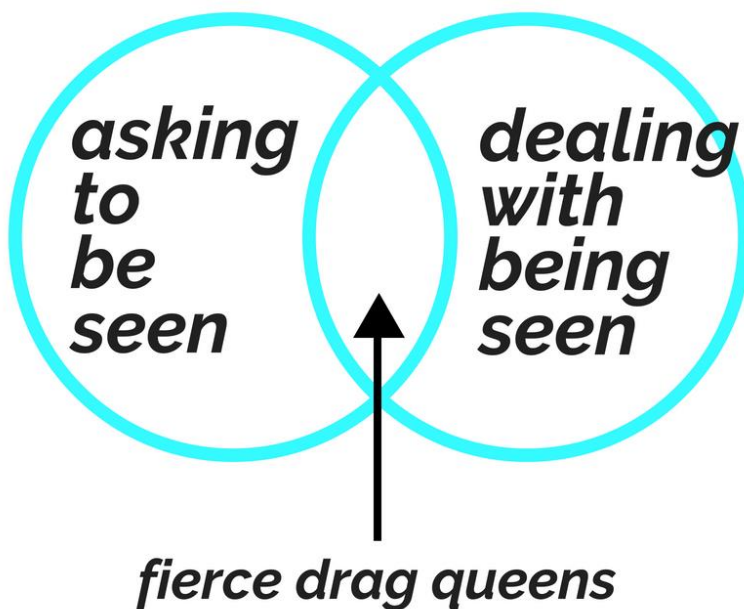


Figure 22: Asking to be seen/dealing with being seen.

Drag queens use: dance, makeup, sewing, design, comedy, improv, and character-work in their art.

When the queens on RuPaul's Drag Race aren't performing to their fullest, RuPaul asks them why they're standing in the way of their own growth. He encourages them to ask themselves if they are being motivated by love, or fear.

Drag appears, to me, to be shadow-work.<sup>126</sup> Interdisciplinary boot camp.

<sup>126</sup> A common phrase in pop-culture/pop-psychology inspired by the Carl Jung's "shadow"- our subconscious aspect. So shadow-work is based on a non-binary premise that excavating what has



I don't agree with all of RuPaul's choices.

Some of them have offended members of various communities, including myself.

And at the same time watching this ridiculous, flawed, drag-queen-reality-show has brought me the most laughter & hope of all the things I've used to treat my PTSD & apocalypse anxiety.

\  
In a recent challenge, the queens were asked to embody their 'inner saboteur.'

Sometimes I struggle with self-sabotage.

When things feel great, I can rock the boat just to test if it'll stay afloat.

Me and my partner refer to the escalated version of this as drilling holes in the boat.

On the Gemini New Moon I did a ritual for my inner saboteur

“In Celtic spirituality, bridge rituals are a practice in liminality. Between times. Past/future. Letting go of/calling in.”<sup>127</sup>

- Kristoffer Hughes

My inner saboteur says:

You don't know how to talk about vulnerability in the right most perfect vulnerable way

So we drove to a river with a bridge

We found a place for our cauldron in a circle of rocks nearby while our dogs bounded around playing tag

I burned a piece of writing that reminded me of feeling misunderstood and unseen

And I asked the fire to see me

And help me look at the grief that's been haunting me

The “empty chairs and empty tables” of what could have been

And asked the fire to help me let go of the fear of being judged

Then I wrote the word 'hope' on a stone.

---

been polarized in the psyche and integrating it onto more of a spectrum of consciousness, rather than a dark repressed shadow area of forgetting.

<sup>127</sup> Hughes, Kristoffer. 2014. *The Book of Celtic Magic: Transformative Teachings from the Cauldron of Awen*. Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Publications.



Figure 23: Hope Stone .Gif.

And asked the stone to safely hold my craving to connect with people who want to hear my stories

Then we walked to the middle of the bridge

And I threw the ashes over the side where I could imagine them being carried away and softened along the stones and around the bends.

And I threw the hope-stone off the other side of the bridge, where I could see another bridge upstream made from older wood, with more moss, that made me want to walk along it and explore.

I asked the river to wash away my paralyzing fear

to soothe the parts of me that brace for impact

I want to make room for communication that feels connective

I want mutual bridge-building.

§ 47

Dealing with Being Seen:

In season 10 of “Drag Race,” Monet x Change made an iconic dress out of kitchen sponges. The judges didn’t share Monet’s enthusiasm, and that tension became a source of teasing from the other queens and people online.



The moment her elimination-episode finished airing, Monet launched a music video called “Soak it Up”<sup>128</sup> where she spends a significant amount of time being lavished by boys in ‘kitchen sponge’ green/yellow singlets while she sings about saying No to the wrong feedback.

Hope is sassy in the universe of this sponge-song.

Do I want a sponge-song kind of hope

Figure 24: Sponge Dress.



Figure 25: Sponge Song.

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<sup>128</sup>Monet x Change, “Soak it Up,” YouTube video, 4:55, May 24 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hq1ijbMabsM>.

§ 48

Looking at Hope:

“What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more' ... Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: 'You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.’”<sup>129</sup>

- Friedrich Nietzsche



Figure 26: Hope in Port Alice.

§ 49

My Middle Name is Hope:

And I'm being faced with the kind of ironic situation of having my academic advisor explain to me (kindly) that my project needs more hope.

