

no more potlucks

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EDITORIAL

La motivation, c'est l'énergie qui nous anime. Dans ce numéro d'été, juillet - août 2011, on vous invite à réfléchir sur ce concept.

If you haven't already noticed, NMP is free. No need to create an account, no need for a subscription, no password = free.

We scrapped the subscription model - not because it didn't 'work' - but because we wanted it to be an open project. After 2 years we still didn't see how a forced scarcity model benefited anyone, nor how it aligned with our intentions.

That said, I would like to send out a big thank-you to all past subscribers, and ask that anyone willing and able to please continue to donate to NMP - just enough to cover our minimal operation fees. Better yet, support us by buying a hard copy or digital PDF directly from the printer, Lulu. Order it online and the issue will be delivered to your doorstep in a matter of days.

You can now access back issues to reread Mary Bryson's Adventures in Deconstruction from our inaugural issue; you can click through Mariko Tamaki's guest edited issue Mea Culpa; and you can browse through the current issue, all in the same sitting. Pick anything to read and watch and listen to from our Archives. You can read across issues, thematically, randomly, playfully.

On behalf of NMP, I recently participated in a roundtable entitled FEMINIST PROCESS AND DIGITAL MEDIA ART at ICA Boston. The session reminded

me of the significance of independent projects like NMP and the need to articulate DIY culture in as many contexts as possible. Being in a room full of smart women motivates me.

Later this summer, M-C and I are traveling to Vancouver to present NMP at the We Demand conference - where a good dozen conference participants have appeared in NMP in the past 2 years alone! Community motivates me.

And, I just got invited to brainstorm with Fembots, a feminist initiative from Oregon University, looking to launch an academic journal online that brings into question the academic peer-review model and the politics of the academic publishing industry. Collaboration motivates me.

mo-tive (mtv)

n.

1. *An emotion, desire, physiological need, or similar impulse that acts as an incitement to action.*

2. *(mtv, m-tv) A motif in art, literature, or music.*

adj.

1. *Causing or able to cause motion: motive power.*

2. *Impelling to action: motive pleas.*

3. *Of or constituting an incitement to action.*

tr.v. mo-tived, mo-tiv-ing, mo-tives

To motivate.

T.L. Cowan writes about video-performance artist Dayna McLeod. McLeod gets a break in this issue of NMP; from uber contributor to source of inspiration. As a personal favorite of mine, McLeod's video work is deserving of all the attention it garners.

Performer, activist and professor, Cowan, writes of the “unapologetically and hyperbolically queer.”

NMP favorite, Nicholas Little, writes his final piece as a regular contributor, exploring the role of on-line gay chat rooms in dealing with internalized homophobia. Come back anytime, NMP loves you.

Michèle Pearson Clarke speaks with this issue’s cover photographer, Zanele Muholi, about her ongoing portrait series of black lesbians and trans-men, Faces and Phases.

Corina McDonald introduces the project e-Artexte, which is due to launch in the fall.

Massime Doucet contribue son 3ième texte à NMP «État vitreux». Doucet est aussi l’auteur de «Du bon goût» et «Chez les eux», parues l’année dernière chez NMP.

With NMP from the beginning, Elisha Lim presents 10 lovers. Shop for Lim’s goodies at their Etsy store.

Joshua Pavan talks with Against Equality members Ryan Conrad and NMP regular, Yasmin Nair, about their take on gay marriage economies, inclusion politics, and fantastic queer futures.

Karine Silverwoman interviews Pink Ink Youth; they reflect on their relationship to writing and their experiences in Pink Ink. Be sure to flip through their beautiful zine!

Erica R. Meiners interviews MEN’s JD Samson about their debut album.

Thank you to all the amazing contributors. Special thank you also to M-C MacPhee and Dayna McLeod who make NMP possible. Big thank you to Fabien Rose, Tamara Sheperd, Jenn Clamen, and Renuka Chaturvedi for your copy editing magic. Thank you to Momoko Allard for your invaluable assistance with the print version. Welcome and thank you to Erin McGregor for getting the NMP calendar going..

Stay tuned for issue no. 17, coming out Sept. 2011, for which the theme is “magie”. This magical issue is guest edited by the amazing Sophie Le-Phat Ho.

Purchase your print copy of issue 15, out now on Lulu. You may now pitch us ideas for 2012 issues by consulting our submit page. Note that issues are now booked almost a year ahead of publication, so contact us now! Si vous donnez plus de 30 \$, votre nom sera mentionné sur notre page de remerciements. You can also donate money to NMP; 30\$ or more gets you a mention on the thank-you page.

Follow us on Twitter: @nomorepotlucks

Dear readers, we are still and always committed to bringing forward a motivated and persuasive journal bimonthly.

Mél Hogan



CAPTURED AND SEEN: A CONVERSATION WITH ZANELE MUHOLI

Michèle Pearson Clarke

This is a very different introduction to this interview than I had planned. As I write this, my mother is undergoing surgery to remove cancerous tumours from her brain. We are nearing the end of a 14-year battle with pancreatic cancer and I am reminded yet again of her inordinate reserves of grace and resilience. And as I write this, I am reminded yet again of all that she will leave behind with me.

It's a lot. I'm lucky, I know. I love my black queer self because she loved me. She was the first person to see me as I am. Her seeing me meant that she cut my plaits off when I asked at age six and it meant that she made me a bowtie and cummerbund for my graduation dance at age 16 and it meant that she danced with me and my friends at Pride at age 33. She saw me right into my current existence.

*This is what it's like to have Zanele Muholi take your photograph. It is the experience of being seen. A South African artist, Zanele has been documenting black queer women and transmen in her ongoing series of black and white portraits, *Faces and Phases*, since 2006. She began the project as a commemoration and a celebration of the lives of the black lesbians that she met in her journeys through the townships of Johannesburg. I met Zanele in 2008 while she was in Toronto studying in the Documentary Media MFA Program at Ryerson University. By then she had expanded the project to include people that she met in her travels from Cape Town to London to Toronto.*

Zanele took my photograph on July 28, 2009. She met me at work and we walked down Sherbourne Street and we talked about life and photography and Joburg and Port-of-Spain. Every so often, she stopped me and took another shot with her film-loaded SLR camera. We had become friends and it was quick and casual. Months later, she sent me a single digital image. For a long time, I found it difficult to



look at that photo. It was taken two days before a very painful transition in my life. When I looked at that picture, it was almost unbearable to look at the sadness in my eyes. That was all I could see and I knew why it was there. The bathroom mirror had mounted a long and spirited defense but here was undeniable evidence of loss and grief.

Two years later, time has passed and indulged in its usual bad habit of healing all wounds. Now looking at that photo is almost like looking at someone else. Almost. Zanele started the project because she wanted the world to know that black queer people exist – that we were here. My portrait is also an emotional archive and as the memories fade, I am grateful to have this stark reminder of my face and that phase. It existed. It was here.

In 2010, Prestel published a selection of portraits from the series and Zanele Muholi: Faces and Phases was nominated as best photobook of the year at the International Photobook Festival in Kassel. The series was also included in the 29th São Paulo Biennale last year and it will be featured in Face of Our Time, an exhibition of five photographers' work, at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art from July 3 to October 16, 2011.

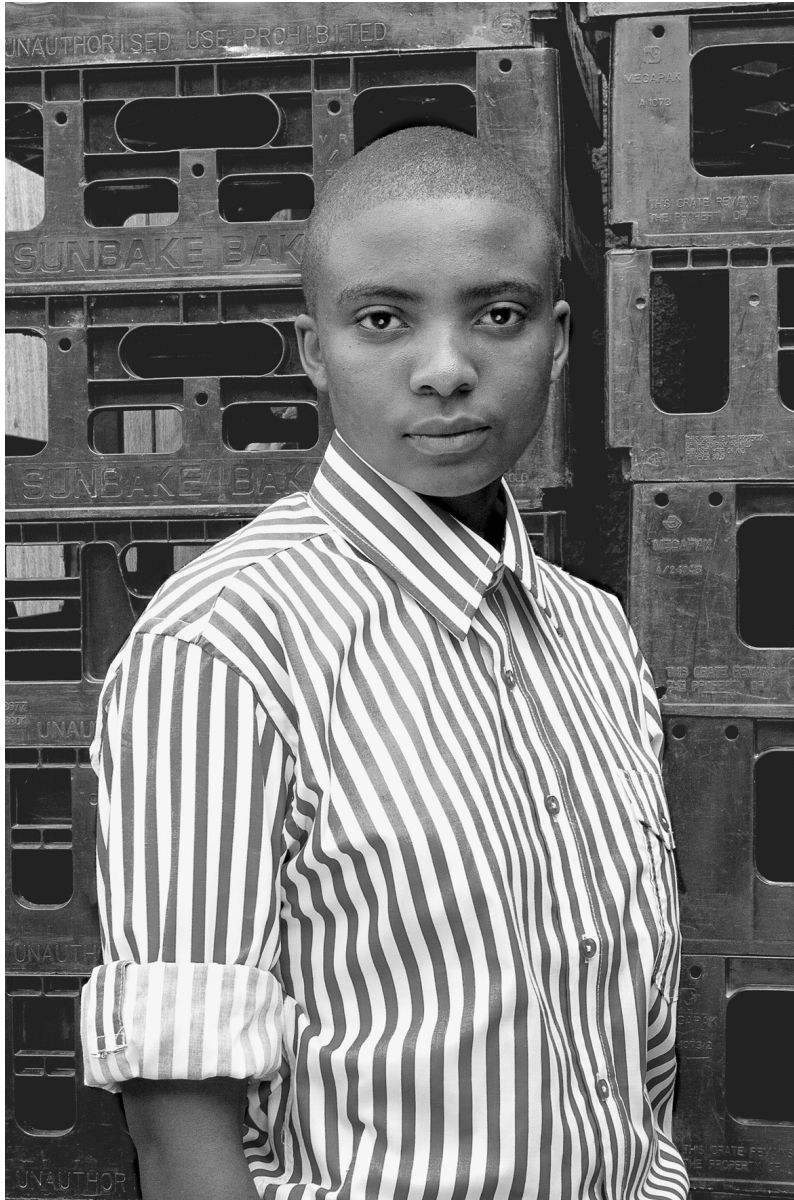
In June, Zanele showed 66 new portraits in an exhibition at Art Basel in Switzerland. I reached her on Skype while she was there and we talked about her photography and Faces and Phases. Below are some excerpts from our conversation.



BEGINNING PHOTOGRAPHY

At the time I was working for Behind the Mask as a reporter, and I was really, really frustrated because I realized that there were no images of people like me.

There were no real images of black lesbians. Even though there were some images that were there for people to see what a black lesbian looked like in my space, they were not quite representative as to how I wanted people to perceive black lesbians in South Africa. So I took it upon myself to make sure that we were present in historical documents in my country. So much change had taken place since 1994 and I couldn't help but think, how is that you still do not see yourself in this place?



TAKING MY PHOTOGRAPH

“Most of the people I have in my photographs, there is a relationship. It excites me to see the changes in people’s lives and also the role that the photography plays in other people’s lives. With us, we’re still talking and in each other’s lives and that means something to me. Because it means it went beyond just photographing and it was more about the relationship that was established during that period. Those memories mean a lot.”



THE PHOTOGRAPH ITSELF

“If you look at the backgrounds for the pictures, you have a tree in your background. And a person who looks at your photo doesn’t read the tree and doesn’t know what happened to you. They’re looking at this handsome person, they sometimes think this is a trans man – that’s the first thing that they look at: oh, that’s a young beautiful guy. They are looking at this gay man or they are looking at this trans man and they are looking at how handsome you are.

But you are positioned next to this tree and there is this fine smooth face. What does that mean? It basically means that’s just a façade. And the real story is as complicated as that rough tree. But that tree grows, that tree ever changes. And then you are wearing a checked shirt, which in a way might be read as some form of a fragmentation of pieces that are put together perfectly.”



