Wetlands Magazine, Volume 1

Gender and Queer Studies Program, University of Puget Sound

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JOHNSTON HILL, KIRSTEN FAHLBUSCH, LIBBY ORRICK, SORAYA BODAGHI, RYAN COLEMAN, ZACH PER -
THE STAFF OF WETLANDS MAGAZINE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE GENDER STUDIES ADVISORY BOARD,
TED TO THE MAGAZINE FOR THEIR SUPPORT, AND LASTLY WE WANT TO THANK OUR LOVERS FOR
the trail,
DEREK BUSCHER, STEFFEN MINNER, MAX HONCH, THE ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF PUGET SOUND (ASUPS), MARTA PALMQUIST-CADY, THE MEDIA BOARD,
2 3
Wetlands Magazine
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Publisher DOMENIC’S PRINTING INC. KENT, WA

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THE TRAIL, THE STUDENT DIVERSITY CENTER (SDC), DOMENIC TASSIELLI, ALL PEOPLE WHO SUBMIT -
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Dear Reader,

There is not much we can say about our beginnings and aims that has not already been said by our campus newspaper, The Trail. Perhaps that is where we should start, by acknowledging the overwhelming campus support we have received, not only from other campus publications like Crosscurrents but from members of student government, the administration, campus groups, staff, and faculty, most notably the Gender Studies Department. We simply cannot thank you all enough! However, while we did not confront many objections in getting Wetlands off the ground, that does not mean that the University of Puget Sound is some sex/gender utopia or feminist paradise.

When Anya came to Megan and Ruby in November with the idea for a new arts and literary magazine inspired by the works of Harvard, Rice, and Columbia University, their participation was a no-brainer. Considering how much opportunity there is for us to explore and expand our understanding of ourselves and others, be it at a Vulva Anti-Violence Alliance meeting or in the classroom, the Gender Studies Department continues to be understaffed, underfunded, and undervalued. Students on our campus continue to experience high rates of sexual violence and harassment. Last year, our campus showed us campus continue to experience high rates of sexual violence and harassment. Last year, our campus showed us

Though we aimed to be representative of our entire campus, this issue is our first and it is far from perfect. Missing are the male voices addressing their bodies and their politics; we only received one piece confronting the issue of race on this campus; absent is talk of abortion, performance issues, virginity, and more. We hope that by bringing up what are undeniable difficult issues in aesthetically pleasing and engaging forms, we will foster a dialogue on sexual expression and gender exploration within the larger Puget Sound community, making subsequent issues of Wetlands even more powerful. Until then, we are proud to present our Virgin Volume. The works submitted to us were beautiful, heartbreaking, hilarious, challenging, and relatable, sometimes simultaneously.

Readers should note that some material is sexually explicit. A few pieces deal directly with issues of violence and non-consent. We ask that all readers take care of themselves while reading and continue dreaming of a better world where we are all free to live and love as we please. Now, enough of us, we give you the first issue of Wetlands. Don’t let this be its last!

Sincerely,

Ruby Aliment, Anya Callahan, and Megan Chambers

Being queer has no bearing on race or class or creed
my white publicist said
true love is never affected by color or country
or the carnal need for cash
I curb the flashes of me crashing across the table
to knock his blond skin from Manhattan
to Montego Bay to witness
the bloody beatings of beautiful brown boys
accused of the homosexual crime of buggery amidst the new fangled fallacies of sexual and racial freedom for all these under-informed self-congratulating pseudo-intellectual utterances reflect how apolitical the left has truly become

I don’t know why but the term lesbian just seems so confrontational to me
why can’t you people just say you date other people?

Again I say nothing tongue and courage tied with fear
I am at once livid ashamed and paralyzed by the neo-conservatism breeding malicious amongst us Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Ally Questioning Two spirit Non-gender conforming—every year we add a new letter

Yet everyday
I become more afraid to say black or lesbian or woman—everyday
under the pretense of unity I swallow something I should have said about the epidemic of AIDS in Africa or the violence against teenage-girls in East New York or the mortality rate of young boys on the south-side of Chicago

I get the bell hooks-ian urge
to kill mother-fuckers who say stupid shit to me all day
bitter branches of things I cannot say out loud

sprout deviant from my neck

fuck you-you-fucking-racist-sexist-turd
fuck you for wanting to talk about homophobia while you exploit the desperation of undocumented immigrants
to clean your hallways
bathe your children and cook your dinner for less than you and I spend on our tax deductible lunch!

I want to scream

all oppression is connected you dick!

at the heart of every radical action in history stood the dykes who were feminists

the anti-racists who were gay rights activists

the men who believed being vulnerable could only make our community stronger

as the violence against us increases
where are the LGBT centers in those neighborhoods

where assaults occur most frequently?

as the tide of the Supreme Court changes

where are the LGBT marches

to support a woman’s right to an abortion?

what say we about health insurance for those who can least afford it?
Sick Cravings
By Cleo Maul

HIV/AIDS was once a reason for gay white men to act up
now your indifference spells the death
of straight black women
and imprisoned Latino boys
apparently
if the tragedy does not immediately impact you
you don't give a fuck
offer a social ladder to those of us inclined to climb
and watch the bottom of a movement fall out
a revolution once pregnant with expectation
flounders
without direction the privileged and the plundered

the faces that represent us
have begun to look like the ones who used to burn crosses
and beat bulldaggers and fuck faggots up the ass
with loaded guns

the companies that sponsor our events
do not honor the way we live or love
or dance or pray
our life partnerships are deemed domestic
and the term marriage is reserved
for those unions sanctioned by a church controlled state
for all the landmarks we celebrate
we are still niggers
and faggots
and minstrel references
for jokes created on the funny pages of a heterosexual
world

the horizons are changing
to keep pace with technology and policy alike
the LGBT manifesto has evolved into a corporate agenda
and outside that agenda
a woman is beaten every 12 seconds
every two minutes
a girl is raped somewhere in America
and while we stand here well-dressed and rejoicing
in India
in China
in South America a small child cuts the cloth
to construct you a new shirt
a new shoe
an old lifestyle held upright
by the engineered hunger and misuse of impoverished
lives

gather round ye fags, dykes
trannies and all those in between
we are buried knee deep in the quagmire
of a battle for our humanity
the powers that have always been
have already come for the Jew

Just For Show
By Anonymous

I could only think it must be love.
It may have been your idea in the beginning, but
this time, was it yours or mine? I think I knew how
this would end, and you certainly did. But you let it
happen anyway. At this point it doesn't matter how it
started. Or how much you said you wanted to be with
me, how much we needed each other and needed This.
This relationship. Or how long I said no. Maybe that
was part of the game, part of why I intrigued you in the
first place.
The first step is falling in love. It took you to
push me over the edge, but eventually I fell.
The second step, it's disillusionment. I was pes-
simistic the whole time. I didn't believe our mania, our
insatiable need and love for one another, could last. And
of course, what pleasure could you derive from destroy-
ing us if not first persuading me to believe that it could?
The third step, it was breaking free. How does
it feel to build something up just to tear it down. Love,
sex, intimacy. The most important thing to me is my re-
lationships with those I love. But to deny the dark side,
the hurt they can incur or the way people use them to
tear apart another.. I would be lying if I said they don't
leave wounds.
When you want something that bad, you'll do
anything to keep it. You'll idealize the other to the point
where it isn't them you love, but rather some parallel,
imagined being that is all the things they said they were.
That keeps the promises they broke. That means the
things they said, loves you like you want them to and
like they said they do. But this person, this person is all
in your head.
Everything was wonderful until it wasn't. First
big problem we had, he came to me and said we had to
end it. Shock, agony, tears. I didn't understand. Let's try
again. Okay I love you we'll make this work. I love you
too, I didn’t think people like you existed, you said. You wrote me poems; you were always checking in, wanting to spend every spare moment in each other’s arms, not even having sex just being near another was enough. As far as I believed I loved you. The man in my head, he was wonderful. But after that night, fuck before that night, I can’t remember… I could never be right. You always had the first word, the last word, every word. Everything I had to say, it didn’t matter, and you never failed to tell me so. I was wrong. You were superior, all knowing, omnipotent and arrogant. I kept seeing you despite the warning signs. Your bigotry still disgusted me.

But your touch was like nothing I had ever had before, you said, the first one to really teach you about sex. The best you’d ever had. Something different, intimate, connected, special, sweet. Loving. You said, the way I would look at you, you felt truly connected, truly close to me like you’d never felt with anyone before. Sex was an important way of how I expressed myself to you. It was how I opened up and made myself vulnerable and explained that I trusted you and wanted to know your soul not just your body. That physical connection, for me, it meant something. We waited awhile. I thought I knew you well enough. That was all you are or ever were to me just a prize that was won and I’m done so goodbye get the fuck away from me. It’s hard to win and me I liked the challenge. And now I’ve that is all you are or ever were to me just a prize that was won and I’m done so goodbye get the fuck away from me.

You said: you’re pretty and you dress nice. And I attached it’s not you I love but the attention I want to have you and that physical connection, for me, it meant something. We waited awhile. I thought I knew you well enough. That was all you are or ever were to me just a prize that was won and I’m done so goodbye get the fuck away from me.

§3.1. On the unlikelyhood of real-world commitment. – Nietzsche quips, “What great philosopher hitherto has been married? Heracitus, Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Schopenhauer … one cannot even imagine them married. A married philosopher belongs in comedy, that is my proposition – and as for that exception, Socrates – the malicious Socrates, it would seem, married ironically…” (On the Genealogy of Morals, §3.7)

Marriage and the promise of a lifetime of sexual satisfaction is nothing joyful in the philosopher’s case, but is instead ‘abhorrent’, ‘a hindrance’, ‘a calamity’. The philosopher engages in asceticism not to deny the self, but rather to achieve its singular desire: a quiet space to think in!