Part of me felt very misunderstood by this prognosis.

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<sup>129</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, and Walter Arnold Kaufmann. *The Gay Science with a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* (Brantford, Ontario: W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library, 2017), 72.

This is a controversial quote from Nietzsche's *Gay Science*, similar in controversy to his quote about the abyss, where people can have an initial impression that this is about something dark and destructive. I like the interpretation that this aphorism is an encouragement to do what brings you joy in life, find a way to light your spark of passion in what you do, as if you had to do whatever it is you end up choosing for the rest of your life; so find a way to be so passionate about how you're living your life that even repetition and monotony cannot kill your joy.

But I can't really argue with it. I've spent a bunch of time here talking about my PTSD, my frustration with traditional academic publishing styles, and my disillusionment with rape culture at large but especially within queer community and my sense of let down with the #MeToo movement -- part of me thought Twitter was going to be able to fix it all.

I don't want to spend years crafting an alienating piece of writing that sort of feels like a suicide note. Truly I don't.



Figure 27: Sheep/dog/cat.

I know I've been gnashing my teeth on hope here.

I haven't been doing hope yet.

And I don't want to make my own trauma a specimen of examination and force it into a certain kind of cleanliness so that I can call it auto-ethnography. But I get that there is a certain tone of teenage-diary-feeling-sorry-for-myself that can make writing unreadable.

So I'm going to meditate a bit on hope here,  
and try to think of some things that I do know about hope...

Hope doesn't need to be contingent on whether or not humans make it to Mars.

And it doesn't need to be resting on the idea that humans can band together in groups that can actually function without self-imploding

And it doesn't need to be rooted in receiving approval from a God, or an academic institution, or a medical professional.

Hope doesn't need to be human-centric



130

Figure 28: More Sheep/Dog/Cat.

The most reliably healing experiences I've had in the last 3 years have been with animals. I feel hope when I see interspecies animal friendships.

Actually, it goes back further than that for me  
This was me as a child.



Figure 29: Kid Me and Kid Goat.

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<sup>130</sup> Pictures from the farm I worked at in Alberta. My favorite moments were watching the different kinds of animals play together. Something about the trust and communication that it must take for animals of a different species to play. It heals me to look at. I think It produces a cognitive dissonance that disturbs an anxious thought pattern I can get lost in- that the world is full of danger. For these animals to cuddle and play they need to suspend that fight or flight and drop into a more relaxed state, a state they can yes/and, they can riff off of each other. they can bridge build. they can be understood. they can be seen.

I feel hope when I connect to these pictures.

I almost died during surgery getting my ovaries removed.

My Mom was downstairs in the hospital, walking around in the lobby, not knowing what to do, but she saw a book about Unlikely Animal Friendships, and she got it for me because she knew I loved animals.

I read the book for a whole week in the hospital, hopped up on morphine.

My Mom would sometimes push my morphine- dispensing button while I was asleep.  
That's a love language.

So I guess animals have been a sign of healing for me for a while.

And at times when I felt like I could trust no one,  
I was able to reach out to animals.

“A lot of what animals see normal people see, too, but normal people don't know they're seeing it. Instead, a normal person's brain uses the detailed raw data of the world to for a generalized concept or schema, and that's what reaches consciousness. Fifty shades of brown turn into just one unified color: brown. That's why normal people see only what they expect to see--because they can't consciously experience the raw data, only the schema their brains create out of the raw data.”<sup>131</sup>

- Temple Grandin

“A gut feeling tells me that at the very least we have severely underestimated the capacity of our fellow creatures to communicate”<sup>132</sup>

- Peter Wohlleben

I think the hope that we can feel with animals when we've experienced profound trauma might be one of the premises behind animal therapy. I've heard a lot of people say good things about equine therapy.

Forget to forgive?  
Forget to feel hope again?

I think that forgetting is at the basis<sup>133</sup> of maintaining “the faith” in fundamental cultures.

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<sup>131</sup> Grandin, Temple. *Animals in Translation*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 65.

<sup>132</sup> Wohlleben, Peter. *The Inner Life of Animals: Love, Grief, and Compassion- Surprising Observations of a Hidden World*, (Greystone Books, 2019), 238.

<sup>133</sup> Necessary condition: X must be present for Y to occur.

I can remember being at one of the corrective church camps I was sent to when I was young and I remember the question of faith coming up a lot.

And most times when a kid would have an example of a lived experience that didn't lend itself very well to the dictums (and the world view they were attempting to indoctrinate us into).

They were encouraged to think of other things.

Distractions.

Look over here at those people who turned into pillars of salt because they didn't believe.

I want to move on without forgetting.