BEING AT ART BASEL

“Tonight made me realize how important the project really is. I knew that it was important but I didn’t know that it would be important in this way. This is a different space. This is not a conference, this is not my kind of setting - this is not my kind of space. This is a space full of straight people, comfortable people who are living their lives. They may not care about what happened to the people who are in the images but they care about the fact that the people are here. They are curious – they want to know who are these people and why are they here. And people come and stand in front of the pictures to have their pictures taken with them. I think it’s because you hardly have black faces in a big exhibition like this.

This is a big art fair and for most people, this is the first time they have seen a black person present work like this. People are drawn to it and they want to be a part of it. So for me, it made me realize we don’t need to keep these things to ourselves. Just because they are images of queer people, it doesn’t mean that the target audience should just be queer people. To have all of these people coming into this space and appreciating us meant a lot.”



ON VISUAL ACTIVISM

"I always say to people that I'm an activist before I'm an artist. To me, you take a particular photo in order for other people to take action. So you become an agent for change in a way. I say that I am a visual activist because it's important to me to go beyond just being a photographer. Because you know, that sounds so sexy and it's a "profession." I think to myself what's the point of just taking a picture?

What happens after that? I'm doing what I'm doing to make a statement and also to say to people: This is possible."



Zanele Muholi was born in Umlazi, Durban, in 1972, and lives in Cape Town. She studied photography at the Market Photo Workshop in Newtown, Johannesburg. She was a founder of the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW), a black lesbian organisation based in Gauteng. Her solo exhibition, *Only Half the Picture*, which showed at Michael Stevenson in March 2006, travelled to the Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg and the Afrovibes Festival in Amsterdam. Recent solo shows have taken place at the Gladstone Hotel in Toronto and at Fred, London (2010). She was the recipient of the 2005 Tollman Award for the Visual Arts, the first BHP Billiton/Wits University Visual Arts Fellowship in 2006, and was the 2009 Ida Ely Rubin Artist-in-Residence at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). In 2009 she received a Fanny Ann Eddy accolade from IRN-Africa for her outstanding contributions to the study of sexuality in Africa. She also won the Casa Africa award for best female photographer and a Fondation Blachère award at Les Rencontres de Bamako biennial of African photography in 2009. Current group exhibitions include *Appropriated Landscapes* at the Walther Collection, Neu-Ulm/Burlafingen, Germany (11 June - May 2012), and *Figures and Fictions: Contemporary South African Photography* at the V&A Museum, London (12 April - 17 July 2011). Muholi's documentary *Difficult Love* (2010) has been seen - and continues to show - at film festivals around the world.

www.zanelemuoli.com

Michèle Pearson Clarke (@michelepclarke) is a communications professional and filmmaker who has lived in Canada for nineteen years and still misses her other home, Trinidad and Tobago. She is the director of *Surrounded by Water* (2003) and *Black Men and Me* (2006). NOW Magazine's Cameron Bailey named Michèle one of Toronto's 10 best Filmmakers of the Year in 2006, and the following year she won the Best Canadian Female Short Award at the Inside Out Toronto LGBT Film and Video Festival. She has written film reviews for Xtra! Magazine and her writing has also been published in *Bent on Writing: An Anthology of Queer Tales*. Michèle has served on the board of directors for Inside Out and Trinity Square Video and she was a jury member for the Ontario Association of Art Galleries annual awards in 2010. Currently she is on the board of the Feminist Art Gallery. Michèle lives in Toronto and she is interested in contemporary, alternative and queer things that have to do with black art, culture and style. She posts about those things online at :

strangestfruit.tumblr.com

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OPENING E-ARTEXTE WITH CORINA MACDONALD

Mél Hogan

What follows is part of a conversation that was started through email in March, when Corina was settling into her new job as the e-Artexzte Project Manager. e-Artexzte is an Open Access (OA) repository for visual arts publishing in Canada, and I think it is safe to say that nothing quite compares to it in terms of its objectives and scope. The repository will offer publishers and authors the option to make their publications available in electronic form, with all the benefits that come from Open Access: metadata harvesting, access through Google Scholar, and so on. Corina is an information specialist, but her job, along with the e-Artexzte team, is also in advocacy and outreach to convince Canadian publishers and authors of the benefits of the project and of Open Access. The e-Artexzte project is expected to launch in the fall of 2011.

Mél Hogan: Who initiated the OA movement – where did it grow out of? Has there been resistance to the idea of Open Access?

Corina MacDonald: Basically the OA movement is founded on the idea that publicly funded scholarship and research should be freely available for unrestricted use. There are philosophical similarities to parallel movements in free software and culture, although OA really gained momentum in the early 90s as a response to what is known in academic libraries as the ‘serials crisis’.

Unfortunately this crisis has not since been resolved – the term refers to an ongoing situation where large journal publishers exert a monopolistic stranglehold over academic libraries and unreasonably escalate the costs of subscriptions. This has had serious repercussions for scholarly publishing. The rising costs of journal subscriptions are not matched by increases to library budgets, and so libraries have been left scrambling to provide

access to the journals that their faculty need, often at the expense of other acquisitions. Faculty are still mostly unaware that the articles they publish in proprietary journals must be bought back by their libraries at increasingly high rates. Practical alternatives have emerged from this situation in the form of 'Green OA' (self-archiving) and 'Gold OA' (OA journals).

Many of the large journal publishing companies have adapted to Open Access, and have allowed authors to self-archive articles in institutional repositories under varying conditions. Ironically I think some resistance comes from within the academic milieu itself, where there is a lack of awareness of the situation and prestige is still the overwhelming factor in publication and tenure. This varies by discipline; in the sciences, there has been greater involvement in OA and many groundbreaking projects have emerged from that community, such as the Public Library of Science (plos.org). But overall there remains a real need for greater education about these issues for authors in academia.

I'm not an expert on all the historical details of the OA movement, so here are some links for further information:

- » Open Access Overview Peter Suber
- » Open Access Archivangelism Stevan Harnad (blog)
- » The Access Principle John Willinsky (e-book)

MH: What does self-archiving mean? How important is the idea of self-archiving in and for digital collections online?

CM: Self-archiving is a term that is quite specific to the Open Access (OA) community. It refers to the process whereby authors, usually from within a university context, deposit digital copies or pre-print versions of their published journal articles in an institutional or thematic OA repository. Many of these repositories offer support for the long-term preservation of the digital content they hold, but I would argue that access is an important impetus for self-archiving and so the term archiving can be somewhat ambiguous here. Self-archiving is an important strategy for Open Access, and many universities are considering making it a mandatory step in publishing by faculty.

Personally, I think that the concept of self-archiving can be relevant to many kinds of digital content creation. For example, I think that artists should be much more proactive about explicitly licensing and making available images of their work online for non-commercial use. Many artists would be happy to allow writers and bloggers to reuse images in their posts and articles online, but by not explicitly defining this reuse, they are essentially contributing to a large grey area of online activity. This is a backwards way of dealing with the situation in which we find ourselves.

So I guess that, for me, the concept of self-archiving can be broadened into the open culture context as a responsibility to explicitly make at least some of your content openly accessible for reuse. There are many tools available to do so - Creative Commons licenses, the Wikimedia Commons and projects like One for the Commons.

MH: If e-Artexte positions itself as an online archive, then how does it define or imagine dealing with the long-term care of its collection? What is its main priority as an archive: use or preservation?

CM: e-Artexte will extend Artexte's mandate to provide reliable information sources for research in the visual arts. Artexte as a library does not have a mandate to preserve the documents in their collection – they make these documents available for consultation and do their best to ensure their longevity, but do not have the resources or capacity for long-term preservation.

The same approach will apply in principal to e-Artexte – provisions will be put in place to try to ensure the longevity of the digital content, but increased access to research material is the primary goal of the repository.

MH: Can you talk about licensing tools (presumably Creative Commons) and explain what interoperable standards are? What does 'interoperable standards' mean?

CM: OA repositories do not normally hold any copyright over their contents. Usually there is an agreement with depositors stating that they hold the rights for any content they upload. By default, material is freely available for unrestricted use, as per the definition of OA, but in some cases rights holders may choose to use Creative Commons licenses to make some restrictions on the use of their content (i.e. no commercial use).

Interoperability is really the backbone of networked culture. In this specific context, when we talk about using interoperable standards what we mean is that one repository stores and can export data in the same (or compatible) format as another repository. One of the important functions of a repository is to provide metadata for 'harvesting' by search services which can aggregate and search across multiple repositories at once. For example if you visit the OAlster website, you can use a single search box to cross search data from over 1,100 different contributors. Repository content is also harvested by Google Scholar. There are specific metadata and protocol standards that enable this interoperability.

MH: Can you expand on the idea of the 'content provider'?

CM: We are in a networked culture where data is constantly moving around, being selected and re-combined along the way by different types of services. As a result, the way we think about providing access to content is also changing. It is one thing to develop your own website where users can come to discover your content – but there is now an opportunity to make content available more broadly and in new contexts through federated search services or content aggregators, OAlster being one example.

To extend this idea we could also consider the city as a content provider, for example cities like Toronto, Vancouver and Ottawa that have adopted Open Data policies. In doing so they have been able to benefit from the experimentation and work of their citizens. There are communities

of developers eager to get their hands on municipal data so they can build applications that tell people when the next bus is coming, or allows them to report on needed repairs in their neighbourhoods, etc. (there are many, many more examples). By making city data open, it suddenly spawns multiple contexts that city councillors may never have envisaged, and that the city may never have had the expertise or resources to develop on their own.

Cultural institutions like libraries, archives and museums have very rich content that they can make available in a similar way, allowing them to benefit from the imagination and innovation of their communities. Not every museum will be able to develop their own augmented reality app that provides contextual collection information based on GPS coordinates for example, but they can take the steps necessary to make sure that their content isn't inaccessible when those developers come knocking. The Brooklyn Museum and The Powerhouse in Australia are two museums leading the way in this regard, having created open APIs for information about their collections.

So I see this role of content providers as an important shift in how institutions can imagine themselves contributing to a larger landscape of networked resources, allowing their content to live in new and possibly unforeseen contexts. Open Access repositories are one component of this landscape.

P.S. A group called Montreal Ouvert is working on convincing the city of Montreal to adopt an Open Data policy.

MH: What other models or projects out there have you referenced or used to build e-Artexzte?

CM: We are using Eprints as the basis for the repository, which is an open source repository software developed and maintained at the University of Southampton. However, this software is configured 'out of the box' for an academic publishing context. So we are adapting this system to a visual arts context, and specifically to the context of Artexzte's existing cataloguing practices as an organization that has been collecting arts documentation and publications for 30 years. I am not aware of any other thematic OA repositories dedicated to critical art writing, so this is a pioneering project in many ways. It also leverages OA outside of the academic milieu which has not been done extensively.

MH: What are some of the obstacles you have faced? Are there worries when launching a project of this scale in terms of backups, and the ephemeral nature of digital media? If so, what kinds of precautions are put in place to ensure the long life of the project? What kinds of human labour and investments are required to keep this project going after you have created the site?

CM: This is definitely an ambitious project for a small organization to undertake. We are fortunate to be working with university colleagues who have experience in OA, and there is also a large and active Eprints community that we can look to for guidance.

There are certainly some obstacles in terms of the ongoing resources required to maintain the repository, but some of the decisions we make now will help to minimize future costs or problems. I think because we are using well established and actively maintained open source software, we can feel fairly certain that it will be sustained for some time into the future. Interoperable open standards are also an important foundation of digital preservation and sustainability. Of course the project will still be vulnerable to the vagaries of hardware failures, server crashes and other unforeseen disasters. Backups will need to be made regularly, and in keeping with the library mantra of LOCKSS (Lots of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe), we can keep multiple copies of backups in different locations.