§3.2. The sex lives of famous philosophers. – Our historical knowledge is somewhat nonexistent, so it is a fair bet that their sex lives were accordingly nil. – It is rumoured that Heracitus developed the theory that early human begins to walk on four-, four-legged creatures, two conjoined as one. They were then separated by the gods, condemned to roam the Earth in search of a lost beauty. He wrote in his journal that she was a “blind god of erotic love” to him, and that he needed to reject this false idol in favor of his true god. Leaving her coldly and suddenly, he remained celibate for the rest of his life…

– Descartes was hardly well adjusted; he thought God put cats on the planet for him to torture, and he wrote a book about locking himself in a room for a week. Thus it is almost too frightening to imagine what his sex life must have been like… – pair Leibniz’s lack of expertise on the subject with the fact that he invented binary notation and a primitive calculator, and it is clear that this wild-haired seventeenth-century man deserves an award for groundbreaking contributions to virgin gawkdom… – Kant was an adamant celibate, regarding sex as a vote of confidence to substantiate the relationship between two people, but rendered it frivoious and unfurling. To him, sex transformed loving relationships into lurid feats of carnal indulgence, sacrificing moral action and thought in the process. Not only did Kant condemn the mingling of emotions and sexuality, he also thought that masturbation was a sin worse than suicide… – and finally, Schopenhauer went all the way and argued that all sexual activity was an “exercise in metaphysical futility.” We can now see where Nietzsche is coming from…

§3.3. Untimely ejaculations. – Returning to Nietzsche’s remark, the true question to ruminate on is: was this statement made with affinity or contempt? Nietzsche was most likely a virgin, but died of syphilis anyway (talk about bad luck). Before he fell madly in love with a Russian college student named Lou Salome, but she in turn favored his good friend Paul Réé and rejected Nietzsche’s advances. This may help to explain Nietzsche’s bitter opinion of women. If only he could have given over his egotistic selfpity, he may have been able to channel that intelligent rage into some mind-blowing romps in the boudoir. What if philosopher hasn’t fantasized about the Übermensch in bed – whether it’s being one, or being with one? A sexual superman or superwoman must be the protagonist of many a fantasy; perhaps this explains why Nietzsche was so keen on the idea, and dreamed of its actualization as the peak of human achievement…

§5.1. Sisyphus’s Climb to the Peak, or, Existentialism & Erections, part 1. – It is clear that philosophers spend much of their time ruminating, utterly lost in thought. They have a difficult time shutting the thought cycle off. To be lost fully in the sexual act, reflective intellectual contemplation ought to be entirely suspended, or else involvement with the other is ruined… It seems as if the
§5.2. The Burden of Atlas, or, Existentialism & Erections.

- Philosophy is a full-time job—only very rarely do we see a philosopher who engages fully in the moment, which is a prerequisite for enjoyable sex. Perhaps this is why Sartre was so successful in both philosophical and sexual inquiry: at least he was engaged and engaging. Despite Sartre's gremlin-like visage, he was the dawg of the 20th century French intellectual circle, rivaled in sexual conquest only by his polyamorous lover Simone de Beauvoir. He failed, however, to see that his philosophy of freedom trapped him. Ontology can only distract one from a situation, coloring things in a different light. – Like Sisyphus in his myth, the existentialist protagonist is trapped. Once the gaping maw of the indifferent Void has transfixed you, it will be hard to begin a titillating exchange with that lovely man or woman you've been eying in the library for some time now. ... Paralyzed by the realization of utter freedom, the question of whether one ought to reach for the coffee mug or open a window or even breathe, the philosopher simply cannot bother themselves with a frivolous clitoris ... When you are struck with the emptiness and utter despair of each moment of existence, grieving the death of God, an erection is thoroughly out of the question. Like Atlas, the existentialist must shoulder the weight of the world stoically and silently. The despairing philosopher sees life as an infinitely heavy thing, while sex ought to be a lifting of the weight of the world, a breath of fresh air. No one can shoulder the burden of Atlas or the boulder of Sisyphus without dreaming of simple pleasures, silklen sheets, wet mouths...


- The first few hundred years of Western philosophy amounted to the awkward few seconds of a virgin's first time, recent philosophers have broken ground by progressing to the paroxysm-inducing thrusts of the 'middle,' arguably the most fun part of the sexual act. Things get kinky starting in the early '60s with Foucault and his History of Sexuality: Foucault argued that sexual deviance is a mere social construction and the only way out of the hole that we dug for ourselves is — guess what — lots and lots of experimental screwing. Foucault, a homosexual and avid participant in San Francisco BDSM subculture, definitely did his fair share... but, as far as theory goes, Gilles Deleuze comes out on top: Foucault once said that the twenty-first century would inevitably be "Deleuzian." Deleuze-Guattari's philosophy borders on the tantric: there is not one mountain of truth to climb, merely plateaus, one thousand plateaus ... Finally, the arrival of feminist theory (propelled by Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex) asserted women's equally sophisticated capability and penchant for thought and theoretical exegesis, which had been stifled by similar social constructions until the twentieth century in all countries that spawned cultured academics. (Notice how literally every philosopher considered up to this point has been a white male?) It is hard to believe how early in the history of philosophy we currently are; the next ontology to turn the world on its head may very well cum from the mouth of a female thinker.

§7. The climax.

- Sex is becoming more and more a part of philosophy — certainly we're all interested in it, and it's a lot more interesting than masturbatory metaphysics (here's looking at you, Liebniz). But why isn't philosophy becoming more and more a part of sex? — Because most philosophers are going to cum long before you, a very small number of philosophers are going to cum at the same time as you, and you'll never get to meet any philosophers who will cum after you!
**Feminism/ sex/ bell hooks/ masturbation/ communication/ sex**

By Rosie the Riveter, further proof that feminists screw

(Preface: I really love bell hooks. All of her included quotes are from her book, *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics.*)

I have been with my boyfriend for over two amazing years. I have never been with anyone who is as respectful, honest, funny, kind-hearted, and feminist as he is (even if he denies his feminist-slant).

PLUS, the sex is amazing.

For these many reasons, my partner was shocked into silence when a female acquaintance sympathetically apologized to him because I am a feminist.

Her exact phrase was, "Oh, so that means you don't have a lot of sex then, right?"

**FUCK NO THAT IS NOT WHAT IT MEANS!!**

Feminists have sex.

In fact, feminists have GREAT sex!!

After this outrageously inaccurate depiction of myself and other feminists, I felt the all-consuming desire to quiet this distortion.

Notably, this is not the only misrepresentation of feminism and feminists. In case you didn't know, those damn "feminazis" are hairy, man-hating, dominating, crazy, family-ruining, socialist, butch lesbians with their noses in the air because they believe in women's empowerment. Oh, and apparently they don't have sex.

While some of these traits may describe certain feminists, they could just as easily be used to describe other people, like the dominating and crazed Rush Limbaugh. Rather than dispel all of these (often) unfounded stereotypes, I'm just going to focus on the "feminists don't have sex" one…

hooks uses an intentionally open-ended definition for feminism. hooks claims that, "feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression." This means that feminists want to end the domination of one sex over another. They/ we/ I want equality. This does not mean that I want men to be subordinate to women. As a feminist, I want women to be treated with the same respect as men. Women are people. They deserve to be treated like people, not "less-thans" or "after thoughts." Feminists understand this reality and implement it in their "private" daily lives.

Scholars have used women's likelihood tomasturbate as a proxy for analyzing female empowerment. Here's the woman empowerment-masturbation-feminist connection: empowered women realize that they have a right to their bodies, including their beaver/ peach/ vag/ pussy. Empowered women know that their bodies are not something that the government can legislate or regulate. Their bodies are not holes for lonely pénises. Their bodies are not silent billboards meant to be stared at but not listened to. Their bodies are not baby-making machines. Their body is theirs, and their body may want sex.

An empowered woman will realize that it is okay – in fact, it is natural – for her to want sex. An empowered woman is also more likely to take control of the situation and fulfill her sexual desire. When a woman understands that she alone has the right to control her body, she realizes that she doesn't need anyone else to please her. She is totally comfortable going about her one-handed/ dildo-ready/ battery-operated way. While on this solitary trip of enjoyment, the masturbate-er learns what their body does and does not enjoy.

I am not claiming that feminists are the only empowered women or that only women are feminists. However, I am claiming that feminists are empowered based on their belief that everyone, themselves included, deserves to be treated equally with an innate right to control their own bodies.

To review:

Feminists = empowered men and women.
Empowered people = more likely to masturbate.
Feminists = more likely to masturbate.

Once more, I’ll rely on the always insightful hooks for the last piece of this puzzle: "If any female feels she need anything beyond herself to legitimate and validate her existence, she is already giving away her power to be self-defining, her agency."

**Artist Statement:**

We are not a culture that likes to look at vaginas. I’m not exactly sure why. Some people REALLY like to look at vaginas (like Bob… +2 life points if you get the reference). Some people don’t know how to look at vaginas. This is probably because on the whole, as a culture, we don’t look at vaginas.

When women spread their legs… there’s something else there. A lower censorship sign; a bush (like… an actual bush… the green leafy kind). Vaginas are hidden from sight and they’re only taken out for sex.

Well, that’s stupid; it means that we don’t even remember what vaginas really look like anymore. The media has told us that vaginas are supposed to be hairless, naked, and small. But this is not about vaginas. This is about vulvas. And the thing about vulvas is that they’re not always hairless, and they are not small. They’re beautiful and they’re all different and they’re powerful and they’re fine. They’re super fine. Just the way they are.
Since feminists understand that they are people who deserve respect and the power of self-definition, feminists often don’t feel the need to be validated by others. Quite the opposite actually – feminists tend to express/parade/promote/advocate their opinions. Even in bed.

Communication is critical in general, but it becomes even more important in the bedroom. It is hard to be more intimate and connected with someone than when you are inside of them. Intimacy is scary, and bad sex is shitty. Both of these issues can be alleviated with healthy/inclusive/participatory/open dialogue:

You don’t like what she is doing with her tongue? Tell her to go in circles; you know you like that. You’re not comfortable with anal play on the first date? Let ‘em know and suggest something that you do like doing and are comfortable with. You miss when sex toys were incorporated? Whip out the vibrator and a discussion about what you want do tonight.

Communication will enliven the bedroom! And the best communicators are those that feel they have a right to speak their mind and that their opinion is valuable.

To sum up….

Feminists = empowered people = more likely to masturbate.

More likely to masturbate = more likely to know what you enjoy doing sexually

Feminists = more likely to communicate.