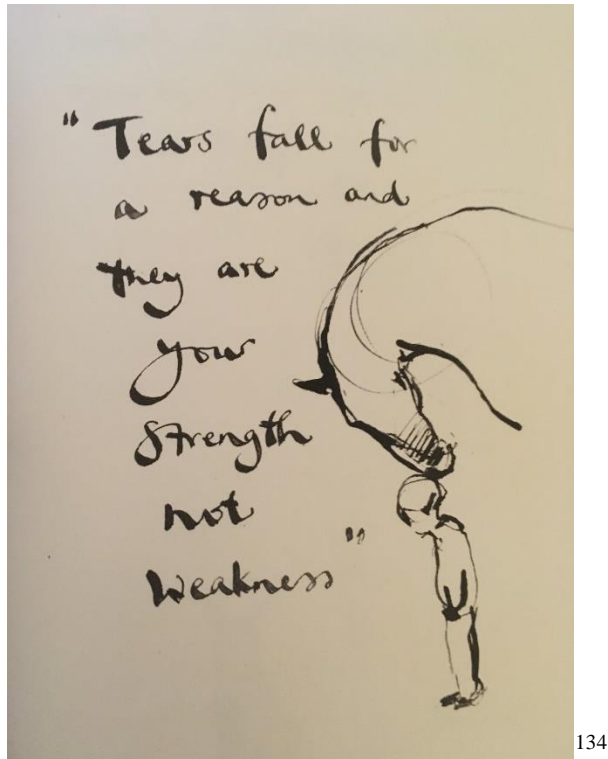


Figure 30: Tears are strength.

§ 50

Dear Carl,<sup>135</sup>

It has taken me a long time to know what I want to say to you and I'm realizing that I've had a lot of emotions to work through before my voice was ready for this conversation. There have been times, in this process, where my voice has been all about myself, and my own recovery process. It's taken a lot of healing to get to the point where I can reach out in lightness again.

<sup>134</sup> Mackesy, Charlie. 2019. *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*. London: Ebury Press.

<sup>135</sup> I will always be grateful for how you helped me see the poetry in my trauma.

and so I got to experience the healing nature of poetry first hand.

Auto-ethnography/poetry/trauma-work. Trauma Poetry. The intentional gaps, and intentional filling of gaps. Wandering integration.

Un-spelling Trauma.



I feel that a letter that I send to you in the afterlife needs to have poetry.

First, thank you.

I especially thank you for the time you invited me to do an interpretive dance, inspired by Nietzsche's Eternal Return, with you and April and Celeste in front of the Archeology building at UBC.

We took turns, witnessing each other, we closed our eyes while we danced around while the other watched supportively.

While there is no record  
of what happened  
next except in memory  
I am still filled with  
angst anger hurt horror

I twirled lurched hunched squat  
in the meadow  
and a wound opened  
up in my memory  
like a wide hole that won't heal

My body remembered  
what i didn't know it knew  
(family stories secrets scandals)  
but when i opened my eyes  
the meadow was the same

Logan, Celeste, and April were the same,  
and I was the same, too, except  
I had died in the meadow  
behind the museum  
with its stored memories

Each day is now  
new birth where  
the past is the same  
but distinctly different, seen  
through holes of difference.<sup>136</sup>

- Carl Leggo

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<sup>136</sup> Leggo Carl, "The Eternal Return" (unpublished poem, April 2014), typescript.

I felt ridiculous. The only thing I felt able to do on campus with my eyes closed while “dancing” was flail my arms around- somewhat symbolic of how I felt walking around regularly on campus I suppose.<sup>137</sup>

When it was your turn you walked, and pondered, and giggled, and I was surprised to see you punching the air, and I was completely touched when you told me about the anger coming through.

I thought I was signing up for an interesting afternoon when I said yes to this, but I had no idea that I’d be looking back on that moment as a touchstone of powerful, vulnerable masculinity. To just let yourself be, and feel, and do, not hurting anyone, but expressing, blindly yet within sight of so many others--passers-by, in a rush to get to a lecture, people looking out of office windows, and not dancing on the front lawn. you let yourself be seen.

“Those who are seen dancing, are thought to be mad<sup>138</sup>  
by those who cannot hear the music”<sup>139</sup>

- Unknown

But your openness to let yourself feel and see new things let you dance on the manicured lawn, and cry on that lawn as we debriefed, and let yourself see me and see my story -which holds some unique intersectional trauma- when I might have thought no white straight man your age could.

When you ask people to write with you, it’s like being invited to dance like that. You create a space where people can let their most absurd and personal stuff become public. And I will always hold that lesson in my heart.

That’s why I trusted your voice when you said that I had lost hope and your capacity to dance and laugh has been a continuous inspiration for me to conjure it back.

You didn’t have to be someone who can see across your culture.

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<sup>137</sup> Mackesy, Charlie. 2019. *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*. London: Ebury Press.

<sup>138</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2009) xxi

“The constitution of madness as a mental illness, at the end of the eighteenth century, affords the evidence of a broken dialogue, posits the separation as already effected, and thrusts into oblivion all those stammered, imperfect words without fixed syntax in which the exchange between madness and reason was made.”

- Michel Foucault

So, dancing with our words can also be read as madness can poetry, dancing, and madness un-spell “rigor mortis?”

<sup>139</sup> This has been one of my favorite quotes for years. And it’s often not sited, or incorrectly sited as a Nietzsche quote. The source unknown.

And I respect the hell out of your decision to live that way.

I hope you're drinking and laughing and commiserating in a Newfoundland-esque Poet's Valhalla and hanging out in liminal space, inspiring young writers.

Appreciating you,

Poetically,

- L

“We are capable of creating a culture that is committed to healing on a cellular level, that encourages us to experiment with reaching out, making contact both physically and emotionally.”<sup>140</sup>

- Kai Cheng Thom

§ 51

Looking at Gratitude:

(And how it relates to hope, which relates to healing PTSD, which relates to healing a wounded voice)

When I let myself see the things I'm grateful for in this story,  
I see that the story isn't just filled with shit.