I think what will be most crucial to the ongoing sustainability of the project is really the engagement of authors and publishers. There is education and outreach to do in the visual arts milieu about Open Access and the benefits of depositing work in an OA repository. e-Artexte has the potential to become an important research resource, but it must be cultivated over time with the collaboration and participation of the community. So in a sense, building the repository itself is only the first phase of this project.

Corina MacDonald is an independent information specialist and web developer specializing in digital cultural collections management. While a student in Information Studies at McGill (MLIS, 2006-2008) she worked as a research assistant with the DOCAM research alliance (docam.ca), where she learned about issues surrounding the documentation of digital and technology-driven art. After graduation she worked at the Canadian Heritage Information Network on the Artefacts Canada database, an aggregation of data from over 400 Canadian museums. In 2010 she began doing freelance software and web development work, and is currently the project manager for e-Artexte - an Open Access repository for Canadian visual arts documentation initiated by Artexte. When she isn't crunching metadata she is djing and hosting modular_systems, a radio show on CKUT 90.3FM where she has been involved as a volunteer since 1996. She is also a member of the editorial team of Vague Terrain, an online digital arts publication and blog.

pink ink zine

no one can tell your story but you



2011 Issue

Pink Ink Youth Interviews

Karine Silverwoman and Pink Ink Youth

Pink Ink is an informal, creative writing drop-in for queer, trans, two spirit and questioning youth ages 14-29, and is a program of Supporting Our Youth (SOY) and Sherbourne Health Centre in Toronto. As someone who failed or skipped most of high school, I have always been a big advocate of demystifying the concepts of who is a writer and what constitutes good writing, after being bound by the confines of spelling, grammar, and rigid school standards. Pink Ink youth are encouraged to “write down the bones,” using stream of consciousness writing and by participating in writing activities to express their own multi-layered experiences and those of the people around them. At a time when projects like the “It Gets Better,” campaign are the main focus in the fight against homophobia and transphobia, Pink Ink and other collectively-based initiatives can draw attention to the importance of community-engaged and politically-charged arts projects as a means of affecting change. The interview that follows was done as a collective effort. As a group we wrote out the interview questions and the youth responded to them as a part of a writing exercise. We are currently working on our annual zine, No One Can Tell Your Story But You, which launched at the Art Gallery Of Ontario on June 15, 2011, and featured several arts-based initiatives that run out of SOY.

Karine Silverwoman: How did you hear about Pink Ink?

Blaze: I initially heard about Pink Ink over 5 years ago and spent a really long time avoiding it. Eventually after at least a dozen people told me to go, I went. It just took me 6 years to get myself out of the house on a Saturday afternoon.

KS: What first got you into writing?

Portia: I was a painfully shy kid. I spent most of my time in my room reading, sometimes getting lost in the story. I wasn't very social, I didn't go out and play all that much.

When I was young there was a lot of turmoil in my house but I never talked about it. I never really expressed my emotions. And when I was 11, my mom sent me to a shrink. Her advice was, if you can't speak about it, write about it. Because if you don't get it out it'll explode and that won't be safe for anybody, and that's what I kind of started to do. So I just started journaling and it grew from there.

KS: How do you see yourself as a writer?

Alex: I am foremost a female writer but black queer female is more truthful. I write to process events and emotion and yes, to rebel. To challenge. Some

are never meant to be read by another soul but mine. And some, it's like dropping a bomb and leaving people to deal with the aftermath.

Blaze: I have this really warped sense of Identity, it never stays the same for more than a few years. Which can be really interesting, but also feel really shallow.

The one thing that 's stayed the same is the kind of stuff I write about. People I know and things I've done. I draw from that stuff like crazy. Looking back on my journals from 5 years ago, the style is exactly the same.

KS: What kind of writing do you do? Why?

Feste Epkwose: I write almost exclusively about myself – about my life, my experiences, and my heritage. I enjoy retelling the stories my father told me about life on the island, old family legends, as well as my own adventures. I feel like it helps me to remember who I am. I feel that people tell stories to remind one another of who we are as human beings, that we have a common history, that there are things we have in common as human beings, like the ability to feel pain or the ability to laugh.

I come from a long tradition of storytellers. I think that storytelling, the sharing of an experience – art, really, in all its forms – is the basis of our identities, both as individuals and as members of our various communities and cultures. I also write for pure cathartic value.

Most of the time I come to Pink Ink and just let myself vomit all over the page. Sometimes I make

new discoveries or plunge deeper into an experience or emotion. Sometimes I get a good story out of it. Mostly, it just feels good to rant, get things off my chest, and I'll probably never look at it again.

KS: What has the Pink Ink experience been like for you?

Luka: Winter 2005. My first time at the 519, first queer group ever. Obviously, I ended up with a crush on the facilitator (what? Queer women of colour do exist? Woah!). But, I also wrote. I went places I didn't want to go: gender, body, home. And I edited and re-wrote – texts and myself. My 'voice' became stronger, my story did matter after all. And, really, just having a free space, full of other queer and trans people, to do what I like – (writing) isn't that amazing?

Alex: Pink Ink represents the few weeks in the year where I have an allocated time just for writing, whether I feel like it or not, whether something brilliant or mediocre comes out. It is a space where I get to take care of myself as a writer, and when the opportunity arises, face my demons. It's cheaper than therapy!

Blaze: Pink Ink has been amazing, the group and the energy has been really beneficial. It's really welcoming and has brought out a lot of great stuff. The exercises have helped me write about stuff I haven't had a chance to think about. I'm insanely happy I finally came to Pink Ink.

KS: What does Pink Ink bring to you?

Alex: I get to be exposed to queer literature writers that I did not know, and to appreciate and get inspired whether it is through the content or the style.

KS: Has being queer or trans influenced your writing? If so, how?

Morgan: I've been writing for as long as I've known how to put words to paper and I've been queer that long, too. I can't separate either of them, or my Trans identity, from any other part of me, so it's all tied up together.

Blaze: It's not so much being queer that has influenced my writing but being around other queer/trans people. When I find myself alone for a long period of time I tend to lose my enthusiasm for writing things down. Being around other people brings that enthusiasm back in this really strong kind of way. I think it's the attitude of "our stories are fucking important," and the energy that brings when people get together. I kind of feed off it.

Alex: No, not particularly. I was writing about queer material before I identified as queer. I was not limited. I do not censor.

KS: Do you think writing spaces are important to queer and trans youth?

Portia: Hell yes. Growing up in a suburban, white, middle class society, I would never have shared any of my writing with anyone and would've therefore never grown as an artist. No matter how much

people say they don't want to be labelled as a queer writer, it definitely leaks out; if it doesn't, you're censoring yourself and not totally creating, which is crap, a waste. Most art comes from that scared, dark part of yourself, like that quote about how all the great artists were fucked up, drugged, drunk or depressed. You're not going to express that and get the proper understanding or feedback from people that have no fucking clue about your life experience.

KS: Do you think that writing can affect change? How?

Luka: Yup. Writing is a process: even if/when it doesn't change anything else, the writer itself changes. Writing is committing ideas to paper, so other people can access them. It is spreading ideas, and ideas change things.

KS: Can you talk about your experience with the zine launch?

Blaze: The zine launch has been a sort of adrenaline boost. I've been writing more and editing less. Feeling like I need to produce as much as I can so I'll have more stuff to pick from. In a way it's almost therapeutic. Not nit-picking over everything I get down on paper.

Alex: I enjoyed the collaborative effort in making the zine. The more people provide their input/vision, the richer is the experience. Last year, at the zine launch was the first time I performed spoken word. Despite the initial anxiety, it was an exhilarating and vulnerable experience. Those are instances of feeling alive, empowered, an experience cerebrally orgasmic (that is if it goes well...)

“

My 'voice' became stronger, my story did matter after all. And, really, just having a free space, full of other queer and trans people, to do what I like – (writing) isn't that amazing?

Karine Silverwoman is an artist, counsellor and personal trainer. She is almost done her Master's of Social work at Ryerson University. Her art focuses on poetry, video-making and dance.

Morgan Page is a feminist activist, writer, artist, and Santera.

Feste Epkwose is an autistic transexual Metis from Nova Scotia. He is socially inept and likes Lebanese food and folk-punk music.

Alex Looky is an African feminist writer with interests not limited to portrait photography, gender issues, queer issues and sex education.

Blaze spends most of her time thinking about and writing down all the crazy stuff she did at 17. Sometimes these thoughts turn into performance pieces. She also makes really good vegan food.

Luka B. Vicious: Genderqueer transguy. Brazilian. (Not an) Artist. Likes pirates, zombies and vampires. Reluctant community organizer.

Portia is a writer, a poet , a free verse lyricist who is determined to make words her subordinate, a shade of distinct dyke feminist equalist fluid colour

Pink Ink is a creative writing group for queer/trans, questioning and two-spirited youth aged 14-29 in Toronto. It is a program run out of Supporting Our Youth featuring workshops by emerging and established guest writers, and culminating in a published zine and launch party entitled, "No One Can Tell Your Story But You."

<http://www.soytoronto.org/current/pinkink.html>

Marriage is the proverbial
burning building.

Instead of pounding
on the door
to be let in...

queers should be

stoking the

flames!



"NEOLIBERALISM'S HANDIEST LITTLE TOOL": AGAINST EQUALITY ON MARRIAGE

Joshua Pavan

As debates over gay marriage spread from state to state, there has been a small but growing opposition from the left. One of the sites in which opposition has emerged is in the work of the Against Equality collective. Calling into question the primacy of marriage, military service, and hate crimes legislation as the Holy Trinity of queer movement politics, the collective published its first anthology last fall: "Against Equality: Queer Critiques of Marriage".

The driving force behind Against Equality is its co-founders: Yasmin Nair, a Chicago-based writer and activist, and self-described "outlaw artist, terrorist academic, and petty thief," Ryan Conrad. They were joined in conversation by Montreal-based Joshua Pavan, community organizer and co-founder of Pervers/Cité, Montreal's radical queer summer festival.

Joshua V Pavan: So given that we're gathered here in the Motive issue, can you start by explaining what prompted the Against Equality (AE) project (and specifically that name)?

Yasmin Nair: It began in November 2009, when Ryan came up with the idea of a digital archive. Before that, we'd got to know each other via FB (I think it started when I caught sight of Ryan's photo session of himself in a bridal gown, holding a sign that said "Gay marriage will cure AIDS," and knew I'd found a kindred soul). We realized there was a real need to have all this amazing, radical queer analysis, activism, and artwork archived on the web. We knew there had been powerful critiques of gay marriage from the start of gay and lesbian organizing and activism, but hunting them down was a vast task.

As for the name - I know we wanted to be provocative, yes - the name would definitely draw attention. But we were and are serious about questioning this specious notion of "equality." The word is loosely thrown about, and it's assumed that we should all know exactly what that means and what it stands for, but what does it really mean in a country where "marriage equality" is simply another way to ensure that the unmarried should be left out of a basic benefits structure? And what does equality mean when the system set up only ensures an insurmountable amount of economic inequality?

JVP: Yeah, in the ways that “equality,” has been emptied of all but the sort of warm, positive feelings around it, similar arguments can be made of “Pride,” or “Community.” Nevertheless, a lot of queer activists have found it important for these words to be the battleground of their more radical politics, both for their historical significance and intelligibility across movements. How do you see Against Equality fitting in with that?

Ryan Conrad: I think that examining the deployment of the rhetorical, affective appeal and the kinds of inequities it obscures is key to our project, in order to get people engaged in a conversation and to reflect back on what these actually mean within the context of neoliberalism. For me, it’s about rejecting that rallying cry to invest ourselves in a deeply unequal heteronormative present and demand and fight for a radically equitable and queer future.