Feminists = more likely to communicate what they enjoy doing sexually with their sexual partner.

More likely to communicate what you enjoy doing sexually with your sexual partner = better sex.

Therefore, FEMINISTS HAVE AMAZING SEX!!!

In closing, yes I have sex. Yes, it is awesome. And yes, I think its body-rocking greatness is mostly because I’m in a feminist relationship full of communication, equality, and “sex-ploration.”
I gasp and pant as I push through the final quarter mile uphill, collapsing on a flat patch of grass in an enclosed area off the trail. I feel the itchy weeds stick to the sweat on my back as salty drops roll off my forehead and down my cleavage to soak into my sports bra. I close my eyes and inhale deeply, tempting a breeze to play across my flushed face. Ian rumples the ground as he rolls down next to me, dropping his pack and breathing heavily. I look over and see his face planted in the grass, deeply inhaling the heady scent of earth.

"Are you sure you don't want to do another 5 miles before the sun sets?" Ian mumbles into the dirt. "I'm not sure if 12 was a good enough workout."

I reach over and feel his overheated forehead. "You don't have heat stroke? Your jokes are getting pretty weak," I retort. Ian mumbles something incoherent, his laugh contagious, his eyes a piercing hazel-green. His smile is dazzling, his laugh contagious, and his eyes are a piercing hazel-green. He doesn't talk to excess, but when he does speak his words are sly as I realize I can see a distinct outline of everything underneath.

Once I finish washing up, I grab our water and lie down next to him on the grass.

"That looks pretty constricting," he says, nodding towards my blue sports bra. "We are in the middle of nowhere; you know. Don't make yourself uncomfortable on my account."

He actually sounds sincere and not like he is just trying to get me naked for his own benefit. I raise my eyebrows at him and he shrugs, and since I have never cared much about nudity, I go ahead and do as he suggests. He is right, the tight elastic had been digging into my sides and removing another layer feels better than I expected. I lay back with my arms over my head, letting the sun dry me off as I close my eyes and exhaustion overwhelms me.

My mind flows into a fuzzy, half-awake world of lucid dreams… I am straddling a man, rubbing up and down a strong chest and gripping thick black hair in between my fingers and moving my hips back and forth and then I wake up with a gasp as I experience the terrifying, surreal thrill of falling and snacking back into the earth.

Photos: Dicksicles

By Will and Spencer

16 17

Becoming One on a Mountain

By Phoebe Smith

and stream water and I can see all of his straining back grassy bank to purify. His white shirt is soaked with sweat low. Ian ills the bottles upstream and sets them on the meadow stream, slow moving and waist deep. A sigh of relief escapes my lips as I sit down on the water's edge to peel off my boots and place my toes in the lukewarm flow. Ian fills the bottles upstream and sets them on the grassy bank to purify. His white shirt is soaked with sweat and stream water and I can see all of his straining back muscles from where I have come to float half immersed. I can't help but admire his sun darkened olive skin glinting under the reflective water, and to my surprise, I feel a jolt in the pit of my stomach when he takes off his shirt to wring it out.

I have known Ian for around two months; we have been working together on the same regional team for the California National Parks Service since the summer started. Now it's fire season, and with the increasing drought we have been sent off in pairs to man remote fire watchtowers for a couple weeks at a time. Ian and I joined up to take on a four-day hike up to our station, and we just finished our second exhausting day. I haven't spent much time alone with Ian before now, but we have always been able to banter in a group. He has an ambiguous ethnicity, and a slight inflection to his voice growing up in Portugal. His smile is dazzling, his laugh contagious, and his eyes are a piercing hazel-green. He doesn't talk to excess, but when he does speak his words are full of wit and under-

I am jerked abruptly out of my reverie when Ian picks me up and tosses me into the deepest part of the riverbed. I emerge soaking, choking on water and laughter. I take off my soiled shirt to wash it out, but not before playfully flinging water in his direction. I stretch upwards and feel my muscles straining. The strenuous work I have demanded from my body this summer has left me toned and tanned, and I have never felt so confident. I submerge myself, intent on washing off the sweat and peeling skin from the day's sweltering trek. Out of the corner of my eye, I notice Ian staring and grinning at me unabashedly from his relaxed position on the bank. He is lounging back, wearing only loose hiking shorts, and I blush slightly as I realize I can see a distinct outline of everything underneath.

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I am shocked by the turn my mind has taken without my guidance and disoriented from nodding off. My sudden movement alarms Ian and he turns toward me as I roll on my side to face him. His gaze flickers from my chest up to my eyes imperceptibly fast.

"Can I ask you a question?" I inquire.

"Obviously, you just did," he teases. "But feel free to ask another."

"Sorry if this is too intrusive, but when was the last time you had sex?"

Most of the people in our summer group know I love to talk about sex for the sake of it, so hopefully he won’t assume my question is a ploy to hit on him. It isn’t, exactly, but I have had a bit of a one-track mind lately because it has been a while for me. I took this summer job with the intent to do some serious self-exploration and personal growth and therefore have avoided getting physical with anyone. It has also helped that private time with another person had been virtually impossible up until this point. Except now I have gotten to the point where thoughts of sex have been slipping into my subconscious at every turn. This dream wasn’t the first time my fantasies have taken a shape resembling Ian; when we slept next to one another last night I could practically feel the electricity coming off his skin.

He raises his eyebrows at me and looks taken aback, but not uncomfortable.

"Are you asking if I have slept with anyone we have been working with this summer?"

And when I don’t reply, he tells me that the last time was in April, before our job had begun. As I consider this, I become hyperaware of the closeness between our faces, the feeling of his breath on my skin and the faint smell of nuts and dried fruit he must have been eating earlier. After a day of concentrating on physical exertion, my quick but vivid dream sent a current through my body that I couldn’t ignore. I shot up into and out of the water so I am standing waist deep in the current, my back towards Ian. The noise of the water is enough to mask the sound of him lighly slipping in behind me, so I don’t notice his appearance until I feel his warm hand slide along the small of my back, leaving a trail of fire on my sun baked skin. I take a breath trying to orient myself, but the fire is so hot I am both numb and disoriented and I let the nothingness take over as I whirl around and reach a few inches up to press my mouth against his.

In response, he pulls me into the curve of his mouth. Our faces, the feeling of his breath on my skin and the glow of pink - incredible display, lashing pink over the horizon and the one after that and the one after that… momentarily blinding me. I am both awesomely happy and overwhelmed by the power of it all, and OHMYGOD it is SO GOOD my body is releasing sparks into the atmosphere and clenching and releasing, moving up around my nipples and to the taut stomach, moving up around my nipples and to the bones at the base of my throat. The sun is setting in an beautiful and overwhelming and surrounded in a bright orange glow.

When a moment such as this has been built up for so long, I am not satisfied quickly. I push him over and move my head towards his crotch with genuine earnest, but he stops me.

"I’m sorry, but I can’t wait. I want to be in you," he says in between heavy breaths.

I shudder with excitement at the first touch between us, holding my breath as he teases open my flushed inner lips and slowly slides inside me. We exhale together as he begins to build up a quick in and out pulse, me grinding my hips up and down at the same rhythm. My body is still shuddering from my earlier climax, and I am so turned on that every movement feels like a fire building up deep within me. My mouth gasp and pant and our fingers delve into the muddy grass underneath and hair tangles and sweat builds and limbs wriggle desperately along another. I dig my nails into the smooth skin of his back and butt, biting playfully along his collarbone. He hitchs my leg up around his hip and effortlessly rolls over onto his back, pulling me on top of him. A laugh escapes me as I teeter, but when I sit up he is still fully inside of me.

"That’s never worked before," I say; he laughs and sinks back into a smile with eyes closed as I begin to move him in and out of my body, his hands brushing the grass off my back and teasing my nipples.

Instinct from years of living in thin-walled apartments makes me grip my hand tightly over my panting mouth as I feel an orgasm building up to a peak, but Ian pries my hand away with his strong fingers so I cry out and let loose the noise has built up inside of me and OHMYGOD it is SO GOOD my body is releasing joyous energy to the outside world and the shining glow in an euphoric lash of life.

I bit my inner thigh and taste it. This is also a good hurt. It’s very necessary to distract my feelings elsewhere; otherwise everyone will know who I am inside. Time moves slowly—I’m sure of it—and perhaps my professor should consider having the clock fixed for his needy students.

Time. It belongs to someone else, I’m sure, because it does not service me. My heart drums at a different pace and so I do not feel that I should be bound to it. I scoot my heavy wooden chair back, unintentionally making all the noise in the world, and collect my belongings, pacing rapidly towards the door.

Many of my peers watch me with question marks in their eyes but I ignore them. I ignore all except one. These eyes belong to a raven-haired woman and I believe that she knows why I return her stare. She is the cause of many problems in this class; or, perhaps I only suffer from one big problem instead. Regardless, I am frustrated by the things she says and it makes me feel the electricity coming off his skin.

He raises his eyebrows at me and looks taken aback, but not uncomfortable.

I pinch my inner thigh and it hurts good. I bit my inner lip and draw a drop of blood onto my tongue and taste it. This is also a good hurt. It’s very necessary to distract my feelings elsewhere; otherwise everyone will know who I am inside. Time moves slowly—I’m sure of it—and perhaps my professor should consider having the clock fixed for his needy students.

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me hate her voice. Or, perhaps I have always hated her voice and it makes me hate the things she says. But it really does not matter for she is an idiot and I do not wish to associate myself with idiots.

My professor sees me pause then walk out the door. We all have things to do, I suppose, but I will need to follow up with an email to let him know that that was not okay, I think he thinks.

The doors in this building are exceptionally heavy, but I am sure that I can hear him, the Professor, scribbling my name onto his notebook. His pencil lead scratches his yellow, lined paper as metal forks on a car door. I walk away from that wreck as the only survivor or perhaps as the only victim.

Click. My bathroom stall is now secure. I want to make it home but I do not think that I could have made it back in time. Sitting comfortably on the toilet seat, I position my fist under my chin, like the ‘Thinker. I am Man Thinking. The man doing his business in the stall next to me must be confused as he stares at my feet and perfectly straight jeans. He must expect me to realize my mistake and pull down my pants, but it is no mistake. Yet I am, in a way, taking one mean shit. I need all this bad out of my body. Or could the bad be good?