I'm grateful to have lived through something unique.  
It's been, if nothing else, interesting to tell and sift through.

The process of writing about my story has helped me to appreciate an artistic aspect to the tensions around my trauma. It's helped me consider more perspectives on my trauma too, which helps to move out of the fixed trains of thought that trauma can encourage. Thinking about an audience to our trauma is so interesting. A productive audience, because there is often an audience to trauma and this isn't always productive (bystander effect).

And so I'm wiring my brain and beginning to believe that if good things also happened here in all of this, then good things will probably happen again.

So it isn't all shit.

Even though it was hard.

So hard.

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<sup>140</sup> Thom, Kai Cheng. 2019. “Why Are Queer People so Mean to Each Other?” *Xtra Magazine*. August 16, 2019. <https://www.dailyxtra.com/why-are-queer-people-so-mean-to-each-other-160978>.



Figure 31: What do we do when our hearts hurt?

## § 52

### A Look Back at my Process:

I wrote most of the foreground text in the order that it came in trusting that there is a logic in that.

It involves repeating and connecting similar points at different stages of the piece but there is a continuity in the sense that the vibe, the aesthetic, the approach, the methodology of the beginning of the piece is different from the end of the piece. It changes throughout. My capacity to deal with the logical came first.

Then I sorted through the old footage from the previous version of this project.

Sometimes I would shake for days after opening my computer and not be able to even think about this story again during that time without shaking worse.

Sometimes it feels like having a huge dump in the sense that I feel a million pounds lighter after interacting with some aspect of this story.

This story has been my longest serious relationship outside of my blood family. We've broken up a few times. And I've come back broken to it.

Sometimes when I interact with it feels like massaging dough. I can feel the ingredients integrating.

<sup>141</sup> Mackesy, Charlie. 2019. *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*. London: Ebury Press.

§ 53

Thank you for reading this:

Thank you for witnessing me in this process.

I truly love the practice of combining ideas and methods in one conversation. So it's been a treat to get to do that here. I feel so appreciative of interdisciplinarity. It's given a validity to a way of communicating that was on the brink of being academically shamed out of me. It's helping me un-colonize my voice.

I can't close all of the loops I began in this piece. I want this to be a launching-off point. A conversation starter. I'd like to see other people write in response to gaps that I've left here, like Easter eggs. That is a writing methodology that I want to stand behind, and treat it as though it's intentional, and not a mistake. It's a type of conscientization<sup>142</sup> to encourage your audience to participate in your piece. So I haven't made this a color-by-number exercise, or a completely finished painting. I hope it feels like I've built part of a bridge into an exciting conversation, and I hope you want to return the gesture.

§ 54

Looking at Kindness:

“seeking composure and repose  
without imposing, always afraid  
of disposing and decomposing,  
constantly proposing and supposing  
the fecundity of composting.”<sup>143</sup>

- Carl Leggo

“I want to spend less time antagonizing and more time crafting alternative futures where we don't have to fight each other for resources and care.”<sup>144</sup>

- Francis Lee

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<sup>142</sup> Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 46. Freire's non-dualist, socialist methodology involves engaging with students in dialogue where everybody's' ideas are valued.

<sup>143</sup> Leggo, Carl. 2002. “Writing as Living Compos(t)Ting: Poetry and Desire.” (*Language and Literacy*, <https://doi.org/10.20360/g2k59w>. 2002), 1.

<sup>144</sup> Lee, Frances. 2017. “Excommunicate Me from the Church of Social Justice.” Autostraddle. July 17, 2017. <https://www.autostraddle.com/kin-aesthetics-excommunicate-me-from-the-church-of-social-justice-386640/>.

I wanted to come back to kindness in the end. It seemed like the unkindness was the worst part of the glances we caught on camera.

It was unkindness that hurt the most when I felt neglected by bystander effect after I came out about being assaulted.

And it's been kindness that's helped me heal my PTSD (Not over. Not fully healed. It's still a process)

The belief that the bad things won't necessarily happen again.

And the hope that kind things will happen again.

My friend reached out and asked me to send him a picture of the story where he was written about.

I'm going to send it.

I don't want to scratch at scabs that will heal if they're left well enough alone

And I also don't want to leave something to fester.

Sometimes shining the light of day on something dusty helps disinfect and get the shame out.

“In my first somatics course, the teacher spoke to us about co-regulation: the ability of our bodies' nervous systems to gradually become attuned to one another. She likened this to a group of fireflies coming together in the night: their flashing bioluminescence starts off random and asynchronous, but the more time they spend together, the more their flashes coalesce around a shared rhythm.

- Kai Cheng Thom

This is us: we are each so powerful, so brilliant, so capable of individual, fierce resilience. We are also capable of harmony, of coming together to form a single bright light. We have the ability to love one another, deeply and securely. And we are capable of imagining a world, of bringing a world into being, where we do not have to kill each other to survive.”<sup>145</sup>

- Kai Cheng Thom

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<sup>145</sup> Thom, Kai Cheng. 2019. “Why Are Queer People so Mean to Each Other?” *Xtra Magazine*. August 16, 2019. <https://www.dailyxtra.com/why-are-queer-people-so-mean-to-each-other-160978>.



Figure 32: Kind(er) Gaze.