YN: I think what AE challenges with regard to “community,” is the notion that the only kind that matters is the sort represented by Gay Inc. At the same time, in asking for a politics that considers how “marriage equality” leaves out large groups of people, we’re asking for a politics that looks beyond “community-based” solutions. What would marriage look like if we thought of it less as something that benefits specific “communities” (straights, gays and lesbians) and more as an institution that unequally and systemically grants benefits to specific kinds of family formations favoured by capitalism?

JVP: When people hear “neoliberalism,” the common understandings or associations would be around government economic policies of austerity, privatization and deregulation. What role does marriage play in this project?

YN: Marriage, as configured in the U.S, is neoliberalism’s handiest little tool. It allows for the most intense privatization of resources by placing the responsibility for people’s welfare squarely in the realm of the family. Need health care? If you don’t have a job that gives you that, or have parents who can put you on their plan, or a spouse with a job that allows you access to the same, you’re screwed. In that sense, neoliberalism loves marriage - it’s an effective and economical way to ensure that the state can abdicate from its responsibility for people’s health and well being.

RC: The entire framework that we use to understand our “resources,” like health care or housing or knowledge, etc. is of the economic model of capitalism and scarcity. Here in the States, through marriage we see the privatization of what we believe are collective benefits, like access to health care, to specifically classed family units. Instead of fighting for everyone’s right to live, like queer folks did so loudly and proudly here and elsewhere in the 80s, we see LGBTs now demanding that only married people have the right to these things.

JVP: So this privatization with marriage is less about shifting state functions into the private sector, as much as it is into the private sphere?

RC: I don't think you can separate, on one hand, economic models that rely on a massively privatized public from, on the other hand, the shift towards championing the right to privacy/private sphere. Both the economic and affective/cultural shift to the private mutually reinforce the naturalness and inevitability of the other.

YN: Take, for instance, the rhetoric around public school education here in the States. People are being persuaded to believe that demanding charter schools or vouchers for private schools is about "taking back their schools and communities," and being able to voice their wishes for their children's education. The constant emphasis on a "taking back" rests squarely in the realm of the affective private sphere and disguises the corporatization of public schools.

JVP: So while you're not the first to launch a queer critique of marriage, you're one of the first to frame it as a "politics of inclusion," rather than a "politics of assimilation." Is this an effort to escape an argument of culture? Is it to thwart the intentionality of "I'm getting married, but not because I believe in marriage"? Why this shift?

YN: I think the anti-assimilationist argument still matters, but not in the way it's being propounded. Queers are not naturally anti-assimilationist; there's nothing in our genetic makeup that says that we are always outside the norm. Rather, we have come to stand for and nurture alternative forms of communities/affiliations/sexual lives because our outsider status both forced us and allowed us to do so. And through that we have

historically achieved tremendous political reconfigurations of politics and the public sphere.

Some queers, like Dan Savage and Holly Hughes, like to bash the queers who criticize gay marriage by claiming they are either not assimilationist, or that their marriages are somehow quite different than what we might imagine (as in Savages's constant references to non-monogamy), or that we are simply "threatened" by coupledness or because our major problem with marriage is that it is conservative (as Hughes puts it). I think that just shows the limits of the anti-assimilationist argument.

So we insist on talking about the costs of inclusion because anti-assimilation lets people off the hook; they can pretend that it's not marriage's central role in the state that's the problem - it's just how marriages are conducted. Which is bosh, of course. You can marry naked and hanging upside down from a hot air balloon and share your marital bed with multiple strangers every day - none of that will change how the state endows your marriage with benefits it will not give to the unmarried.

JVP: What about this argument of "I don't believe in marriage, but I need adoption rights/ immigration papers/ whatever else." People can be on board with a critique, but there's a real need underpinning support for marriage.

YN: None of us have ever told people that they can't get married. Hell, if it helps you stay in the country, or get health care, or keep your savings, whatever, or if you just have an emotional need for the institution, get or stay married. We're not purists who blame people for getting married.

But when people tell me that they need to get married for x and y, and so want nothing to do with our critique, my response is: why are these things separate? Ironically, most of my straight married friends probably have a better critique of marriage because so many of them have been effectively coerced by the state - because of health care issues or child custody problems. But they're fully with us in discussing ways to evolve a system that would not demand marriage from people. Using the utilitarian arguments is nothing more than an act of political cowardice. It's pretending that political change can only come about if a perfect state of things is first achieved. But who among us is ridiculous enough to say that?

RC: I'm still not convinced that marriage is the best way of gaining protections for one's partner. The gay marriage movement needs to be called out in its trouncing of domestic partnership benefits. In Connecticut, for example, upon ratification of gay marriage all domestic partnerships were dissolved, destroying many peoples' (gay and straight) protections for their intimate and non-intimate partners. This idea that gay marriage is the only thing we should be fighting for, at the cost of reducing the number of ways in which all people can create partnerships actually reduces the number of ways people can access protections and collective benefits.

YN: Also, the right isn't just trying to keep us from marrying, they are taking away our collective bargaining rights as queer workers, they are defunding all essential social services geared towards queer and trans people, they are reducing access to public and higher education, defunding any

and all programs doing HIV prevention and treatment, they are rolling back human rights protections for queer and trans people, they are blocking any iteration of immigration reform. But somehow marriage is the battle being brought to "us," one for which we should be prioritizing all our time, energy and money?

JVP: In that context, how do you see Against Equality as fitting into a broader landscape of social critique in America? At a time when it seems to be polarizing between work being done in academic institutions, and the sort of punditry of the Daily Show - Rachel Maddow circuit, how do you walk that line?

RC: I think a great thing about Against Equality is that it is both an intellectual and activist project. All of us involved in the project are all engaged in direct work within our communities. Being activists informs our intellectual work and our intellectual work informs our activist work. I am primarily engaged in queer and trans youth empowerment in an isolated working class town as well as HIV prevention and anti-stigma work. There isn't some huge disconnect between who and how we think through our theoretical engagement and work through our material reality.

YN: And the phenomenal response to our work and the many people who've told us that just coming to our presentations or reading our book has emboldened them to carry on these conversations and make changes elsewhere is evidence that there is a need for a different kind of discursive space where critique can continue.

JVP: How do you gauge the success of the project? Given the materialist framework, presumably it's more than just starting conversations. What does it mean to fight to win in the marriage debates?

YN: We didn't get into this to win any debate. Yes, arguing with people and making our points clearly and effectively is definitely a strategy, but in the end that's only been one of the rhetorical and discursive strategies we've employed. We wanted people to understand that there are real, material problems with this focus on gay marriage and that it's a contradiction to support it as a "liberal/progressive/left" cause.

For example, a number of immigration rights groups have decided to uncritically support gay marriage as some kind of progressive "let's get behind the gays and they'll support immigration rights," tactic.

Those same immigration agencies have been trying to get the law changed so that people on spousal visas – who have no access to even social security numbers, driving licenses, work permits, all of which makes them frighteningly dependent on their spouses – might have more rights and be able to petition for themselves in the event of abuse.

Our critique matters tremendously, but not because we're trying to win a debate with people on the pro-gay marriage side who are, for the most part, too deeply invested to care. It matters because it gives people who are in fact working in places like immigration agencies a way to say,

"Wait a minute, how can we possibly support this issue uncritically when we're actually trying to dislodge the centrality of relationships in so many other ways?"

RC: The point for me has never been about winning the gay marriage debate, but about creating more time and space for the queer political imagination to exist. The overwhelming emphasis on the so-called practical successes (i.e. gay marriage, hate crimes, overturning DADT, etc.) has collapsed the realm of the imaginable into a narrow vision of futurity with all its glaring inequalities. How do we build strategies to fight for a radically equitable queer future if we can't even fathom that time or place as possible, let alone desirable? Perhaps it's that I am deeply invested in the materialist framework, but without losing site of the fact that materiality can limit the imagination, which in turn limits our materialist framework.

I'm looking forward to new, more ambitious projects that we have on the horizon with the Against Equality project, particularly with this idea we have been chatting about around doing an international think tank addressing the issues of inclusion politics. I think it's here that we have the opportunity where we (radical activists, artists, academics, etc.) can overlap conversations around materiality and the queer political imagination in interesting ways that will lead to strategies to actualize the most fantastic queer futures and survival tactics for the present.

Against Equality: www.againstequality.org

Yasmin Nair: www.yasminnair.net

Ryan Conrad: www.faggotz.org

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We wanted people to understand that there are real, material problems with this focus on gay marriage and that it's a contradiction to support it as a "liberal/progressive/left" cause.

Joshua V Pavan is an Alberta-bred queen relocated to Montreal where she works as a trade unionist and community organizer. In the summer of 2007, he was one of the co-founders of Pervers/Cité, Montreal's radical queer summer festival. When not engaged in solidarity work with the Prisoner Correspondence Project or as Lady Gaza, he can be found defending the honour of misunderstood popstars.

Yasmin Nair is a Chicago-based writer, academic, and activist. She is a member of Gender JUST and the Against Equality collective. Her work has appeared in publications like Bitch, Time Out Chicago, Maximum RockNRoll, makeshift, Discourse and the first AE book, Against Equality: Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage. Nair is currently at work on a book about affect and neoliberalism, and can be reached at <http://www.yasminnair.net>

Ryan Conrad is an outlaw artist, terrorist academic, and petty thief from a mill town in central Maine. He is the founder of Against Equality digital archives and continues his involvement in the project as a member of the editorial collective. His work as a visual and performing artist has exhibited internationally in Europe and across the United States and Canada. He continues to write for both academic and non-academic presses as well as present his written and visual work at academic and activist conferences. All his work is archived on faggotz.org along with this well-established record of work as an activist and organizer.



DAYNA McLEOD'S FEMINIST CELLULOID FANTASIES, QUEER REVISIONARY: MAKING IT BETTER

T.L. Cowan

When I started thinking about what I would say about Montreal-based cabaret, video-performance artist Dayna McLeod in this NMP "Motive" issue, I thought about my own motives for writing about her. Mostly, I write about her work because it is smart, bold, hilarious and under-discussed, but also because, since forever, McLeod's videos/performances have resisted the tidy, safe narrative of aspirational gayness that circulates in mainstream North American discourse (most recently this narrative went viral with the "It Gets Better" YouTube videos of 2010) and rather, affirms over and over again—without the reassuring capitalist backdrop of red-bricked, vanilla-flavoured affluence—that being queer is, well, about being really queer.

The "It Gets Better" campaign, started by Dan Savage in September 2010 in the wake of an alarming number of early-school-year gay teen suicides, has already been well-lauded and well-critiqued, and I know that it does not make logical sense to compare Dayna McLeod's video-performances

with the "It Gets Better" campaign. It's like comparing g-strings and boxers: they are both kinds of underwear, but not meant to do the same thing. However, in the wake of "It Gets Better," wherein most of the celebrity (i.e. most-watched) videos either tacitly or explicitly self-applaud the ways that gays and lezzies produce, strive for, pass as and achieve a kind of neutered, apolitical, middle-class normalcy (or, homonormativity, to use Lisa Duggan's now famous term), I think it is monumentally important to showcase feminist queer work like McLeod's that relishes, normalizes and hyperbolizes the unneutered realities and fantasies of all of us who don't.

But when I began to think about my "motive" for reading and loving to think about McLeod's work, it struck me that my motive to revel in her celluloid fantasies brought to stage and screen in video-performances like "That's Right Diana Barry, You Needed Me," "Ultimate SUB Ultimate DOM" and "Sex Accidents & Home Repair" is



that I find the work reassuringly irreverent, unpredictable and twisted, all the best parts of being queer that are rendered invisible in homonormative culture. While I often feel smothered by the PotteryBabyWeddingBarnBoomBellsification of contemporary dyke life, McLeod's work, and the ways that it instrumentalizes that grand queer cultural tradition of reading against the grain, reminds me that being against the grain is a mode of living and way of knowing that is available, valid, necessary and—when done with the right amount of irony—devastatingly, on-the-nose amusing.