I blow my nose and flush a bunch of used toilet paper down the toilet. Walking to the sink, I wash away all the red in my face with water on the coldest setting. I blow my nose and lush a bunch of used toilet paper down the toilet. Walking to the sink, I wash away all the red in my face with water on the coldest setting. I blow my nose and lush a bunch of used toilet paper down the toilet. Walking to the sink, I wash away all the red in my face with water on the coldest setting.

"Dude, it’s pouring outside, huh? Your face is wet as fuck," says my housemate. He is slouching on the couch. I’m pretty sure he is high and not of this Earth anymore. That would make two of us. “Man, am how I supposed to walk my ass over to the food place for food? I don’t want to put on cold—” I think he realizes what he just said.

"DUDE! Food place! Food! Can you believe I just said that?" He is laughing uncontrollably and I nod a yeah-you-just-said-that nod. “Damn! You’re high too, aren’t you? You’re eyes are so red, you little fu—”

I’m upstairs now in my room because I believe I heard enough from him. It does not matter anymore—nothing matters anymore—and I climb atop my lofted bed where I feel very safe. I strip down and crawl under my warm thick sheets where I set many of my prisoners free.

The Divide Between Black Women and the College Campus Dating Sphere

By Sandra-Rosa Bryant

last week, I was in the company of three other Black female students and we somehow got on the subject of romantic relationships on campus. Sitting there and hearing their stories was not an eye-opening experience by any means merely because their stories were so similar to my own, but hearing their stories gave me a reaffirmation in my desire to write this piece. The idea had been in my mind for weeks but for whatever reason I needed an extra shove to begin drafting this essay. Hearing the shared experiences of Black female students on this campus was the compelling force that I needed.

We all felt the same—Black women are in a world apart on this campus and markedly outside the sphere of campus dating. We talked about how when we step off campus or venture back to our respective hometowns, we have to readjust ourselves to our environments and what comes with our environments. We have to readjust ourselves to romantically-motivated advances and become re-acclimated to the notion of being a romantic interest for somebody. But as soon as we return to campus, we throw all of that out of the window and move through this campus as the weightless amoebas that it oftentimes feels like we are perceived as.

We couldn’t come up with any other reason for the divide between Black female students and the dating sphere on campus other than race; there’s no running from the fact that this is a predominantly white campus, but even here we were met with several nuances. We are not unfamiliar with being approached by white people outside the boundaries of campus. It is true that we are much more accustomed to the advances of Black men, but we are not strangers to the expressed interest of white men—granted they are off campus. But this campus is not solely made up of white people, and it is not only white people who choose to ignore Black women.

We talked about how the fact that we were not being viewed as romantically worthwhile to the entire campus was on an entirely different level of gut-wrenching difficulty to acknowledge and understand. We walk through this campus constantly being forced to reassess ourselves and our environment. One woman in the group reflected on how she would call her mother for reassurance that there was nothing wrong with her and that she was indeed an attractive individual who was worthy of attention. It’s not you, it’s them. And I can’t deny that I once called a friend back home only so she could recount to me the story of the time that boy with cornrows got down on his knee and begged for my phone number at the park by her house. These yearnings for affirmations of our worth are troublesome and problematic to say the least, but they are a part of our existence as Black women on this campus.

I think it is important to note a character trait that we four discussants share. We are not particularly passive people when it comes to relationships and going after what we want. So if there are any thoughts of the divide between Black women and the dating sphere on this campus being related to a lack of initiative on the part of Black women to go after what we please, cast that thought into oblivion, because it is utterly and abundantly false. With that being said, one must come to understand the difficulty that surrounds approaching a person on this campus based on the amoeba-like persona that has been applied to Black female students without our consent. What is the point in trying when everything that we have experienced on this campus tells us that Black women and relationships on this campus are practically oxymoronic?

Black men on this campus don’t seem to have the same problems. Not by a long shot. All a Black male student has to do to garner attention on this campus is step into a room and, more often than not, he will be met with many a hair flip and a maestrolom of flirtations and praises. Black men have always been overly-sexualized in the history of this country, and from what I’ve witnessed on campus it doesn’t look like things have changed very much. I regularly find myself wondering how Black male students feel about this. Do they enjoy it or do they feel like they are a rare delicacy being served on a shining silver platter to a roomful of starving dinner guests?

These two extremes of romantic attention given to Black women and Black men on this campus are inextricably nuanced. One can imagine what both extremes could do to the respective groups’ egos, but what is much more important to think about is what the implications behind these two extremes can do to the respective groups’ psyches and praxes.
Since the age of thirteen we’ve been haunted by the rabbit in Donnie Darko telling us that “every living creature dies alone.” We fight against Robert Putnam’s America of the individual by all going bowling on Tuesday, by playing words with friends, by making fun of Donnie Darko together. We go to parties looking for carnal approximations of closeness and when we wake up we try to conceal that hint of annoyance at ourselves as they say exactly the wrong thing. We find people to be with, we measure out the time together, we spend lazy Sundays in bed, we make plans. We are young and we are never alone.

Then one day, we are. Separated by distances, left behind, no longer in love. Follow the advice, the steps, the prescriptions but feel the absence of another, or any other. Fall into bed, roll over, try to empty your mind. Listen to just your breath. It is not supposed to be like this.

One day, you take a shower, make breakfast and leave the house. You think of your day, sorting through times and places to be, absentmindedly picking a flower from a tree. You forget that you are alone. A car drives by bumping “Money Maker,” and you laugh. It’s even sunny outside.

Rosa Monteria wrote Crónica de desamor, the book on loneliness. She once said: “la soledad es absolutamente necesaria...La soledad es buena para llevarte bien contigo misma, para tratarte bien, para aguantarte, y luego...para no hipotecarte. si no sabemos vivir con nosotras mismas vamos a pagar unos precios desorbitantes, vamos a tener unas relaciones antropofágicas solo por el miedo a la soledad...La solución no es saber resignarse, sino saber descubrirla.”

“Solitude is absolutely necessary...Solitude is good for making you get along with yourself, for treating yourself well, for putting up with yourself, and then...for not selling yourself short. If we don’t know how to live alone, we’re going to pay an exorbitant price, we’ll have anthropophagic relationships just because we’re afraid to be alone...The solution is not to learn how to settle for less, but to discover solitude.”
“And why don’t you write? Write! Writing is for you; your body is yours, take it.”
—Helene Cixous on L’Écriture Féminine.

The Cuntinual Blooming Water Lily
By OL Weitz

In a parcel of pink petals the pearl of my oyster soaks up love long after the noontide.

Even after the oar is set aside, my cunt, my candle-holder, my cherry pink canoe is ready to glide.

There are no depths to the cave of wonders that illuminates every time a million nerve endings collide.

Love > Gender
By Caroline Henry

Let me see them titties bounce
Good girl
I thought I saw you in a porno…
I wanna make you cum
Call me daddy
Are you ready?
Hold on I have to pee
I miss Lindsay
Wanna fuck on the floor?
Shhhh….Take this pillow
I’m coming, I’m coming, I’m coming. I’m coming
Are you okay?
Can we role play? I’ll be the student, you be the teacher — ready Ms. Williams?

Are you sure you’re wet? Get the lube
Is it better than with mike?
No, I want to watch you do it
Ride me like a pirate
Oh, fuck yeah!
I wish you were Andrea
You’re not just doing this to get back at Matt, are you?
Bite my nipples
Come on, I promise you’ll like it
Wait, I want to listen to some Chris Brown, yeah…
Dueces.
What’s your fantasy?
I hope that was as good for you as it was for me.
We lash boob just to catch one another in the game—public places, pubic spaces wax ridiculously intertwined as we laugh at the scoffs, rage at the hollers of the normal people. These places have meaning to them—the normal people. These spaces have Vulgarity and Eve sewn shut inside of them, and we poke them and air them out like wounds—healing ourselves each patch of skin this world has told us to hate and hide. 

There’s no sex in a circumference of lesh, no lurking Lilith in our jungles of fur, Sex in our minds, Sex in our eyes, but skin dips into ozone with no preconception of a night’s undertakings. So we gravitate toward hanging loosely, throw the noose of past witches off our backs as we conspire to desecrate the world—Flashes Breeding Succubi Socratesing the Masculinity out of Lineage, Decking Femininity out the Nines.

Low skirts anchor our pelvic bones, we swim through fabrics like witches, gnashing our teeth like witches, healing ourselves each patch of skin this world has told us to hate and hide.

Titties and Beer
By Collin Veenstra

First Date/How Do They Hate Love?
By Anonymous

Somehow, a shaky-voiced “you”, “me”, and “drinks” got me a date with the barista. What NOT To Do on A First Date, 4 Signs He’s Into You, Love Lessons From Chick Flicks I changed shirts four times in search of one that looked good without trying. Makeup! Look thin! Accentuate your curves! 5 tips to bring out that natural, healthy glow—The twenty-minute walk gave me enough time to get nervous. You must never go out at night by yourself—it’s just not safe for a woman. She was chatting with the bartender when I walked in. Always be polite, smile, and answer His questions in a kindly manner.

Small talk ensued, with a stout and “something seasonal on tap, I guess” So, you’re footing the bill? I see who the man is here…The bartender asked if I wanted a sausage. Nobody “comes out” just once. We talked about Good Music and Places to Visit. Homosexuality is illegal in 76 countries.

She told me she thought dinosaurs might still live in the Congo. Homosexuality is wrong because it’s unnatural. Dinosaurs never existed either. We walked the streets of Tacoma, hand in hand. Gay marriage is illegal in 43 states…lay low. We passed Christmas lights and she told me the houses with blue lights were Jewish. Rabbi Greenberg? He’s not a real pastor; he’s gay.

We talked about the time she dropped out of college and the times when I thought about it. College is a stressful time, and I don’t want you to be weighed down by this too, okay? We stepped on every sidewalk crack all the way back to my house. The gays are ruining the foundation of America.

We stood close on my porch PAGS!

And kissed until the next car drove by.

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Sainted Window
By R.H. Walker

“We can die by it, if not live by love,
And if unfit for tombs and hearse
Our legend be, it will be fit for verse”
—John Donne, “The Canonization”

Vulnerable as flame from a paper match,
one struck after a pile torn trying
to ignite, we halt, and breathe
in each other’s ears.