§ 55

a Kind(er) Gaze<sup>146</sup>

How else can we look at each other?

hope + questions = kind(er) gaze

Here's an image of straight and gay people looking warmly at each other.<sup>147</sup>

I want to balance out the possibility of being scowled at with the possibility of being smiled at. If we let ourselves see only danger and only potential scowls, we succumb to black and white. Either/or thinking.

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<sup>146</sup> This is a term I thought of when I was trying to add (Realistic) Hope to Looking. Like an equation.

(Realistic) Hope + Looking = Kind(er) Gaze

Not Kind Gaze, an unattainable thing where we behold each other as perfect this is idealization. another kind of black/white thinking

“kind(er)” is like “saf(er) space,” it’s a more realistic, more attainable option.

<sup>147</sup>“Century House Association.” Century House Association. Accessed April 13, 2020.

[https://www.centuryhouseassociation.com/?page\\_id=6040](https://www.centuryhouseassociation.com/?page_id=6040).

I was encouraged by many people to include some kind of positive imagery of people interacting with queer people in a loving way. and when I began this project I couldn’t conceive of putting my time into such a picture. I didn’t see the value in it. At this point I think that it’s critically important to balance out discussions of harsh gaze’s with relation to oppression with instances of love and connection across the intersection that is being critiqued/called-out. If we don’t balance out our critiques we might engage in polarized arguing/thinking/being. leaving room for love doesn’t hurt. It softens the us vs. them binary.

We are deciding that we are either safe in our cloistered queer community - which we are not- or we are in danger out in the rest of the world with “normy” people - which isn’t always the case.

Maybe believing in the possibility of connection across different  
truly difficult bridge-building  
takes a leap of faith  
not a forgetting that you can be eaten

a willingness to take a chance on the possibility that something wonderful might happen.

and the fire inside my chest ignites



Figure 33: One of our greatest freedoms is how we react to things.

“Change begins with the belief that change is possible, when we invite our bodies to entertain the possibility that connection is possible.”<sup>149</sup>

- Kai Cheng Thom

<sup>148</sup> Mackesy, Charlie. 2019. *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*. London: Ebury Press.

<sup>149</sup> Thom, Kai Cheng. 2019. “Why Are Queer People so Mean to Each Other?” *Xtra Magazine*. August 16, 2019. <https://www.dailyxtra.com/why-are-queer-people-so-mean-to-each-other-160978>.



“The poet produces the beautiful by fixing his attention on something real. It is the same with the act of love. To know that this man who is hungry and thirsty really exists as much as I do--that is enough, the rest follows of itself.”<sup>150</sup>

- Jan Zwicky

I remember a time in Carl’s office talking about how it was important to the ethics review process to not only make sure that a project wasn’t harmful to the test subjects, but to also make sure that the project wasn’t harmful to the author itself.<sup>151</sup>

He gave an example of one of his students who was dealing with sensitive material that delved into their childhood trauma where that person’s PTSD was triggered and it wasn’t clear whether the process was in the spirit of healing or whether the person was just being re-traumatized.

It’s occurred to me many times here that I’ve walked a fine line with this project with regards to my own trauma. At this point I can truly say that this has been cathartic. But it has also been extremely painful. My voice is not the same as it was at the beginning of this.

I like the definition of queer” as “different or inverting what is normal.”

I hope I have inverted  
integrated  
and clarified some things here.

Thank you for coming with me on this journey.

In hope & poetry,

- Logan

§ 56

Post-Mortem:

Reflection on Methods:

I think we always need to be careful not to lapse into embodying the qualities of the thing we are critiquing.

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<sup>150</sup> Zwicky, Jan. 2014. *Wisdom & Metaphor*. Edmonton: Brush Education Inc.

<sup>151</sup> In a piece where I’m trying to achieve a kind of form/content integrity,( without aiming for a perfect 1:1 relationship between the way I’m talking and what I’m talking about) it’s been hard to talk about trauma without re-traumatizing myself by dredging through the details. but truly i do feel that this has been cathartic. I’ve been trying to use the rubric of reaching for hope authentically, not cruelly.

Queer social critique + Auto-ethnography = getting into some of my trauma-content.