Since it's early-20th Century beginnings, cabaret has been a stage for politically-motivated pastiche; and it is on the contemporary cabaret stage, I think—a stage that does not require season's tickets and is often pay-what-you-can—that queers can satirize to themselves the complicated and conflicted ways that we are compelled into, and lured into conversations about, low-interest mortgages, wicker patio furniture, matching flatware, professionally sanded hardwood floors, Diaper Genies and where to get these things. Cabaret, I suggest, might be taken as a tonic to counteract the effects of such conversations. Cabaret artists like McLeod, for whom the short form is their major form, might be understood to be challenging the standards of normative "grown-up" performance, of adult, professional "success." In Canadian and US contexts, cabaret might be understood as a mode of queer temporality that invites liminality rather than longevity, a kind of living that (in theory) thrives in the polyamorous (multiple) rather than the monogamous (single), and the low-paid rather than the lucrative.

While I do not think that artists who make work in longer forms are all a bunch of sell-outs, I propose that McLeod, for example, whose artistic gears are not cranked to pump out a "full-length" solo show, resists the matriculation model of a performance career in the same way that many (okay, today maybe not so many) queers, in Judith Halberstam's framing, resist "adult responsibility" in the form of marriage and reproduction. Contemporary cabaret itself, then, as a transnational phenomenon of predominantly artist-produced events, is a performance space and mode of existence, even a way of understanding the world that can undermine the normal (boring) and celebrate the outrageous, the gaudy, the raunchy (not boring). In many ways, I'd argue that contemporary feminist and queer cabaret and the performances/performers that thrive in this milieu operate as a genius antidote to (the well-meaning, to be sure) "It Gets Better" campaign and the (well-groomed, to be sure) horse it rode in on, counteracting the sanitized version of gay lives that get packaged for mass consumption, flaunting instead the dirty secrets of anti-normativity.

McLeod's "That's Right Diana Barry, You Needed Me" was originally commissioned for the 2008 Buddies in Bad Times' "Anne Made Me Gay" cabaret, curated by Moynan King and Rosemary Rowe. It now lives primarily as a short video performance available on McLeod's website. In this performance (my version is documentary footage of a performance at a 2008 Meow Mix, Miriam Ginestier's long-running Montreal cabaret "for bent girls and their buddies"), McLeod arrives onstage to a minimalist set—the only prop, the cover of Anne Murray's Greatest Hits album



projected onto a screen beside her. McLeod asks the audience if they like her dress, which is a red tassel number she “picked up at a Value Village in Oklahoma for \$7.” She then explains that when she was a young girl she fell in love with Anne Murray and that her affection/admiration for Anne Murray took the form of self-transformation:

I would put on the long-sleeve white turtleneck, total 1980s signature style for Anne Murray, liberally apply blue eye shadow and frosted pink lipstick [says to audience member, “You know what I’m talking about”] I know some of you hadn’t been born yet in 1980. I’m dating myself. I was seven. I would also tuck my white turtleneck into my tights. I don’t think Anne Murray ever did that, but I would rock it! [Strikes a pose with dress tucked into tights]. Cuz I was seven, and it felt fuckin’ awesome.

With her red tasseled dress tucked into her patterned black nylons, McLeod demonstrates the dance moves she would perform as a child “in the garage that my dad turned into a family room.” She then tells the audience that the other “Anne that was important in my sexual identity” was Anne Shirley from *Anne of Green Gables*, thus introducing “Canada’s song-bird” Anne Murray to *Anne of Green Gables*, the Canadian cultural export par excellence.

As she begins her tribute to Anne of Green Gables, McLeod compares Anne’s Diana Barry with her own first girlfriend, “whose name I’m not allowed to say in public, for legal reasons (hers, not mine, frankly).” This girlfriend, McLeod tells us, “was all like [tongue tongue tongue] ‘I’ve never

been with a girl before’ [tongue tongue tongue]. ‘Don’t worry my boyfriend won’t mind’ [tongue tongue tongue]. ‘He wants me to experiment’ [tongue tongue tongue].” McLeod responds to the girlfriend’s ambivalence: “Right! Cuz I’m really worried about your fuckin’ boyfriend when I’m fingerbanging you in the back of your station wagon when we’re camping with my parents after we play *Pictionary!*”

Following this mini-rant, McLeod asks the audience to indulge her in a celebration of her two Annes, at which point the projection changes to a video mash-up of the intimate scenes between Anne and Diana Barry in the 1985 Kevin Sullivan CBC mini-series based upon Lucy Maude Montgomery’s books (starring Megan Follows as Anne and Schuyler Grant as Diana Barry). Accompanying this mash-up of intimacies is a fantasy soundtrack of Anne Murray’s love song, “You Needed Me,” with the lyrics projected karaoke-style below the video. McLeod sings along to the song, performing what seem to be ABBA-inspired dance moves with her dress still tucked into her nylons, all while cajoling the audience to sing along as well. As the song ends, the video closes with a scene of Anne and Diana standing on an iconic P.E.I. cliff, the long grass blowing in the wind, the “bosom friends” looking out over the Atlantic Ocean. (Just as an interesting aside: during the 2000 Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English conference at the University of Alberta, Laura Robinson gave a paper entitled “Bosom Friends: Lesbian Desires in L.M. Montgomery’s *Book*,” which caused an uproar in the national media: newspapers across the country featured stories reporting that there is



"no proof" that Anne was a lesbian or harboured lesbian feeling toward other women in the novels. Also, in her memoir, *All of Me*, Anne Murray denies being a big ol' dyke, but she acknowledges that she has lots of lesbian fans, whom she appreciates.)

I think what thrills me about McLeod's work and makes it so interesting to me is that she seems to be driven by a consuming desire to prove that nothing is not queer. Queer fantasy is the proof that everything is potentially gay. In "Ultimate SUB Ultimate DOM," she produces a mash-up video-performance similar in structure to "That's Right Diana Barry," again placing her own fantasy-driven monologue at the centre of a piece that writes a queerly revisionist fantasy of two much-loved family favourites. McLeod begins: "Imagine if you will, Maria Von Trapp from *The Sound of Music* as the ultimate submissive. Okay? Now imagine that she is being topped by the ultimate dominatrix, Mary Poppins." She then goes on to narrate an SM scenario, set "in the nunnery," in which Maria Von Trapp confesses to being a "bad, bad little nun" to Mary Poppins, who is in the Mother Superior's office, doling out punishments. McLeod explains that Maria Von Trapp is on her knees on the stone, which makes "her knees very, very tender." While McLeod's video mash-up combines scenes of Maria Von Trapp begging for forgiveness, McLeod mocks the codes of appropriate feminine behaviour that makes "singing in the hills" and "dressing children in drapery" serious offences and, in so doing, she subverts the tropes of gender and class discipline so central to *The Sound of Music* and *Mary Poppins*. Maria Von Trapp then exclaims the degree of her transgressions, "And what's worse, I just can stop saying things!" and McLeod

interjects, imagining what might follow, "Fuck me, fuck me Mary Poppins. Fuck me, fuck me with your umbrella."

The rest of "Ultimate SUB Ultimate DOM" is a frenzied manifestation of a dungeon-appropriate encounter in which Mary Poppins tells a ball-gagged Maria Von Trapp that she is going to whack her again and again with her umbrella "until your ass is red, raw and rosy like my cheeks." McLeod's Mary Poppins demands, "You're going to call me Sir, you're going to call me Captain," transforming the patriarchal cruelty of these classics into role-playing fun. The encounter culminates with Mary Poppins explaining to her submissive, "Lucky for you the head of this umbrella turns into a big, fat five-inch dildo that I'm going to just jam into your wet, tight little pussy." She then commands Maria Von Trapp to sing "The Hills are Alive" with the ball-gag still in her mouth. The scene ends with a flushed McLeod concluding, "That's just a little something about how I think it might go," and the credits roll with Maria Von Trapp's famous yodeling. While McLeod's website explains that this piece is meant to "satirize homophobic theories of homosexual narcissism, which dismisses same sex attraction as a treatable narcissistic disorder," it is also satirizes the inherent power imbalances within the "family values" rhetoric that these classic films produce and reproduce.

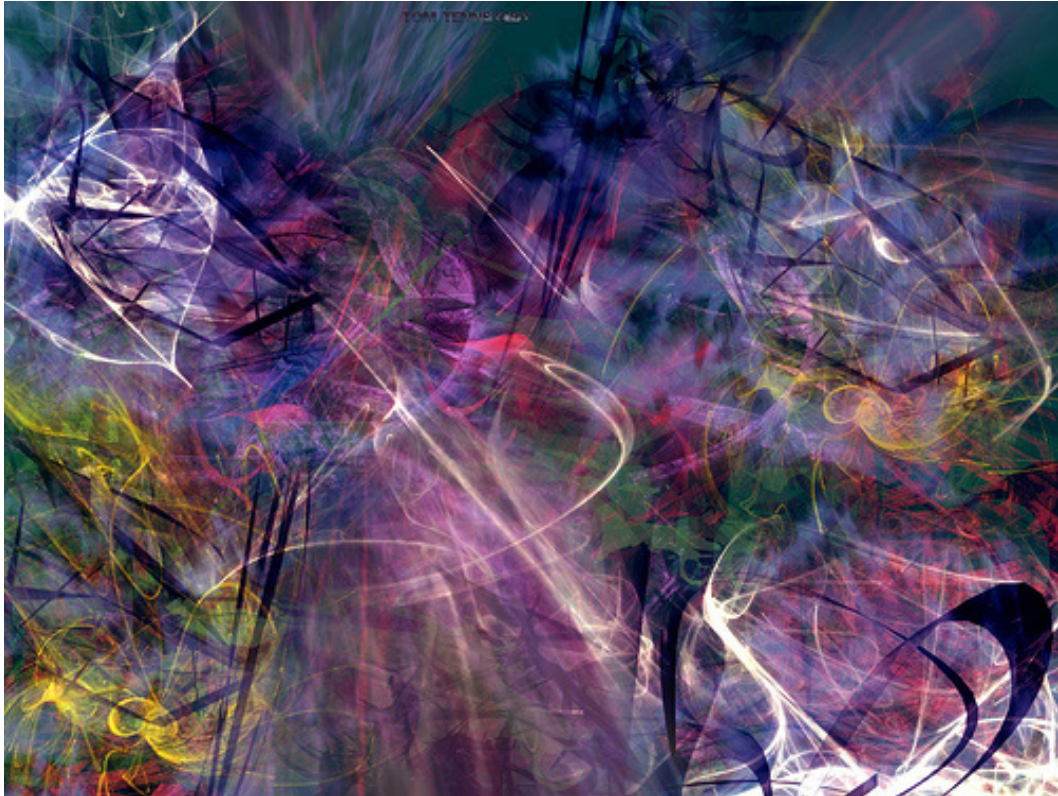
Since I'm talking about narcissistic fucking, it seems only right to conclude with a brief discussion of McLeod's "Sex Accidents and Home Repair," a video-performance originally commissioned in 2004 by Studio 303 for *The Home Show*, featuring McLeod as "Dayna McLeod," host of a



sex-safety home improvement program, and—appearing as a projection on a screen at the back of the stage—McLeod as Butch Johnson, the show's tool-savvy “sex-carpenter.” “Dayna McLeod,” performing with a projected Butch Johnson (you get that they are both McLeod, right?), explains that the mandate of their show, “Sex Accidents and Home Repair,” is to “make sex safe in any room of your home.” “Dayna McLeod” and Butch Johnson work together to help a sex-accident prone, “lady-lovin’” couple, Alyson and Mary Ann (who, like most T.V. girl-on-girl couples, always have sex fully clothed), whose furniture is not safe for “heavy petting fun.” Based on HGTV-style home-improvement-on-a-budget shows and featuring Butch Johnson fucking “Dayna McLeod” on Alyson and Mary Ann’s newly-reinforced living room furniture, this performance is a commentary on what I now understand as the “It Gets Better”-style aspirational lifestyle politics of home renovation culture, and, importantly, a cautionary tale against lesbian bed death (literally).