We are driven to this. Have been since
friction started when, instinctively, I never
pursued happiness—I sought perfection and so
I have been away. We are vines, entwined
at the bottom, diverged and following mullions
apart, but set to meet again at window’s keystone.

Tender as teenagers again,
we find space to touch in ethereal squares
of moonlight admitted by window glass, and
the sheets rustle as regret
sublimates off of our bodies,
making the air moist and close.

We go way back. Each kiss echoes
in the empty cathedral of time, where, built
in sonnets, Donne’s rooms hold ashes of
lovers martyred and an altar built of
amour fou. I am a young man. We have not had
long to wander the gardens of adulthood.

A grateful silence has
swept a delicate lace across
the bed and her legs and mine
are transoms entwined, heads lean against each
other, a Romanesque symmetry—
a devout, angelic constellation traced in
beads of sweat. We have forgotten
the future. The past is not looming
before us.
This Body
By Roman Christiaens

This my body, imperfect body, white upright body, a status marker of the mainstream gay politic with a mind too queer, too kinky for its own good and a frame that doesn’t quite match military standards.

This my body. Soft, flaccid, yearning for something firm to hold onto and yearning for a taut exterior. Instead, it’s a mass of disorganized flesh, thrown together like a makeshift quilt. A scarlet letter in my own circles because it doesn’t quite fit in yet. A bulky carapace that I just want to shed and then fly away in something less heavy.

My body is an indistinguishable map with some of the landscape filled in and the rest of it blank, and this my body map.

Points
Points of my collarbone, jutting out like an Adonis, the model to which everything is measured against and to which I am measured against. The points of my collarbone form a brief illusion of a fit muscular body until my stomach gives me away.

Points...my fingertips, jagged curves of these bitten nails show a lifetime of anxiety, a lifetime of being an interloper—between fine straight nails and crooked nail-beds, between this life and theirs—and a lifetime of oral fixation.

Points...my toes, large Hobbit-like toes connected to a basketball players-sized foot. A weird source of pride—prizewinning feet—feet that marked the first departure of difference from my peers. Feet that made it easier to run, to escape. It’s too bad they make it so hard to buy heels in.

This my body map...lines
Lines...the stitched-up tendrils stretch from my hip bones to the edges of my sides. They betray my thinner frame. Remind me of days filled with rocks and slurs and avoidance and isolation. Remind me that I will always be the perennial fat kid, the fat kid with stretch marks.

Lines...bubbled up lines. Pockets of god-knows-what run their length along my right inner thigh. Gifts from my father and his genetic “bad knees.” They serve as portents of the future, indications of old age, of an infallible body. The indestructability of youth fades away with a single step.

Lines...the curve of my hair. A boy band pop singer curve. Always from left to right, left to right. Where I’m most comfortable. Where I don’t question or stand out too much, because sometimes, I just want to disappear.

This my body map...shapes
Shapes...right hand dug into the grass, crouched on my knees, and eyes looking forward, a stance ingrained in my mind since elementary. I am the paragon of my father’s masculine expectations. I recede back for half an inch before lunging forward towards the person on the other side of the line; a mechanized motion that I knew all too well. And I have to wonder who I was doing it all for anyway.

Shapes...my back arched, on my knees, and face pressed desperately into the couch cushion. Wanting him to enter me. Wanting with glazed eyes and glazed mind. Wanting because by now I shouldn’t still be a virgin. Wanting because of others’ expectations and not my own, and when I look back, that night is still a blur.

This my body map...scars
Scars...a crooked crack runs along the vase-shaped portion of my right middle finger. A seagull’s silhouette or maybe a jigsaw piece, and an excess of skin right above it. He told me to keep still. My hand hovering over a tiny tree branch as he lifted the axe upright. It’s bigger than his own head, and then he let go. We were too young to be playing that game—that adult game—but thank god for the resilience of youth.

Scars...I turned back to the pool and crept towards the sea-foam colored edge. Me in my bright orange swimsuit and a whimsical notion that I could conquer anything until I jumped. I jumped and reality hit me with a thud. My chin split open and the water turned red.

Scars...he told me that no one else would love me as much as him. That no one else could understand me or know me as much as him. And all of that loss piled on to me—unbearable in its weight. That night, I sat in the bathroom and with three quick swipes, marked a painful memento of our fucked-up relationship. The lines on my inner thigh have faded by now but not my memory. Scars are stories, and mine are etched in skin.

This my body map, from the tiny tree scratches to the stretched out mountain lines, from the hand scribbled legend to the axis of cardinal directions. The traveled and the uncharted. Every little angle and line, orientation, edge, point, position. Every rip and tear and scratch and bruise, and every feeling.

This my body map. Imperfect, Incomprehensible. Mine.
His penetrating blue eyes
And strange, eerie laugh
Are imprinted in my mind.

I was raped.

My lips,
My neck,
My chest,
My fingers,
My stomach,
My thighs,
Were all tainted.

My body was broken,
And I wanted nothing to do with it.
Brushfire
By Madeline Ranstrom

That august brushfire reminds me of you.
A blur that crawled along the hemline of hills,
you ripped down valleys and ravaged
the quiet space
between land and sky
like the world
between covers and sheets.

You lit everything up.
Smothering and suffocating me,
warping my trunk and making limbs curl,
like my curling toes,
as we barreled toward combustion.

You were an ember that trembled
within a log until
you became its pulse,
then quietly made it split,
sending splinters everywhere.

I was the earth, I was the cedar, I was your tinder.

I walk the charred hills now
and smell of the inside of your mouth
on the blistered land.

I remember the way
we sparked and spit during days
and burned and beat through nights.

Everything is hollow here.
I can’t get the ash off my hands.

The First Dick I Ever Painted
By Hattie Lindsley
In the words of Destiny's Child,
Today, Imma SURVIVOR
NOT a Victim
So Don't You DARE
Stop and Stare
at ME and Preach
Your Insecurities, Your Opinions, and Judgments
on the Actions of OTHERS
TOTALLY Unwilling to LISTEN
When I DEMANDED:
NO! STOP! NO! NO! NO!
OUCH! NO! NO! OWW!
NOOOOOOO! OW! NO! STOP!
OW! NO! STOP-- OW! IT!
OW! OUCH! OUCH!
NO! NO! NOOOO!
STOOOOOOOP! HELP! NO! NO! NO! NO!!!!
That Night and NOW
When HE DID NOT STOP!
Caused ME to STOP! and Reflect
on WHO I AM and YEARN to Become
NOT a Monster or a Piece of Scum
like HIM! or YOU!
It must just be some Silly Game YOU Play
it's Working cause YOU ARE SHINING
with INSECURITIES IN YOUR WHINING
I Am Solemnly Swearing To THIS Vow:
YOU ARE FINALLY OUT OF MY HAIR!
Forever! Never. Again. There.
I May Forgive, but I WILL NEVER FORGET
BOTH of YOUR ACTIONS and Adverse Reactions
on Who I Was and How I Perceived the World Around
Me!
Wisened and Riled BY THIS, yet NOT Spited
Because of THIS
R
A
P
E
Who Have I Become?

In the words of Destiny's Child,
Today, Imma SURVIVOR
NOT a Victim
So Don't You DARE
Stop and Stare
at ME and Preach
Your Insecurities, Your Opinions, and Judgments
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with INSECURITIES IN YOUR WHINING
I Am Solemnly Swearing To THIS Vow:
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Forever! Never. Again. There.
I May Forgive, but I WILL NEVER FORGET
BOTH of YOUR ACTIONS and Adverse Reactions
on Who I Was and How I Perceived the World Around
Me!
Wisened and Riled BY THIS, yet NOT Spited
Because of THIS
R
A
P
E
Who Have I Become?
How Paranoids Do It
By Hannah Fattor

Paranoids do it with all the doors closed and locked, the lights off but easily reached (in case of emergency). No music, you can’t hear them coming over Peter Gabriel. You have to undress completely and let me check you for herpes sores or probe marks. I want you to keep the noises down, you never know who might be listening. No music, you can’t hear them coming over Peter Gabriel. I want to see your hands or at least feel them at all times. Did you hear that? Stop. Wait. Can you hear them coming? I hear them shush. Get off. Put your clothes on and check the lights of but easily reached (in case of emergency). Paranoids do it with all the doors closed and locked.

You didn’t bring a gun did you? Okay then you can come back.

Oh would you mind wearing this tinfoil hat to deflect their mind control rays where are you going? I thought you said you loved me. It was all a ruse wasn’t it? I knew all along.

I locked on the door and without waiting for an answer, kicked it open with my black stilettos and entered. Only wearing a lacy apron and my shoes, I had a freshly baked blackberry pie in one hand and a picnic blanket in the other. He was waiting for me with ravenous eyes and a trembling body. He came towards me but I moved faster than him, grabbing one of his ass cheeks and digging my nails in hard. I lowered him to his knees on the hardwood floor and told him to strip. I ran a painted nail down the smooth skin of his spine, feeling a shiver emanate from him and transfer to me. As I shifted my body to kneel I could feel a slippery wetness move down my leg—but I wasn’t ready for that kind of pleasure yet. I pushed his torso down so he was on his hands and knees, flat like a table top. I spread the small checkered cloth over his back, and I couldn’t stop myself from reaching between his legs to feel his cock. It was rock hard and pulsing under my tight grip, and I felt another shiver of excitement run through my body. I had the impulse to straddle him immediately, but I restrained—as did he, understanding his place. This night was made to savor pleasure, increase and heighten the physical sensations that are an incredible part of being human.

I lifted the warm pie from its pan and placed it on the cloth. With a knife, I cut a thick slice. Slowly, I lifted the piece to my mouth and licked up the warm filling that was spilling out of the sides. I took my time to enjoy every luscious flavor; the crust was soft and buttery and melted in my mouth, and the berries were a perfect mixture of sugary sweetness and shockingly tart. I bit into a large blackberry and moaned tenderly. Ater some time of this my mind went numb and I could no longer process what was happening to me. I pulled his face deeply into my crotch and thrashed my hands over his back, and I couldn’t stop myself from reaching down his spine, feeling a shiver emanate from him and transfer to me. His night was made to savor pleasure, increase and heighten the physical sensations that are an incredible part of being human.