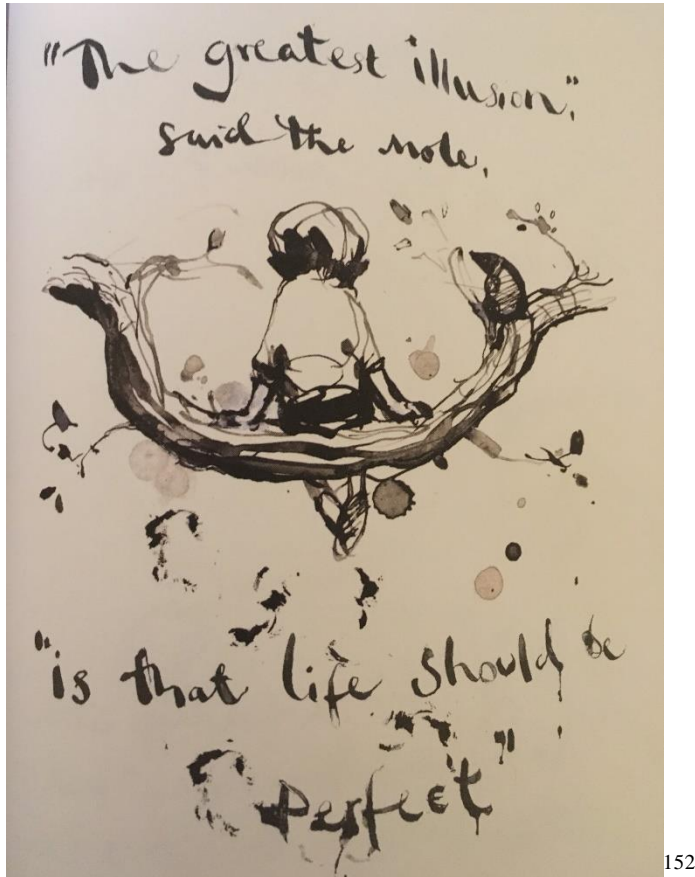


Figure 34: The greatest illusion... is that life should be perfect.

“Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process [they do] not become a monster. And if you gaze long enough into the abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you.”<sup>153</sup>  
 - Friedrich Nietzsche

I’ve seen us become the charismatic leaders who rule through fear and divide and conquer methods. I’ve seen us lapse into “thou shalt”, “should-ing” on each other.  
 I’ve seen us wear the farmer’s clothing many times.

And as I’ve been working on my voice here,  
 I think I’ve lapsed into trying that clothing on  
 the farmer’s  
 the Emperor’s  
 I’ve spouted dictums...

<sup>152</sup> Mackesy, Charlie. 2019. *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*. London: Ebury Press.

<sup>153</sup> Nietzsche Friedrich and Kaufmann Walter. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (New York: Vintage Books. 2011) §146.

It's very hard to talk authentically and powerfully about trauma in a way that is also balanced

Where you don't stare too long into the abyss  
and become a tyrant  
Or other people

Walking that kind of line  
Dancing in that kind of balanced flowing narrative  
Might be what perfect enlightenment is<sup>154</sup>  
An enlightened voice

And since enlightenment isn't something that's all that human<sup>155</sup>  
and I want an auto-ethnography that's authentic in its dealings with this content  
maybe it makes sense for there to be demonstrable imperfections in my voice  
fluctuations in my framing,  
and changes in my tense.<sup>156</sup>

§ 57

Looking at the Tone Shift

I've documented both my politics and my voice changing in this piece.

\* I don't use phrases like "fuck the toxic male gaze" anymore. or even "the toxic male gaze"

\*\* I don't use the phrase "radical masculinity" anymore either.

\*\*\* I actively dislike the term "problematic now, because of overuse Anita association with persecution.

"Art breaks open an open place, in whose  
openness everything is other than usual"<sup>157</sup>

- Martin Heidegger

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<sup>154</sup> Hesse Herman, "Siddhartha," (Random House Publishing Group, 1981).

Hesse's version of Siddhartha didn't become magically powerful until he stopped being so attached to his own enlightenment and started going with the flow.

<sup>155</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, and Reginald John Hollingdale. 1996. *Human, All Too Human*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>156</sup> Mackesy, Charlie. 2019. *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*. London: Ebury Press.

<sup>157</sup> Heidegger, Martin. *The Origin of the Work of Art*. (Waterloo, Ont.: University of Waterloo, 2002) 22.

§ 58

Continued Inspiration:

An author I've been very inspired by recently is Adrienne Maree Brown and her book *Emergent Strategy*.<sup>158</sup>

Instead of critiquing (naming what's wrong) she shares something positive (naming what she would like to aim towards) in community organizing.

And she relies on metaphors as anchor points for her flexible, living, community-oriented rubric of values.

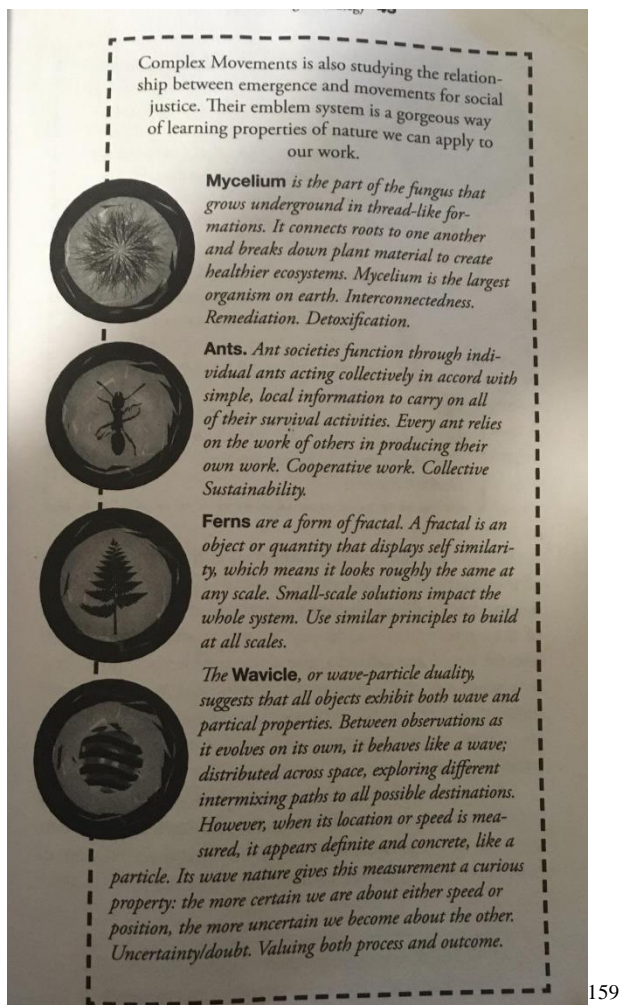


Figure 35: Mycelium, Ants, Ferns, Wavicle.