So, what does narcissistic fucking have to do with my claim that McLeod’s work serves as an antidote to homonormativity? Obviously, the answer is in the question. If only all the LGBTQ teens out there could find their way to the work of McLeod and other artists who make it clear that adult queerness is not necessarily about being as straight as possible, but is sometimes about being as unapologetically queer as possible, things might get a lot better.

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HOMOSEXUAL, HEAL THYSELF!

Nicholas Little

The mental disorder of homosexuality was cured in 1973 by the healing powers of a boardroom majority vote. The Board of Directors of the American Psychological Association (APA) voted gay people back to good health and, when the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) was published in 1980, homosexuality had been removed.

It was, however, replaced by a new diagnosis. Like regular old homosexuality, 'ego-dystonic homosexuality' is characterized by a lack of desire for the opposite sex and attraction to the same sex. But ego-dystonic homosexuals experience both as "unwanted thoughts or feelings". There aren't a lot of diagnosed ego-dystonic homosexuals out there. By the time the revised DSM-III-R was published in 1987, ego-dystonic homosexuality had also been removed—it had been constructed and deconstructed as a mental disorder in a span of just seven years.

Lest we under-estimate the speed of progress or the fervour of that dissenting minority around the APA boardroom table...In 2010, a prominent London newspaper printed the experiences of a self-described "happy, out gay man" who willingly

submitted himself to conversion treatment in order to map its continued existence among accredited members of the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists[1]. Sadly, he had no trouble finding therapists only too happy to try and cure him of his same-sex desire. One service user who had undergone 17 years of conversion therapy described it as "psychological torture".

Most homosexuals endure an entire childhood of attempted conversion therapy at the hands of family, friends and strangers. Yet we prove to be the most stubborn of patients. One effective antidote to the treatment is simply affirming to one another just how unconverted we still feel despite years of hetero proselytizing. "You still crazy?" "Yup. You?" "Uh huh."

Online gay chat rooms have certainly helped with this. I was recently chatting on the Internet with a 19 year old guy, who told me about his girlfriend, what it was like growing up in Brixton as the son of Caribbean immigrants who faithfully attended a Pentecostal church, his plans to go to university in the fall and the booze-soaked holiday he'd take with a gang of friends before that. After chatting for a bit he asked:

James:

do u want me to cum over tomorrow?

Nico:

that could be fun. although i get the sense you're still unsure how you feel

James:

yes

Nico:

to be honest, i'm not sure i want to be the source of another guy's guilt or anxiety

James:

u got a point. why didnt u say any of dis b4?

Nico:

we were just chatting is all. meeting up could be fun too. or it could make you feel awkward and bad about yourself, which would just make me uncomfortable – or not turned on at the very least

James:

honestly - dis may sound weird - but i actually pray to stop wanking while thinking bout guys. but i just keep doin it. its like its got a hold on me

Nico:

sounds like prayer is something real and powerful for you. i feel bad that you have desires you wish you didn't have

James:

i know dis may say sound weird but yr the only one i have opened up to

Nico:

well there's a lot at stake for you if you open up. it's a logical strategy to protect yourself by keeping things secret

James:

i know. so what to do?

Nico:

indeed, what to do? lots of guys have been in your shoes and there are different directions you can go in. each way is fine – it's okay whatever you choose.

we each get our own life and get to choose what to do with it, which is exciting and intimidating... that's life, i guess

James:

u sure?

Nico:

sure of what?

James:

the different directions thing that u said – u sure it's okay whatever I choose? do u think i should just weigh out the pros and cons????

Nico:

well, i won't lie to you: in my experience, men who feel sexual attraction to other men don't change. the sexual attraction doesn't go away.

James:

really? it's not gonna go away?

Nico:

well, others might tell you differently and they are entitled to their opinion as well. but i bet if you think about your own experience, you recognize how you have tried to resist being attracted to other men, and how it is always there nonetheless. like it is part of who you are.

that doesn't tell you what to do next, it just describes where you are at the moment. different men respond to being in that same situation in some pretty different ways – they choose to live all kinds of different lives. but that core feeling of attraction to other men, that doesn't go away – in my opinion, at least

James:

i find men attractive but i keep it to myself and don't act upon it

Nico:

and if that's the route you choose and if it works for you and you find peace of mind, then that is absolutely fine. that's one way to respond to what you're feeling and it's as legitimate as any other it's your life, you get to create it the way you want

James:

thats the way i handle things now but i dont think it works. cuz if it was working, i wouldnt be online looking for guys like you

Nico:

well, you may have a point there

James:

i dont know what to do

Nico:

well i feel for you. i can tell you're being honest here and it genuinely causes you distress. it's a shame for any person to feel bad about something that they know is coming from deep inside

James:

i know. it makes me feel sad

Nico:

i bet it does. and i bet it causes you stress. and you're 19 and you should be enjoying yourself!

James:

i know. this has affected my school work

Nico:

i believe you

James:

nicholas, what should i do? i feel like i need psychological help

Nico:

i wish i could give you an easy answer that would solve all of this for you. i wish there was a way to solve it quickly and make sure nobody gets hurt all i can do is give you a bit of advice --- but you have to keep in mind that i am just one guy and obviously i am biased in the sense that i have chosen to go with those attractions to other men and to live my life as a gay man

James:

lol

Nico:

well i just think of what your parents would say! they'd say, "don't listen to him, he's a crazy gay man and he's just trying to recruit you!"

James:

lol

Nico:

but really, i'm not

oh man, saying that just makes it sound like i am look, the way i have chosen to respond to my attraction to other men is just one of many ways of doing it. it works for me but you may find a way that works better for you. i can offer you advice as another man who has been in the situation you are currently in - just keep in mind that my choices are exactly that: mine. you get to choose for yourself

James:

yes its true

Nico:

i told you for example that although my boyfriend is a gay guy, he's made the choice not to tell his family. which is very different from the way i go about things. i don't ask him to do it my way. he has his own set of pros and cons and he has made his own choice for himself.

James:

well i see guys in college but i dont take notice even if they are attractive. but if they are girls i can think wow. but when i get home and i'm on the internet and i see guys like u, then i think mmmmm. wow, i'm in shit

Nico:

in what sense? where is the pressure coming from?

James:

there is pressure becuz there is no one gay in my family. and i'm in a relationship and i think im genuinely in love with her

Nico:

i think you are too

James:

but then i also think yr cute...

Nico:

well that's because i am. clearly!

James:

lol

Nico:

you don't have to be gay or bi to see THAT

James:

too funny

Nico:

look, you're about to enter a whole new world: you're gonna leave college, leave home, and for the first time you will be living on your own at university. the world is entirely yours to explore and your job is to make good on that opportunity

James:

yes

Nico:
you get to be 19 years old ONCE in your life. it's a pretty magic experience to step into adulthood and be totally in control. it's scary, but it's also exciting

James:
and so...

Nico:
and so... over the next couple of years, you're going to collect all kinds of new experiences and it's going to happen really quickly too
and they're all going to just go into your brain and bounce around in there somewhere and without you realizing it, they're going to create the vision of how you see the world
for some guys, religion and serving god is their #1 priority. that's great. other guys decide self-realization and attaining all of their personal or career goals is their #1 priority. that's fine too. some guys decide that family is most important to them and they are willing to put some of their personal goals on hold to make sure their family is safe and healthy. that's great. some guys look for adventure, others are drawn to stability and security. either one is fine.
over the next few years, you're gonna develop a stronger sense of what comes first for you. and the truth is: it doesn't really matter what those priorities are family, god, adventure, career, being a good friend, having lots of sex, working for a cause, making tons of money
they're all worthy goals AS LONG as it's true for you and you go about it with integrity

i know that's a bit corny, but i honestly think that's the most helpful thing someone could have told me when i was feeling the way you are feeling

James:
wow
i dont even know what to say
it would be great if i had a dad who could talk to me like this

Nico:
oh man

James:
my dad left me when i was young so... yeah

Nico:
you live with just your mom?

James:
yeah

Nico:
you grew up the same way i did then

James:
yeah. i think thats what made me have these feelings. cuz i only live with women

Nico:
you might be right. but then again, lots of men live only with women and are still sexually attracted to women

James:
thats true

“

whatever you end up choosing, don't feel shame about it. if you're going about things with integrity then you got no reason not to hold your head high and feel proud about it.

Nico:

i bet your mum has worked real hard to make sure your house stays together, yeah?

James:

yes she did

Nico:

and i bet if you're aware of how much sacrifice your mum has made to make sure you grew up in a strong home, then i bet you feel some real pressure not to let her down

James:

yes. that is 100,000% true

Nico:

i know it. i feel the exact same way

James:

dis may sound corny but u r a good inspirational speaker. and what u have said i will take into account

Nico:

haha, i dunno about that, but i do understand where you are coming from because i have been there myself. and a lot of other men have as well. they didn't all go in the same direction with it, but it can be a comfort knowing that you didn't invent this situation --- it's a dynamic that has played out many, many times before you

James:

now yr bringing psychology into it, innit? lol the psychodynamic approach!

Nico:

too funny. anyway, all i can say is that you are on the right path, james. you said you do well in school, you've got yourself through college, you're on your way to university, you're working on the weekends, you have a girlfriend you're into, you have a holiday with your mates coming up... that's the way you do it, man. piece by piece, you just get to it and try to act with integrity. that's all you can do.

James:

thank you

Nico:

you're entirely welcome.

whatever you end up choosing, don't feel shame about it. if you're going about things with integrity then you got no reason not to hold your head high and feel proud about it.

James:

yes i will. u r a great guy. thank you

Nico:

you're a great guy too.

James:

i owe u

Nico:

not at all, it's how guys like us make sure we survive. have a good night, man

James:

goodnite

James popped into my head quite a bit over the days that followed. I'm often amazed, living in London, how many different visions of the world converge in the exact same densely populated geography without ever necessarily interacting. How my own neighbourhood is full of dykes and veiled Muslims and Jamaican roti shop owners and orthodox Jews in fur-brimmed hats. How we all cover the same paths on the high street day after day, seeing each other but rarely taking any steps inside one another's world. Which is usually alright with me. I'm glad the Turkish barbers are there for me when I need them and the druggies have a park to shoot up in without me having to immerse myself in their lives. Me and my faggy friends no doubt serve as their passing entertainment the same as they do for us. But talking with James did make me wonder how many of those people I see in my neighbourhood privately wish they could cross into other worlds. How many of them are ego-dystonic, living lives of unwanted thoughts and feelings?

The following week I got back in touch with James:

Nico:
hey man, you been alright?

James:
yes. you?

Nico:
yup. i have a question for you: i've been thinking over what we chatted about last week. i went back and read it again and i thought that other guys in the same situation you were describing might find it useful to read something like that. to hear how another young guy is working it out

James:
ok. truth talks. so what do u want to do?

Nico:
well let me send it to you to read and you can tell me what you think

James:
ok

(Nico sends James the transcript of their last conversation with the intro about the history of homosexuality as mental illness. Long pause while James reads it.)

Nico:
I changed all the names and took out anything that might identify who you are or where you're from

James:
yeah I noticed that. is that for yr work or something?

Nico:
no, I just did it cause I think it's interesting.

James:
i didnt know that people thought the homosexuals had mental disorders

Nico:
a lot has changed in a short amount of time. at the end of the 1960s it was illegal to be gay. people were put in jail for having gay sex. and until the 1980s a lot of health professionals still considered attraction to the same sex to be a mental disorder. they tried to cure people of it

James:
lol
wow

Nico:
How would you feel if that conversation was printed somewhere so other people could read it?

James:
i think that would be a good idea
if i had stuff like that it would help me to figure out my sexuality earlier
wow. did that conversation inspire u dat much?