I suddenly was primal and raw, ready to attack my dangerous prey. I pushed my hand into the pie, crumbling the crust and getting a handful of sticky dark berries. He grabbed my other arm, rolling over onto his back and pulling me with him and I laughed as I forcefully smeared the wet mess in my hand all over his chest. I licked up some of the remains, sucking on his sweetly coated nipple. He tagged on the strings holding together my lacy getup and as the tight fabric came apart my breasts came spilling out. He gasped in longing, grabbing at my chest. I reacted automatically and slipped my body back on him and he was inside of me. I was beyond thought as I latched my legs under his arched back and rolled him on top of me, all I knew is that I wanted to feel his power as he fucked me. My legs were kicked up into the air over his shoulders and dark, thick liquid and round berries squished and oozed from between our wild bodies. Our roles had changed as I became submissive to his rock hard will and let pleasure roll over my body in waves. I clench my legs hard and let myself free to call out a loud moan as I came first. He followed suit only seconds later, mixing his own fluid with the mess on my belly.

The encounter was short but not at all complete; it was his turn to feast. I was still breathing heavily on the hard ground with my back arched and legs spread, so I only half saw him pop a juicy berry in his mouth and burst it with his lips. The viscous juice dripped down on to my soaking pussy, still flushed and swollen from orgasm. His hands reached up to follow my curves all the way down to my ass, giving it a tight squeeze and a little smack. He lowered his head down to my favorite spot and started gently rolling my inner lips and clit around with the tip of his tongue. After some time of this my mind went numb and I could no longer process what was happening to me. I pulled his face deeply into my crotch and thrashed my legs around, begging for him to push me over the edge. My breathing was deep and fast, speeding up even further as I felt it approaching. His tongue flicked fast against my clit and the indescribable warmth of a slow mounting orgasm began to radiate through my body, so I clench my thighs tight together and ohhhhhhyogd I was physically suffocating him but he kept going fast as a slow flood poured out of me… I cried out as sparks flashed under my tightly shut eyes and I was in a different world where time had no meaning and I had no control over the sounds rolling off my tongue.

I regained a sense of consciousness as I began to slowly come down from the high. My legs twitched as my warm and now sopping wet mouth continued to suck me, and I had to push him away. I lay and let the ripples roll through my spine, my panting growing lesser as time passed. He lay down next to me with his eyes bright from the excitement, his body flushed and shaking from all of his hard work. I gratefully kissed his swollen mouth, tasting myself there on his lips. I sighed into him and collapsed onto his chest. And we lay there, completely content to be wallowing in a messy pool of our combined glutony and lust.

Pie and Lace
By Phoebe Smith
I have a theory about growing up. Some say that growing up is when a child learns that they can be right and they can be wrong. Wrong explains growing up in part, but I also think it comes with the realization that we are no longer bulletproof. My grandpa always says, “You kids never wearing seat belts. You think nothing will happen to you. You think you are bulletproof.” He is right. We know of course that we can die, but all in theory. Death, pain, and fear are something that happens to others and their loved ones, not us. We do feel bulletproof. We flex our young muscles and breathe in exhilarated. That tree doesn’t look so high, sure I can, you just double dog dare me, yeah when you hit that bump at 70 you can definitely catch air. You breathe in empowerment, breathless freedom, and a ruthless sense of I’m gonna do whatever the fuck I want to. Being bulletproof, it is a wonderful thing.

Looking back I grew up in a series of three events. Three…isn’t that always the way it is? Holy trinity, beginning then the middle and the end, three wishes, three tests, always three and this was the first. To make it more cliché it was New Year’s Eve, such an awful night. Why do we feel the need to celebrate we are alive on only one day? And it is always an utter failure. It was a hazy: full of slurring voices and smoke. I was dating my first boyfriend and through the haze I remember feeling confident and trusting, just sitting next to him on the couch. I said no, but the questions kept coming. It felt wrong, all of it. The blaring fluorescent lights on my bare shoulders. God we were in a bathroom for fucks sake. This is not going to be it. NO. But the questions kept coming, “softened” by a sweet plea. I began to feel guilty. Okay why not? The rest could come later… would come later. Yes, all right. Just those damn fluorescent lights and then the mirror, staring into my pale face and blurred eyes. Shit is that carpet, who carpets their bathroom floor? Ouch, okay this is not happening. Stop… Now.

The most eye opening part is I knew, in fact I was positive, I would be someone who stood up for what I wanted. I grew up with a mother determined that I would not follow the women of our family. She was determined to give me a sense of self, to save me from the fate of our family, “full of strong women who make stupid choices about awful men”. Adultery, other families, abused, shamed by the rape of their fathers, uncles, and sister’s husbands. “My mother called me a bum magnet. There was a bum in a fifty mile radius, I was completely attracted to him”. I was going places and damn if any boy was getting in my way, but it is harder in the moment. You wish to trust someone, but no is no. We aren’t bulletproof, those things happen to us too. Lesson one: this is Me and these are my terms. I refuse to let you slow me down, step aside. Now.
She loved to play in the woods,
To climb trees,
Shout words starting with the same letter
At nobody in particular.
To kick pinecones
And touch the sticky sap
That dripped and oozed between flakey bark.

She would watch the deer for hours,
Smell the pine needles covering the ground,
Get so close to baby geese, the mother would hiss.

On the playground she was Tomboy,
Then Mister when her mom
Cut her hair just a little too short.
Well, if you're coming to my party, you must bring a Barbie to dress.

Years later on the ice at a hockey game
Against their rivals, the Panthers,
"DYKE" echoed off the walls of the rink,
Chasing her to the locker room even, if they shouted
At nobody in particular.

When people yelled
At things they neither recognized,
Nor cared to question or understand,
She shrugged her shoulders at the sky,
Kicked a pinecone,
And returned to the woods.

There, she hopped from
Rock to rock
Across the stream,
Grinned when the cold water soaked the cuffs of her jeans,
And they would stay damp until dinner-time.
Dear Kanye,

I know we haven’t talked for a while, but I care about you more than anything. You’ve grown so much over the years. As you say, “I'm so proud of you! I wanna scream so loud for you.” But, in spite of everything, we need to talk about you and what you create.

In “Hey Mama,” you say, “Maya Angelou, Nicky Giovanni turn one page and there’s my mommy.” But what about the other women you’re obsessed with? What do you expect from them? When do they get your respect or anyone else’s?

The way you present them, women only exist for your convenience and enjoyment. In “Breathe in Breathe Out,” Ludacris’ leads the cry: “Girls go wild, pull your D's out/Breathe in Breathe out/let them hoes ight, pull her weave out.” Not only is that a complete objectification but a culture that encourages those women to harm each other for approval. Do you see the power and damage in that? In “Breathe in Breathe Out,” you didn’t. “Always said if I rapped I’d say somethin’ significant/But now I’m rappin’ ‘bout money, hoes, and rims again.” That was 2004. In “Power,” six years later, you were beginning to understand your influence: “Reality is catching up with me, taking my inner child I’m fighting for custody/With these responsibilities that they entrust in me.” But what were your responsibilities back then? You were and are an entertainer, but you do not have to entertain that way. You are famous and loved, and you have to face your power.

What else is there beyond these ridiculous ideals? Your depictions of relationships are not meaningful exchanges, but punishments and forewarning. “Runaway” says it explicitly, “See, I could have a good girl/And still be addicted to them hood rats /And I just blame everything on you/At least you know that’s what I’m good at.” Although you admit fault, you take no real responsibility. There is no personal development. Instead you internalize infidelity as out of your control while simultaneously reducing your partner to the status of these “hood rats,” ultimately unworthy of your respect. While “Runaway” supports My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy as a stated reflection of fame and excess, one of your most famous songs, “Gold Digger,” accomplishes a similar end. Essential-ly, it reduces parenthood to exploitation for money. You tell all of your fans, “18 years, 18 years/She got one of your kids got you for 18 years and If you ain’t no punk holla we want pre-nup, we want pre-nup!”

Although many of the songs mentioned above concern your depiction of women, many of your songs involve you and your role as a man, Kanye. In “Hey Mama,” you promise that, “when I’m older, you ain't gotta work no more/And I’m gonna get you that mansion that we couldn’t afford.” Growing up in poverty is central to many of your songs, this one in particular. Many others refer to your current wealth and status.

However, in “New Day,” from Watch the Throne, you address how you would teach your own son. You say, “I’ll never let him have an ego or get caught up with the groupies in the whirlwind. Rather, I just want him to have an easy life, not like Yeezy life/Just want him to be someone people like/Don’t want ‘im to be hated, all the time judged.” Those are the things you would want for your own son Kanye, but is that the message you send in your lyrics? Would a young man listening to your songs learn those things? Could they if they tried?

As an artist, these songs are constructions of your own making. Only you can choose who and what are represented, positive and negative. However, the effects of your actions have ramifications reaching far beyond yourself. I don’t think you’re a monster Kanye, but it’s critical that you consciously evaluate your depiction of women - and that means all women, including your mother. You said it yourself: “i appreciate what you allowed for me/i just want you to be proud of me.”

Love,
Your Mother

*All text in italics are Kanye West lyrics from the songs “Hey Mama,” “Breathe In, Breathe Out,” “Power,” “Gold Digger,” and “New Day.”
The Closet
By Polly Membrino

Sometimes I laugh
When I think of
The Closet.

Millions of people hiding,
Milling about,
Making small talk,
Avoiding the (rainbow) elephant in the room,
Or, maybe, waiting in a long, long, long line.

As if there’s a nervous gathering going on,
The music is a little old and the soda is flat,
And people seem to leave just when you start getting to know them,
But for the most part, nobody seems to mind.

Nobody is quite ready
To make the first move,
Not yet.
But everyone
Is waiting.

Waiting for an eighteenth birthday
Waiting for financial stability
Waiting for a girlfriend or boyfriend’s confident hand
Waiting for Dad to find the porn
Waiting for a new job offer
Waiting for Grandma to pass away
Waiting for the bully to graduate
Waiting for God to look away for just a second.