<sup>158</sup> Brown, Adrienne M. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017.

<sup>159</sup> Brown, Adrienne M. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017), 61.

Mycelium:

We can connect and communicate like a non-linear communal mycelial network.

Ants:

The worker is part of a functioning whole and is valued for their contributions.

Ferns

Smaller groups operate as nodes within a larger network that reflects the reality of the smaller microcosms (opposite of false trickle down).

The Wavicle

Ultimate symbol of non-duality. how can light be both a particle and a wave?

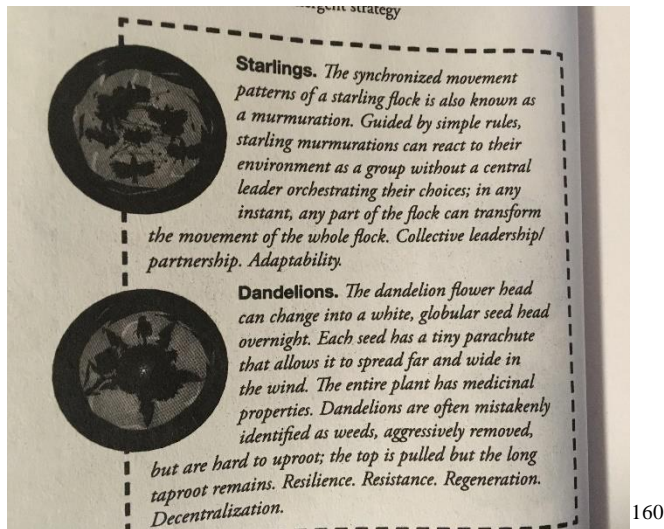


Figure 36: Starlings/Dandelions.

Starlings

A popular metaphor amongst social movement theorists for working and moving as individuals and yet also as a group. Look how it's been taken up in a book that has had fantastic mainstream success. The metaphor works. it crosses both academic and the mainstream the metaphors are multilingual/cross cultural

Dandelions

A symbol of resourcefulness and resilience.

<sup>160</sup> Brown, Adrienne M. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017), 62.

“We have to create futures in which everyone doesn't have to be the same kind of person. that's the problem with most utopias for me: they are presented as a mono value, a new greener more local monoculture where everyone gardens and plays the lute and no one travels.. and I don't want to go there!”<sup>161</sup>

- Adrienne Maree Brown

-

I agree. I don't think it works when we try to come up with one rubric of values, one solution to a political problem, one charismatic leader, or even one group of charismatic leaders. I don't think it's even healthy to keep the same opinion throughout your life!<sup>162</sup>

“...pleasure evokes change--perhaps more than shame. More precisely, where shame makes us freeze and try to get really small and invisible, pleasure invites us to move, to open, to grow.”<sup>163</sup>

- Adrienne Maree Brown

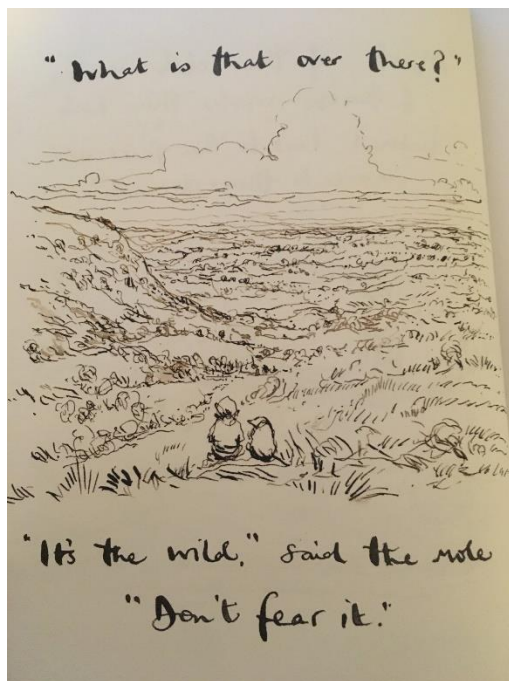


Figure 37: It's the wild.

<sup>161</sup> Brown, Adrienne M. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017), 57.

<sup>162</sup> Or the same voice. or the same politics.

<sup>163</sup> Brown, Adrienne M. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017), 31.

<sup>164</sup> Mackesy, Charlie. 2019. *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*. London: Ebury Press.

The concept of “change” is key for Adrienne Maree Brown. She’s artistically philosophizing about how to effect social change, and she believes that we can do that by emulating more of the systems we already see working in nature, and she feels these systems rely on collaboration and change-- i.e. non-duality and flux.

§ 59

Interspecies Animal Friendship:

A guiding metaphor for effective communication:

If I could add a community-building/communication metaphor to Adrienne Maree Brown’s list, it would be Interspecies Animal Friendships.