Nico:
it did, yeah. one way people like you and me eventually figure out what we want - and some of that confusion and guilt starts to disappear - is by talking to other guys in the same situation. at the very least, it's helpful to know that there are other people like us out there and that we're not crazy

James:
it's true

Nico:
like you say, you didn't know that gay guys used to be considered mentally ill. it seems nice when some of that history gets passed down and remembered. there have been a lot of guys exactly like us who just sort of disappeared because they were born in a different age

James:
yeah that's true. i dont mind if it gets printed

Nico:
ok. and one other thing...

James:
yeah?

Nico:
you know how you were talking about your mum and how she raised you on her own? how you wonder if the lack of a father in the house has something to do with why you go online looking to chat with guys like me?

James:
hmmm... yes

Nico:
well there's a musician from new york who's been around for decades and he's done some cool stuff. he talks a lot about the situation of black people in the US. he put a new album out this year and there's a song where he's talking about whether or not his home was broken and whether or not it makes him any less of a man.
i thought you might like to hear what he has to say

James:
ok

(Nico sends James a file of Gil Scott-Heron's On Coming From A Broken Home - Pt. 2. Pause while James listens to it.)

James:
everything he says in that song is true

On Coming From A Broken Home (Part. 2)

Gil Scott-Heron

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And so my life has been guided
And all the love I needed was provided
And through my mother's sacrifices I saw where her life went
To give more than birth to me, but life to me
And this ain't one of them clichés about black women being strong
cause hell, if you're weak, you're gone!
But life courage, determined to do more than just survive
And too many homes have a missing woman or man
But without the feeling of missing love
Maybe there are homes that are hurt
But there are no real lives that hurt will not reach
They're not broken!
Unless the homes of soldiers stationed overseas or lost in battles are
broken
Unless the homes of firemen, policemen, construction workers,
seamen, railroad men, truckers, pilots who lost their lives...
...but not what their lives stood for
And because men die, men lose, they are lost and they leave
And so do women
I come from what they called a broken home
But if they had ever really called at our house
They would have known how wrong they were
We were working on our lives and our homes
Dealing with what we had
Not what we didn't have
My life has been guided by women
But because of them I am a man
God bless you, Mama
And thank you

Nico:
absolutely!

James:
can I just say...
on behalf of all the "troubled teenagers"... thank
you. there needs to be more people like u
dont get all excited doe... lol

Nico:
thanks man. you're kind. but you're definitely not
troubled. i think you have everything sorted just
fine

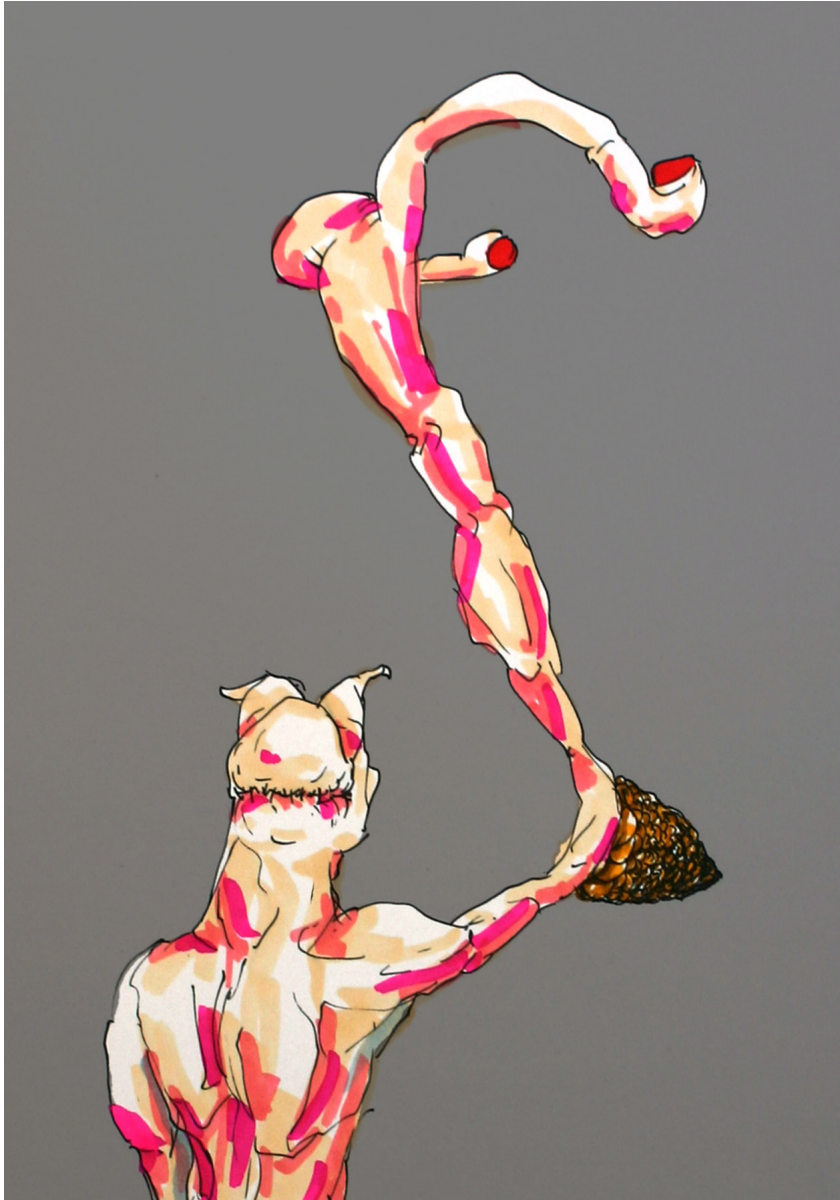
James: s
u think I have mental issues, don't u! lol

Nico:
well if you do, then we all do

References

[1] Strudwick, P. (2010, February 1). The ex-gay files: The bizarre world of gay-to-straight conversion The Independent.

Nicholas Little lived for several years in Ottawa, Ontario, teaching workshops on how to give better blowjobs and escorting for bi-curious bureaucrats on Parliament Hill. Since 2009, he has lived and worked in the United Kingdom. Email him at: nico [at] ickaprick [dot] com.



ÉTAT VITREUX

Massime Doucet

« Bon, le plan est simple. Tu m'écoutes? »

Ta tête étudiait le mouvement de mes lèvres par la vitrine du restaurant. C'était la seule, à cette table, qui portait attention à mes propos : les autres têtes avaient la bouche ouverte et la mort imprimée dans les yeux.

« Bon, on fait comme ça. J'entre dans le restaurant et on se tue ».

Tu piquais de ta fourchette ces têtes recouvertes de fines écailles, comme pour les réveiller ou encore leur retransmettre en code morse les paroles lues sur mes lèvres, et ainsi peut-être renforcer ta propre compréhension de mon monologue.

« Ensuite, on crisse la marde en Enfer. On se fait jeter hors des Flammes Éternelles. On est réincarné en crapauds pour notre Pénitence. Sur Terre, on embrasse de force de jeunes filles. On devient des Princes. On nous couvre d'or et de bijoux trop brillants. On se grille la rétine par une trop longue exposition à cet éblouissement violent. On meurt à nouveau, mais cette fois, des suites d'un accident lié à notre fraîche condition de non-voyants. On est réexpédié en Enfer. Là-bas, à cause de nos antécédents, on nous engage comme Bourreaux de l'Éternité. On fait mal au Monde pendant un temps. Et là, lassés des Lamentations, on finit par se percer les tympans avec la Fourche du Démon ».

“ Mais l'issue serait sans surprise : tes derniers mots rouleraient au fond de ta gorge, entraînés par un bout de truite avalé tout rond.

Tu avais choisi la table donnant sur la grande baie vitrée. La chaise devant toi était libre, j'étais sorti fumer une cigarette dont je ne respirais pas la fumée. Les poissons sur la table n'avaient pas bronché sous tes coups de fourchette dans leurs yeux cuits : ils arboraient le même air ébahi qu'à l'instant où on les posa devant nous.

« Alors? On fait ça? Tu vas me suivre là-dedans? Parce que sinon, très sincèrement, je ne vois pas de sens à ce blind date »

Mes derniers mots te réveillèrent de la série de hochements de tête dans laquelle tu t'étais engagé par politesse. Tu ne comprenais rien du tout à mes paroles assourdies par la vitre entre nous. Si on t'avait demandé de retranscrire sur papier l'intégralité de ce tu avais entendu, on aurait probablement lu quelques « bla... bli... blou... », deux petits « kling-kling » de vaisselle et une poignée de « tout est à votre goût ici? » filtrée dans la moustache trop longue du serveur.

Le désir d'expression de ton ressenti ordinaire fulminait si fort dans ta poitrine que tout ce que tu souhaitais voir se produire était la fermeture définitive de ma bouche. À ta pleine satisfaction, ma lèvre supérieure était tombée molle derrière le « date » de « blind date » annonçant ainsi la fin de mon idée. Ton intérêt simulé jusque-là m'avait rempli d'une joie certaine, fluide et irrépressible. J'étais aveuglé par mon envie de développer avec toi des liens solides tissés d'imprévus. Et cela, jusqu'à l'instant suivant, où ta voix enfermée dans le restaurant fit éclater au grand jour la vérité de par sa projection étouffée. Tu ne planifiais pas un suicide avec moi, réel ou imaginaire, tu ne voulais pas te réincarner. Tu préférais rester là, tranquille, à remplir l'air de mots identiques à hier : ce soir-là, celui de la salle à manger de ce resto de Québec, plus tard, celui du vide de ton appartement, et demain matin au travail, celui de tout le septième étage du Complexe G.

Le désappointement fondant mon visage n'empêchait pas ta tête de parler. Elle poussait des mots excessivement bien articulés, étant au fait du niveau de difficulté de la communication. Les anecdotes brûlaient ta langue et le seul moyen pour toi de l'apaiser consistait à souffler des nuées denses de mots. Le long muscle mouillé se débattait entre tes dents comme sur un bûcher. De mon côté de la vitrine, la rue s'improvisait bruiteuse de tes moindres gestes : ta bouche se refermait dans un claquement de porte de cabriolet, tes yeux clignaient avec les klaxons et tu déglutissais au son des accélérateurs. On aurait pu croire à une performance artistique spécialement élaborée pour ce rendez-vous ou encore à un dérèglement spatio-temporel de la matière et des sons nés sur ton visage et s'emparant peu à peu du reste du monde. Mon œil cherchait nerveusement

aux alentours toute autre concordance insolite entre sons et images qui étayerait l'une ou l'autre de ces théories et cela, jusqu'à tomber nez à nez avec le reflet de ma tête dans la vitrine. Ma tête fantomatique, virtuellement posée sur la tienne, en équilibre, froide, désensibilisée à toutes les secousses de ton crâne de pivert excité.

Je n'étais pas le seul spectre à cette vitrine. Il y avait la silhouette d'un pêcheur sur le menu collé plus bas. Il souriait à pleine bouche, malgré le fait qu'on lui ait délibérément amputé les jambes au ciseau pour intégrer les plats du jour. Les quelques points de trame noire le dessinant suffisaient à lui conférer un air charmant. J'étais certain qu'on s'entendrait bien, lui et moi, s'il pouvait se matérialiser. J'apprendrais à composer avec son physique constitué de sphères noires : je les nettoierais quotidiennement une à une, j'en rapprocherais deux pour subvenir à mes besoins naturels et surtout, je les réorganiserais au gré de mes caprices et valeurs du moment.

Mais la réalité actuelle ne m'offrait que toi et ta bouche parlante prête à engloutir du poisson. Deux morceaux de chair, une issue fatale. L'une venait accompagnée de légumes sautés, l'autre d'un profil ordinaire sur Gay411. Un frisson glissa le long de ma colonne. Le poisson s'approchait de tes lèvres charnues, suivi de la fourchette, puis de ta main la soutenant. Ils avançaient un peu, puis reculaient subitement. Optaient-ils pour une stratégie de la feinte? Ta bouche, elle, parlait et parlait sans arrêt. Tentait-elle de faire diversion ? Nul ne savait quelles étaient les intentions liées à ce cérémonial. Mais l'issue serait sans surprise : tes derniers mots rouleraient au fond de ta gorge, entraînés par un bout de truite avalé tout rond.