Occasionally, one of the celebrities will run up to the door,
Almost knocking over that woman from work with the glasses,
As he grabs the handle and flings the door wide open,
HERE I AM! Yes, the rumors were true.
Where’s my magazine cover?

Several hundred people crack the door open just a bit,
And poke their heads out,
And cross the threshold,
One foot at a time, slowly,
You know, just to test the waters,
Just to see what it’s like.

Back in The Closet
There’s a buzz of excitement.
They’re alright?
They made it okay?
Good.
May I have another slice of pie?
Wetlands Magazine is the product of students at the University of Puget Sound in partnership with the University’s Gender Studies Department. This interdisciplinary program draws upon a rich array of intellectual traditions, including feminist, queer, race, and post-colonialist theories to illuminate the ways in which gender and multiple other converging axes of identity frame every aspect of our lives. Unfortunately the Gender Studies Department can only offer a minor, though it is the only minor to require a thesis. This spring Associate Professor Alison Tracy Hale coached a class of six in the creation of their capstone projects. Each of the students involved in the class provided Wetlands with a short abstract describing their semester-long projects. We are proud to publish the following pieces as examples of the range of research opportunities the Gender Studies Department fosters for its students.

For more information on the Gender Studies Department please visit the University of Puget Sound’s website.

Gender Studies Presentations will be from 6:30-7:30 on April 30th in Murray Boardroom. We encourage you to attend with questions!

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**SELECTIONS FROM THE GENDER STUDIES RESEARCH SEMINAR**

*The Hedonistic Imperative*
By Jackson Baars, Conrad Wharton, Johnston Hill

*Waterlust*
By Cleo Maul
You Call This Representation?

A Study of Women in American Foreign Policy

By Xandra Scott

In my thesis, I posit that since the American foreign policy establishment is populated mostly by white men (who are also the most powerful and entitled people in our society), our foreign policy tends to reflect their interests and their concepts of power. Aside from the women in obvious positions, like Hillary Clinton, women are largely absent from foreign policy establishment.

I want to create a critique of male dominance in foreign policy. Instead, this study will not attempt to overthrow the international relations establishment by discrediting its theories, nor will it toe a standard feminist line. Instead, this study will deal almost exclusively with the practical implications of social beliefs about violence and how our current social system excludes half of our population from a crucial debate.

Women deserve to be heard in foreign policy as a matter of democratic right, and women are being excluded as a result of the ways we understand our policy community. Being present in a debate means being heard, and women are not present; therefore they are not being heard. This exclusion of opinions in foreign policy is a failure of our pluralistic democratic process. Thus, my study is not simply about women in foreign policy, it points out a flaw in our democratic legitimacy as a nation.

Getting A Grip:

Understanding Male Ejaculatory Practices in Popular Media as Physical Manifestations of 21st Century Male Anxiety

By Ruby Aliment

My interest in cum shots has always been scientific. I promise. During my sophomore year, my best friends were obsessed with Tucker Max’s best-selling memoir I Hope They Serve Beer in Hell, the book held responsible for the fratire genre in both film and print. One story in the book always stuck out for me, as it appealed to my curiosity about ejaculation. Titled “The Blowjob Follies,” Max chronicles all of his worst blowjob experiences. The stand-out in this series is subtitled “Miss Chokesondick,” and readers can imagine what happens.

“I had not cum for about three days before this encounter,” Max writes, “and thus I had a Peter North sized 8-roper waiting for her. This did not sit well with Betty, especially because she was not expecting it.”

An 8-roper involves the exchange of a huge load of semen into the mouth or body of a woman. Each shot of semen equals one rope (are you getting the visual?). Peter North is the porn star credited with shooting the largest amount of semen during a single orgasm.

After finishing, Max realises that Betty is choking: “Not coughing or a slight choke the bitch was turning red and dying right in front of me… I was unsure what to do; I’d never seen a girl choke on dick before. I thought it only happened in rap songs.”

Same here! Max ends up breaking her rib trying to perform the Heimlich maneuver, though later finds out that she was not choking but suffocating from the amount of semen lodged in her nose. After reading this book, I was hooked: What is going on with these stories? Why are they so popular? What is it about cum shots?!

Convinced that Tucker Max was a big liar, I continued to believe this type of behavior existed only in the mythical world of bro-land, where men share fantastical stories that would never actually happen. In an interview with The New York Times, Max’s editor, Jeremie RubyStrauss, described the appeal and popularity of Tucker Max and the fratire genre as reactionary.

He said, “I think all of these books are about men searching for a model other than what they’re being told to do, something rebellious, less cautious and less concerned with external approval.”

So, even if these narratives are not being physically performed, their existence is still playing a role in the development and performance of young American masculinity. Now I had my problem area: how is masculinity being manifested and performed in contemporary America by young men?

Then my best friend started sending me links to amateur porn sites, because it is hilarious when women...
watch porn or something… but remember, I'm a scientist. I quickly noted the pervasiveness of cum shots on these sites, and then I was hooked. I started asking around about people's experiences with cum shots and other sexual narratives like "The Shit Bucket" and found that they're not just myths; they're real life.

One fraternity member told me, "Yeah, cum shots are derogatory, but you gotta do 'em to assert your dominance." You gotta do 'em. So I traced their appeal back to the source: pornography.

I began by analyzing the content of the top 20 viewed amateur videos on the site RedTube.com, the self-described home of amateur porn. Videos ranged in length from 00:19 to 28:27 minutes and the view count ranged from just under 6 million views to over 11 million views. I simplified my sample by selecting the top videos from the "cum shot" channel.

Cum shots in pornography, both professional and amateur, are not of fringe popularity; they are central themes, making these videos of primary importance to an understanding of trends in pornography, heterosexual male masturbatory material, and inspiration for actual sexual encounters.

Previous comprehensive content analysis of pornography has found that 96% of heterosexual pornography scenes concluded with the male ejaculating onto the body of the female, and 62% of the scenes featuring external ejaculation are facial. Because my sample focuses intentionally on cum shots, all of the videos concluded with the male participant ejaculating on to the body, face, or mouth of the female, but in some cases these videos were simply mash-ups of different cum shots. Like in Tucker Max’s stories, the women receiving these cum shots are often referred to as "dirty sluts," "bitches," "naughty whores," "dirty cumbuckets," or any combination of those words.

The compilation videos, in particular, frequently made use of an artificial penis filled with synthetic semen in order to maximize the amount of semen released onto the female participant (not every man can produce an 8-romper, and that's OK). Viewers’ reactions, coded through the comments section, often criticized the use of the fake penis, though always found the videos to be "hot" or "sexy," despite the fact that no penises were actually involved in the production of the semen, nor did anyone reach climax in the making of the video. The sexual pleasure associated with viewing the video, however, is a much different story. The combination of view counts, ratings, and applauding comments directed at these videos suggests that plenty of people enjoyed what they saw.

In videos featuring authentic semen and sincere male orgasms, the camera is still focused on the exchange of semen onto the face, mouth, or body of the female participant. There is no question that there is something going on with heterosexual seminal exchange and a new found fascination with the semen. The question is how much does it matter that new models of masculinity normalize this type of behavior? The popularity of these videos, along with Tucker Max-style "literature," and the prevalence of ejaculatory imagery in popular culture suggests that these behaviors and attitudes towards women and heterosexual partnered intercourse are quickly becoming mainstream.

My work proposes that since the Civil Rights Era there has been a broad-based cultural backlash against women and people of color, as their advancement has been taken to come at the expense of white heterosexual men. I will argue that the shifting labor and sociocultural landscape of the United States has succeeded in eroding privileged patriarchal enfranchisement and disrupting traditional male roles, causing an increased anxiety among young men. In looking at pornography as an important cultural text, I will argue that the presentation of derogatory behaviors towards women - whether performed on camera in amateur pornography or more cautiously shared among friends through exaggerated sexual narratives - is becoming more ubiquitous within popular culture as hegemonic models of white masculinity hold on to their power and privilege. The cum shot, then, becomes much more than a funny gesture to symbolize dominance or a different way to end a sexual encounter; it is communicative of, well, readers will have to attend my presentation or replicate my sample to find out.

I Now Declare You Barely Human: How the Institution of Marriage Continues to Impede Women’s Rights in Contemporary America

By Anya Callahan

R elationships... expectations... Sigh. Theoretically, you grow a liking for someone and your connection deepens. If lucky, you fall in love. For those loves that can withstand time and differences, there comes an implicit expectation: marriage. But what does marriage mean? Why is it assumed to be an integral part of human life? I wish to explore the connection between heterosexual marriage and women’s rights in contemporary America. I seek to understand the roots that have lead our society to the modern sociopolitical conviction of the “traditional family” and marriage laws. Through a comprehensive understanding of women’s rights through the all-important relationship of marriage, I attempt to understand whether this tradition, rooted in patriarchy, has a place in a utopian feminist world.

2008 statistics report that an estimated 40% of marriages end in divorce, and that number is increasing. So why does our society continue to take part in such a potentially oppressive, chauvinistically rooted institution?

I promise I’m not the cold-hearted angry feminist bitch you may have written me off as. I get it—compensation, love, these little butterflies that tickle your tummy—yes, I have been there too. But why is it necessary to put a label on human emotions? I concur, it is lovely to have a shoulder to lean on, and a nice toned back isn’t so bad either, but dependence weakens the very beauty of existence.

A desire for security, ‘’Until death do us part,’’ comes from insecurity and uncertainty of individual abilities. Why must we make this binding promise to someone to show our feelings? Adultery would be no threat if individuals were sure their relationships were truly rewarding and not simply preserved by restriction of other prospects. Germaine Ger, author of The Female Eunuch, said, “A lover who comes to your bed on his own accord is more likely to sleep with his arm around you all night than a lover who had no where else to sleep.”

Marriage as a source of protection for women is a euphemism for oppression. In Jon Stuart Mill’s The Subjection of Women, he explained that women’s oppression is particularly tyrannical because of women’s compliance and perpetual engagement in intimate relationships with men. Thousands of years and three waves of feminism later, marriage lives on today concealing a deeply patriarchal past that is often overlooked due to wide societal acceptance and blindness to the original meanings behind the demeaning practices of marriage.