Interspecies animal friendships are quite popular as a soothing feel-good image right now. But it’s not a superficial wishy-washy metaphor. It’s popular because it moves people.

If we can make friendships across species  
If we can build that bridge  
Then we can be incredible bridgebuilders

We can heal our fear  
We can fire differently  
And wire differently

“The boy is lonely when the mole first surfaces. They spend time together gazing into the wild. I think the wild is a bit like life- frightening sometimes but beautiful. In their wanderings they meet the fox. It’s never going to be easy meeting a fox if you’re a mole. The boy is full of questions, the mole is greedy for cake. The fox is mainly silent and wary because he’s been hurt by life.”<sup>165</sup>  
- Charlie Mackesy

Their friendship is a fantastic metaphor schema to discuss existential disillusionment and return to hope and connection.

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<sup>165</sup> Mackesy, Charlie. *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* (London: Ebury Press. 2019), 7.

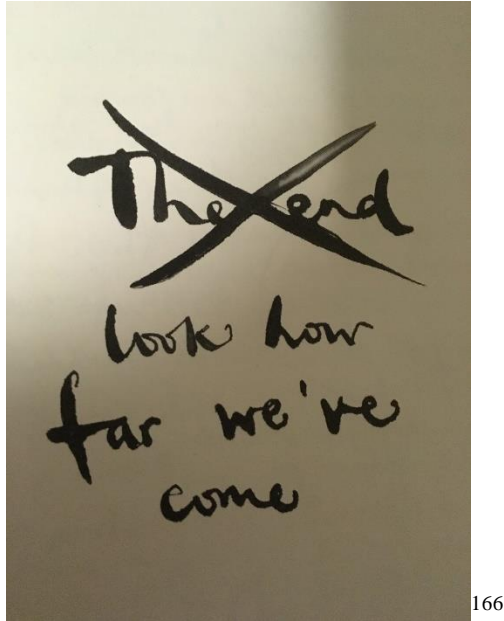


Figure 38: Look how far we've come.

“I can see myself in all four of them [the boy, the mole, the fox, and the horse], perhaps you can too.”<sup>167</sup>

- Charlie Mackesy

The animal friendship metaphor creates a relatable, not-corny, moving platform to discuss: healing, witnessing, belongingness, heartbreak, hope, gratitude and healing.

These are the mediums I want to focus on now:

**metaphors, hope/ gratitude/ healing, liminality, perspectivism, laughter connection.**

§ 60

To Be Continued...

This is a song I've been listening to for years.

Hoppipola<sup>168</sup>

- Sigur Ros

<sup>166</sup> Mackesy, Charlie. 2019. *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*. London: Ebury Press.

<sup>167</sup> Mackesy, Charlie. *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* (London: Ebury Press. 2019), 7.

<sup>168</sup> Mackesy, Charlie. 2019. *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*. London: Ebury Press.



It's sung in a mix of Icelandic and Hopelandic,<sup>169</sup> the band's made up language.

“There is no ending, there's just the place where you stop the story.”<sup>170</sup>

- Frank Herbert

“My poems(in the beginning) are like a table on which one places interesting things one has found on one's walks: a pebble, a rusty nail, a strangely shaped root, the corner of a torn photograph, etc.... where after months of looking at them and thinking about them daily, certain surprising relationships, which hint at meanings, begin to appear.”<sup>171</sup>

- Jan Zwicky

In its essence an interesting poem is an epistemological and metaphysical problem for the poet”<sup>172</sup>

- Jan Zwicky

“...trace the lines for a different genealogy...as the condition of possibility for another way of dwelling in the world”<sup>173</sup>

- Sara Ahmed

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<sup>169</sup> Wikipedia. 2020. “Sigur Rós.” Last modified January 12, 2020.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigur\\_R%C3%B3s](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigur_R%C3%B3s)

“Vonlenska (Eng: Hopelandic) is a term coined by the band to refer to the vocalizations that Jónsi sings on in lieu of lyrics in Icelandic or English.”<sup>[80]</sup>

Vonlenska differs from both natural and constructed languages used for human communication. It consists of strings of meaningless syllables containing non-lexical vocals and phonemes. There is no grammatical relation between or among syllables, nor are they accompanied by clearly defined word boundaries. Vonlenska emphasizes the phonological and emotive qualities of human vocalizations, and it uses the melodic and rhythmic elements of singing without the conceptual content of language. In this way, it is similar to the use of scat singing in vocal jazz and puirt à beul in traditional Scottish and Irish folk music. The band's website describes it as "a form of gibberish vocals that fits to the music".”<sup>[81]</sup>

<sup>170</sup> Frank Herbert. AZQuotes.com, Wind and Fly LTD, 2020.

<https://www.azquotes.com/quote/353152>, accessed April 14, 2020

<sup>171</sup> Zwicky, Jan. 2014. *Wisdom & Metaphor*. Edmonton: Brush Education Inc.

<sup>172</sup> Zwicky, Jan. 2014. *Wisdom & Metaphor*. Edmonton: Brush Education Inc.

<sup>173</sup> Ahmed, Sara. 2007. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. (Durham: Duke University Press), 178.

“I wrote a poem  
because a poem  
always seems  
an apt way to respond”<sup>174</sup>  
- Carl Leggo

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<sup>174</sup> Leggo Carl, "The Eternal Return" (unpublished poem, April 2014), typescript.

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