Je profitai de ce calme passager pour me retourner sur cette rue tranquille de Québec. Les néons découpant l'enseigne de la pharmacie d'en face éclairaient timidement le trottoir. Le soir était tombé. Les ombres pesantes avaient métamorphosé la ville en un agglutinement baroque de polygones ternes. Toutes choses s'extirpant d'un point de lumière intégraient plus loin ces polygones. Un cycliste roulait sur le trottoir suivi de près par un second frisson dans mon dos. Cette fois, c'était la vitre qui irradiait sa froideur dans mes omoplates jusqu'au bout de mon coccyx. Ta présence derrière y était pour quelque chose. J'entendais cogner dans la vitrine. C'était forcément ton petit poing de rat. Je devinais l'onde de choc sur le verre, de petits cercles à peine perceptibles, même pour le pêcheur. Je traverserais bientôt cette rue sans me retourner. De l'autre côté, je me laisserais peut-être entraîner dans la danse des moustiques inspirée par la pharmacie illuminée. Je me joindrais à eux pour quelques pas improvisés. J'essaierais de nouveau de voleter.

*Massime Dousset écrit à temps perdu des nouvelles et de la poésie. Il prône avant tout la dislocation de banalités en objets étranges et ludiques. L'essentiel de son travail s'envole sous forme de courriels à une amie ou en commentaires sur Facebook. Le reste dort en boule dans les drafts de son G-mail pour ne s'épanouir que rarement au sein d'une publication. Ses plus récents projets publiés sont le livre d'artiste et recueil *Quatre fables : Une + Une + Une + Une* (autoédition, 2002), une suite e-épistolaire orageuse en six courriels sans réponses, «Matte furoncle», «Ribs de velours», «Yuri le vitreux», «Mini bean», «Lèche-tes-tiches» et «Memouache» dans le fanzine *Feelings* (autoédition, 2006), ainsi que deux nouvelles «Du bon goût» et «Chez les eux», parues l'année dernière chez *No More Potlucks*.*

Polyamory blew my mind, it dissected me, from my whimpering brain down to my most miserable childhood memories. I'm going to recall all 10 of the lovers that I was jealous of, and hope that the pieces help me understand what I was so afraid of.

I fantasized about #1, and in my mind she was such a good lover. She made all of the right moves. She would begin making love to Den in the taxi from the airport, and then continue on the staircase, in the doorway, on the floor surrounded by candles, and the next night she and Den would still be going strong in a marathon of ecstasy.

Such an exaggerated love life wouldn't be possible for anyone, but somehow my imagination made it work. I never met her. She was just an invisible Casanova. I could flash forward twenty-four hours and they would still be lying there as the sun went down, discovering each other's bodies in a haze of lust.

What good did this do me? Did I want to be prepared for the worst? Did I want her to be nothing but a machine? Was it easier than imagining more mundane images? Would the thought of a happy stroll have been even more threatening? What about their little quarrels, or their moments of boredom? Did I need her to be so surreal?

Did it make it easier for me to overreact? Maybe I needed the terror, the crying and the drama. It all motivated me to fight. Maybe anything was better than surrender.



10 LOVERS

Elisha Lim

Elisha Lim was born in Toronto and grew up in Singapore, in a Catholic convent girls' school overrun with queers, many of whom inspire their first graphic novel 100 Butches. Elisha finally came out in Berlin, and embarked on a sharp learning curve of feminist squat houses, queer trailer parks, transgender pride parades and an Ethical Slut reading group. Elisha was thrilled to be named "Artist in Residence" by Curve, a "Queer Woman to Watch" by afterellen.com, and to run their strips in magazines like Diva, LOTL, CapitalXtra! and NOMOREPOTLUCKS. One of their biggest thrills to date is to be the first exhibit at Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue's inspiring brand new Feminist Art Gallery, aka FAG. Elisha's first book 100 Butches will be published this year and prints are currently on sale at <http://www.etsy.com/shop/elishalim>



TALK ABOUT BODY: JD SAMSON

Erica R. Meiners

Formerly with the 1990s band *Le Tigre*, JD Samson has had a history of involvement with pleasure-producing feminist projects since graduating from Sarah Lawrence College in 2000 with a major in film studies. In addition to *Le Tigre*, JD continues to collaborate with a number of visual and/or musical artists, including *Peaches*, *Christina Aguilera*, *Emily Roysdon* and *Cass Bird*. JD's latest project is with *MEN*.

MEN, the trio of *Michael O'Neill*, *Tami Hart*, and *JD Samson* – each artist having a distinct musical and political lineage—identify themselves on MySpace as “disco house, punk, and reggae.” With danceable tracks like “Simultaneously” and “Life’s Half Price,” *MEN*’s politically charged queer

pop is a mixture of *Lesbians on Ecstasy*, *Pet Shop Boys*, *Joan Armatrading*, *KRS ONE*, *Nina Simone* and of course, *Le Tigre*.

Released in February 2011, their first album *Talk About Body* foregrounds the elasticity of bodies, material and ideological, with lyrics that offer a sharp, feminist and queer lens on reproduction, street harassment, community, labour, pleasure, and ‘radical surgery’ and ‘prosthetic sex.’

It’s April 2011, and *JD Samson* is back in New York. The following is a snippet from our conversation that morning. As in most of her interviews, it appears *JD* is unstintingly kind.

“ I learned in Le Tigre that we are being activists through our work and we don't necessarily have to do every benefit that people ask us to do, because it doesn't help us to survive as activists in the world.

Erica R. Miners: I love the track “Credit Card Babie\$” It’s a really great anthem for queer reproduction right now...

JD: The song takes this kind of depressing topic and turns it around and makes it a way for queers to come together. It’s definitely the song that people freak-out about the most when we play it—which is really cool. It’s definitely the song that was the first—THE hit that made people interested in us—especially queer people. I wanted to write the song because I’m now 32, and I’m definitely hitting a place where I’m interested in starting a family, but the complications push me back in a way. We really wanted to show all sides of questioning having babies...

ERM: You modify and cover the Joan Armatrading’s powerful song “My Family.” What is your vision for queer family or queer kinship now, especially when queer family in the United States just seems to mean gay marriage?

JD: Joan Armatrading is my favorite musician that has ever lived. She’s very inspirational to me, not only just for her songwriting but her vocal rhythm and her persona. I’m actually wearing her t-shirt right now. My aunt is a lesbian, and my aunt’s ex-girlfriend introduced me to Joan Armatrading when I was a teenager ...and it was kind of one of those things where I thought at the time, “that’s for adults.” Later, I really got into it and Joan became this amazing hero to me. That song, “My family,” is from her first record that she made with—questionably—her partner Pamela Nestor, because they’re not out. That song, originally, is very slow and I find it very emotional and almost religious. We really

wanted to turn it around and make it a disco track and kind of celebrate this new religion. One thing about being in a band all the time is that your family kind of shifts to be the people that you travel with, your band, and then it becomes the audience and your community because we choose to spend every night of our lives with our fans and with each other. I really wanted to express my gratitude to the people around me that are so giving and kind and whom I trust with my heart and stuff... my chosen family.

ERM: Talk about the album’s playful title, Talk About Body, and the meanings for you and MEN around trans and feminist politics?

JD: After listening to the record in its entirety, we realized that we talk about a couple of things pretty regularly on the record. One of them is the body and also sex and gender expression and identity. Then we talk about money and we talk about power and both money and power do come back to the body. It was important for us to have a title that wasn’t a command but felt like it could be. We were really interested in the way that those three words lead you to this reality-check and that’s really what the record has become.

The record is a way for all of us to silently realize where we are right now, and I think it can seem depressing and it can also seem really hopeful. Those words “talk about body” kind of help us all talk or not talk, but saying we talk is that you have to think. My body and our bodies and MEN, the title of the band and why we’ve named ourselves that, also make people gawk. What bodies we live in and how we get to choose our genders and label ourselves, our sex—it’s all kind of tied together.

ERM: In other interviews, you have outlined why the band is called MEN – you and Johanna [Fateman, of Le Tigre and original member of MEN] were talking about your new philosophy on life, just pre-MEN, and asking yourselves “what would a man do” (ask to get paid) as a “confidence boosting deal.” I am interested in what you outlined about these relationships between money, gender and a sense of entitlement?

JD: It’s really difficult. I learned in Le Tigre that we are being activists through our work and we don’t necessarily have to do every benefit that people ask us to do, because it doesn’t help us to survive as activists in the world.

This is an interesting kind of journey to go on, because in some ways you can feel guilty for asking for money. I grew up in a multi-class background that was really complicated for me to try and keep up all the time. I do have a generosity issue where I’m continuously trying to pretend I have more money than I do. I want to say “yes” to all benefits and I want to give, give, give so much, but there is a line that I have to draw, for myself. It’s been really interesting to kind of go through that process.

I was listening to some of the Le Tigre Sweepstakes record the other day, and there is this line that Johanna wrote that was something like “I am a feminist but I won’t be coming to your benefit”—I think that’s the line— it’s so brilliant! At a certain point, there was a way to measure your feminism based on how much money you can give and what people expect of you based on your level of like, you know? We just played Coachella, a huge

festival, and we lost money. That is just how it goes sometimes. But people expect you’re going to be millionaires.

ERM: On that note, I know you DJ-ed a fundraiser in Chicago for the Transformative Justice Law Project, a local collective made up of “radical lawyers, social workers, activists, and community organizers who are deeply committed to prison abolition, transformative justice, and gender self-determination.”

Why the commitment to queer justice organizations that aren’t working for the big ticket LGBTQ items, like marriage or the ability to participate in a permanent military economy?

JD: I am a supporter of the Sylvia Rivera Project here in New York.

I’m in an interesting position in terms of trans-law because I am, in some circles, considered to be trans, but I really don’t identify as anything; I’m kind of just like me.

That’s difficult and problematic for some people to understand. But the reality is that I am happy under the umbrella term of queer or lesbian or gay, or any of those words. I personally have a difficult time with the separation into miniature subcultures, and I really miss the larger family perspective, I guess.

So I choose to live within all of them. But people see me as this spokesperson for the trans community, and I’m happy to take that on while I’m also

happy to not necessarily identify as trans, but also be a spokesperson for that community.

Because I think what this does actually is to open everything up a little bit more, which is exactly what it should be all about: free gender fluidity. I also have a history with the Michigan Women's Music Festival. Of course I do find issues with the policy of trans people not being allowed into the festival, so it's important for me to show that I have support on both sides and that it's also possible to be supportive of both sides for different reasons. I guess it's just important for me to show my stance in lots of different ways and just prove that it's not so black and white.

ERM: What are you're reading these days?

JD: The Patti Smith book, *Just Kids*, which I'm really into. I'm really excited after that to read *Bossypants*, by Tina Fey. And I read Eileen Miles's *Inferno*. I actually just bought a new copy of Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues*, and I was going to re-read it because I feel like it's been too long. I'm

really inspired by people who have opened the world up and that's the reason why I read so much nonfiction because I'm just like, tell me about how you do this, you know? ... It's been really important for me to stay away from too many definitions and labels, and to make sure to continuously create space and open it up instead of closing it down. I kind of try to stay away from too much theory because I feel like it does shut me down a little bit, closes the doors a little bit.

With July 2011 performances scheduled for London and Vienna, MEN's live concerts might be out of reach to some of us, but not for your kitchen or garage dance parties.

<http://blog.menmakemusic.com/>
<http://www.myspace.com/men>

Erica R. Meiners lives and works in Chicago.

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