American law was founded on English common law, meaning women’s property and contract rights belonged to her father before marriage and to her husband after. Women were legally recognized as property of men. Marriage a contract - a contract that many of my friends are not legally allowed to partake in. While I do believe in marriage rights for everyone, the heated debate continues over same-sex marriage, it is vital to take an analytical look at the history and significance of marriage in America and to question if there is a place for this tradition in an egalitarian society.

Give it to me, baby: Female Orgasm in the 21st Century

By Megan Chambers

Where have all the clitoral orgasms gone? Seriously, everywhere I look, women are cumming as a result of penetration: porn, Hollywood movies, written erotica, visual erotica, magazines, television shows, yada, yada, yada. Did...
you know that only 30% of women report regularly achieving orgasm from penetration? Did you know that 29% of women report NEVER achieving orgasm through penetration? I KNOW, right? So here we are, with abstinence-only sex education, restrictive media portrayals of women's sexual pleasure, and a society that is too scared of the p-word and the v-word to express more information that was collected, the more obvious it became that the clitoris was a truly venerable organ.

The clitoral network (that’s right, it’s a whole network) consists of 18 separate parts. For the sake of space, I won’t list them here, but they can be found alongside a host of other invaluable information re: how to make a woman cum in Ian Kerner’s *She Comes First: The Thinking Man’s Guide to Pleasuring a Woman*, which can be attained on loan through the UPS Library… just fyi.

Anyways, 18 parts! Ok. I didn’t know that, and I have a clitoris. Allow me to elaborate further: the word vagina has been used to describe the entire ‘down there’ part of a female-bodied person – one more inaccurate that pervades Western sexual culture, as the correct term for the entire ‘down there’ is vulva. The vagina is the hole between the urethra and the anus into which the penis is inserted during penile-vaginal sexual intercourse. The vagina possesses significantly fewer nerve-endings than the clitoris and, to dispel the ‘darker’ (and thus: ‘longer’) myth, its nerve endings are largely concentrated in the third of the vagina closest to its entrance.

Female orgasm is universally accompanied by orgasm, this is actually true only 79% of the time. Female orgasm is not necessarily audible or visible either, nor is female ejaculation necessarily indicative of orgasm. I know. Porn lied to us. Those bastards…

The beauty of the whole thing is that even if women have never had an orgasm, they are perfectly aware of how to act as though they have. Porn, Hollywood cinema, stories from friends, etc… every woman knows how to fake it. They feel the need to be able to provide ‘evidence’ of their orgasm, because according to what we are all taught, women’s orgasms are infamously difficult to achieve and require a great deal of effort to facilitate. While men’s orgasms come quickly, easily, and, most stereotypically of all, ‘natural’, women must be administered to. Failure of the male to orgasm signifies an incomplete sexual event; failure of the female to orgasm often boils down to a matter of time – it took ‘too long’ or it was ‘too hard’. But what is ‘too long’? Western sexual culture has a tendency to view sex as a linear act: foreplay followed by penetration (as lengthy as possible) ending in orgasm, presumably for both partners. Unfortunately, this only appears to be the case for women about 30% of the time. Men, on the other hand, report experiencing orgasm through penetration 75% of the time. Our cultural focus on penetration has led us to a significant orgasm gap between men and women in heterosexual sexual encounters.

There are many ways to stimulate a woman to orgasm. Penetration is one of them, but there is also cunnilingus (oral sex on a vulva), manual stimulation (with your finger(s) or hand), or stimulation with a toy (dildo, vibrator, etc.). Many have experience with personal stimulation, and, for women, personal clitoral stimulation is the most consistently effective way to achieve orgasm. Cunnilingus is another highly effective way to stimulate a woman’s clitoris until she orgasms.

Personally, I have never faked an orgasm. Why encourage behavior that doesn’t get me where I want to go? I have also never had an orgasm during vaginal penetration. I know women who have had vagin orgasms, but I know far more women who have had clitoral orgasms, both as a result of their own stimulation and as a result of manual or oral stimulation. I know even more women who are frustrated by their desire for orgasms, combined with the expectation of orgasm, combined with the lack of effective stimulation provided to them by their heterosexual sexual partners. Don’t be that person. If you love to love on ladies, do your homework, and make sure you know what you’re looking for and where to find it.

Re-valuing Motherhood through New Media: The Cultural Significance of “Mommy Blogging”

By Laura Derr

So I’m writing a paper on “Mommy Bloggers”, a somewhat pejorative term coined to describe any mother who blogs about her children. I told this to my sister the other day, a new mom of a 4-month old, and she responded with: “Is that a joke? I read those blogs. Which makes sense. But why would you read those blogs?” She has a point, but the truth is that these blogs have a whole lot to say about the state of modern motherhood, which in turn has a lot to say about society as
a whole. You might be surprised how many academic sources have been written specifically about the “Mommy Blogging” phenomenon that has taken off running in the last 5-10 years. There are thousands of blogs authored by mothers acting as editors of their own stories, relaying what everyday life is like for them.

When I first started thinking about this topic, I was convinced that mothers were taking a step back when it came to gender equality by choosing to write about the domestic in a free space like the internet where they could choose to write about whatever they wanted. However, that presumption quickly changed as I delved deeper into the blogs and started reading through articles. I discovered that mothers engaged in public discourse about their private domestic life is not a sort of re-confining to the home in a negative sense but rather a powerful act. As these women speak frankly about the realities of motherhood, they are claiming a space within new media for a world previously left behind closed doors. In my primary sources, I began to find that these mothers express far more than just the identity of “mommy”—they have several other identities that the genre of the blog allows them to explore while still having time for their families and without having to sacrifice their connection to the rest of the world to do so.

My project explores the intricacies of the world of blogging mothers and the different facets of the specific genre of the blog in order to address the following questions: To what extent does the current trend of mommy blogging allow for the re-definition of motherhood for the 21st century, breaking with previous ideals of domesticity in which the mother had no identity but that of the “perfect” wife and child-caregiver to create a new identity of “mommy” which encompasses many other sub-identities? By extension, can this act of writing through the genre of the blog be seen as powerful as women have many more opportunities outside of the home than in the past, motherhood is still an identity that many hold in high esteem. The women who author these blogs are finding a way to exist fully as political, social and economic figures in relation to motherhood but not confined by it. They are embracing the social media of the new millennium without losing their personal values. In providing a space for the expression of the realities of motherhood and marriage, as well as an outlet for women to explore personal interests and the creative among the domestic, the genre of the blog allows for a new sense of power to be discovered in motherhood. Through the blogosphere, mothers can exist both at home with their children and partner as well as in an online world of support and humor, forging bonds with other mothers who can relate to their everyday challenges.

**Outward Displacement, Inward Assimilation:**

*The Inner Journey Home in Star Trek: Voyager*

By Cody Tacderas

**Gender is one of many silent forces that act upon and dictate our everyday actions and behaviors; it is difficult to imagine differing forms for the institution of gender because it is so deeply ingrained within our society. Because of my interest in alternative gender structures, I have become intrigued by how popular works today attempt to both complicate and define our understandings of gender through these works’ imaginations of alternative gender institutions. More specifically, my thesis, “Outward Displacement, Inward Assimilation,” looks at the U.S. television series Star Trek: Voyager (UPN, 1995-2001) and considers the implications of these imaginary norms for the show’s 21st-century audiences.

In short, Voyager is a show set in the 24th Century that chronicles the crew’s experience through unexpected territory. How does the series’ futuristic portrayal of gender compare with and contrast against our own modern gender institutions? What modern day issues are “solved” through Voyager’s understandings of gender? How is Voyager’s vision for gender limited within the confines of its own paradigm? And, by extension, how is Voyager’s vision for gender limited as a product of the 20th Century? These are a few of the questions my research will address in my analysis of this popular cultural text.

Beginning with nearly 18 million viewers in 1995, Voyager emerged as a powerful influence that, despite its futuristic setting, truly reflects and responds to our present-day culture. The huge viewership alone was enough to capture my attention and raise the question, with respect to gender studies, “What exactly is being consumed by such a massive audience?” My findings so far have been immensely surprising—even by science fiction standards—and are grounded within the show’s premise as a displacement narrative, a story of removal from familiar space.

The premise of Voyager is that a spaceship, the USS Voyager, and all of its crewmembers are mysteriously transported away from Earth and all familiar space to a region of space that has been left largely unexplored. Like Robinson Crusoe, the main focus of Voyager’s story is the journey home. However, because the crew of Voyager are so far displaced from society and all Earthly institutions—including conventional practices—they find themselves in constant need of adaptation to their new space. Forget the fact that Voyager features Star Trek’s first female captain, Kathryn Janeway; the bigger picture is that the space surrounding Voyager and its crew is “queer,” incredibly queer, in the sense that almost everything they know becomes subverted. As a result, the crewmembers queer themselves to adapt to their new environment and eventual sense of home.

I tackle this project by following the show chronologically, looking specifically at how gendered situations and ideas operate in the beginning, middle, and end of the series. For the most part, I perform interpretive close-readings of select arcs and characters in order to compare the development of ideas. For instance, in the beginning of the series, the crew feels lost, hopeless, and willing to do anything to get back to their respective homes; their desire for the familiar encompasses gender, too, as their new space subjects them to discomforting gender fluidity. Contrastingly, by the series’ end, the crew feels ambivalent about going home, with the idea being that the crew’s home and society are somehow more appealing than Earth. This suggests to me that, as a result of their journey, the crew creates a new institution of gender that supersedes the gender ideas that they bring with them from Earth. By realizing their newly formed gender-liberated forms, the crew grapples with the idea of taking the long way home as a means to preserve, learn about, and solidify their new place in queer space. Ultimately, I end up dissecting this newly formed gender institution aboard Voyager and determine how it comes to serve everyone’s interests. By paying particular attention to the ways in which this paradigm operates, I see how different gender roles and personalities become liberated from their previous limitations back among Earthly societies. Unfortunately for the crew, their gender explorations are cut short by their inevitable, and almost reluctant, return to Earth. With respect to the gender freedom each crewmember experiences, the ship’s arrival to Earth is interpreted as a lament for the loss of their protected queer space.
If interested in submitting in a future volume, please email pugetsoundwetlands@gmail.com