At Wetlands, we seek to make our magazine accessible to all people. In line with this, we ask that everyone practice self-care when engaging with difficult themes. In asking that, we would like to provide a few 24/7 resources, should they become relevant and necessary:

National Suicide Prevention: 1 (800) 273-8255
Trevor Project: 1 (866) 488-7386
Rape Crisis: 1 (800) 656-HOPE (4673)
Eating Disorders: 1 (800) 931-2237
Trans Lifeline: 1 (877) 565-8860

Additionally, some on-campus resources include:
peerallies@pugetsound.edu
chws@pugetsound.edu
pugetsound.edu/report
"Two screen prints based on the idea of identity through ritual. Ritual is a large part of day to day life and I am particularly interested in how textiles and touch factor into ritualistic processes. Coping with Trump's America, for me, depends a lot on me focusing on ritual and bringing new rituals into my life."
It's been quite the year so far.
I've never been this nervous — about to enter the "real world" after graduation, a real world that's in precarious balance and a constant state of anxiety. A world where every morning, I'm scared to check the news and see who else has been killed or deported, who else has had their rights taken away. A world where progress is being rolled back in leaps and bounds.

It's terrifying. But I know I'm not alone.
I am infinitely grateful to have this magazine, this platform, this community. To have people around me willing to speak out, whether it's against a professor or the university or international politics. To have people breaking down walls both physical and metaphorical. To see people around me taking action, and to be swept up in that action.

Part of this action is art. Art can be exhausting, exhilarating. It can be labor and it can be leisure and it can be radical and vulnerable, and I'm thankful for everyone who has submitted their art here in any form. I am thankful for my staff members who have worked so hard to make this magazine a reality.

I'm not going to say that things will get better, but I will say that we have the power to make things better, or at least the power to try. Every action counts. Stand against those you oppose, and be gentle with your loved ones. Find community. Create. Riot. Survive.

With love,
Natalie Scoggins
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yesterday someone asked me who i was and all i could say was bitter

i’m thinking of a number between seven and fifty-six and if you guess right you can cut me in half pull out my insides unwrap my intestines and see who i really am

my mom once told me your blood is the color of the rainbow when it runs through your veins and the second you cut your skin open it turns red

i used to sit in the bathroom with the lights off cutting at my ankles trying to get to the rainbow (i never found it)

but now sitting in the bathtub bleeding down the drain i am looking for the blue green yellow pink inside of me hoping for anything besides red
Untitled

Kanchan Armstrong
Once, when we first met, I asked her if she thought I was pretty. She looked at me as though I was crazy and said, “Of course you’re pretty, Em. You’re more than that. You’re beautiful.” Over the course of the summer weeks we spent together that year, I can’t count the number of times I wanted to ask her if she wanted to be with me. I didn’t, because I was scared. Every time I opened my mouth to speak, I choked on the words, as though they wouldn’t come out, no matter how hard I tried.

That fall, when we spent hours texting each other and wondering when we would get to see one other again, I asked my mom how she knew she loved her partner. She said, “It wasn’t a slap-you-in-the-face realization. I just did.” That’s when I knew. I didn’t love her, per say. We were young. I didn’t pretend to know what love really was more than anyone else my age. But I did want her to be my “more than.” I wanted to walk across a park, holding her hand. I wanted to kiss her cheek and smile at the vibrant color of her hair. I wanted to brush the bangs out of her eyes that were perpetually blocking her vision, and I wanted to make sure everyone knew I was hers and she was mine.

That was what scared me.

I didn’t know what it meant for me to like a girl. I didn’t know what it meant for me to like a boy. I just knew that I wanted her, and no one else. As hard as I tried to tell her, I couldn’t.

There was one night, a few weeks after I’d broken up with my most recent ex, and I was staying at her place, bemoaning my lack of a love life. In all honesty, I was over it. He and I hadn’t been compatible, and we both knew it. It just seemed like every relationship I’d attempted since I last saw her was… failing. And I couldn’t fathom why.
That’s not true.

I knew why. I just didn’t want to admit it to myself. That night, after long conversations of, “You know you didn’t care about him. So why are you so broken up?” and “Please tell me you didn’t put pineapple and onions on the pizza this time,” we climbed into bed and lay there. She fell asleep, I was sure, but I couldn’t breathe. She was so close and all I could think was kiss me kiss me kiss me.

Months later, we were back at summer camp. This year was different. It was my last year. I hadn’t seen her in months. School had taken over and I wasn’t able to see her as often. I thought I was over her. But when she walked into our room, I was wrong. Her hair was a brighter shade of red, if that was possible. And she’d grown up. She was taller, more graceful, and she had this air about her that said, “I know things. I’ve experienced them.”

On the last day of camp, I finally told her.

She smiled, told me I was beautiful, and kissed me.

Four months, we were together. Four months of her telling me I was beautiful. Four months of me showing her how much I cared for her. Funny enough, she was the first person I truly loved. I told her as much. But, in the end, we both knew why it didn’t work out. We were both busy. I was dealing with my own problems with my mom, and she was trying to back to a healthy state, herself.

I’d be lying if I said I didn’t miss her. It just wasn’t the right time. I know that. She knows that. I don’t think we’re ever going to try again. I’m happy now. I’m in love. So is she. We went on.

I’m not scared anymore. I know what it is to love another woman, and it’s part of who I am. And I think it’s funny, the incredulous looks on people’s faces, when I tell them I’m queer. “Yes, I’m with someone who identifies as male. No, I’m not straight. Yeah, he’s queer, too.” She helped me see that there’s more than just one gender, and I can love whomever I want. I choose to love him the same way I chose to love her.

She asked me once, two years after we’d broken up, if I regretted us. What we had. I said, “Of course not. I loved you. I still do. I could never regret that.”
"The Missing Elements' is a collaborative project between photographer Jacob Shaffer and non-binary trans musician and fashion conceptualist Timmy Flock. The photos create four different characters that are based off of pop songs. The first two songs are two of Timmy’s original songs, and the other two are by indie pop artists.

The photos are called 'The Missing Elements' because Timmy thinks of music as being like a social, stabilizing force in society. Songs take up space in the imagination and fill in gaps between missing elements inside of the personal, individual self and the outside world of communities. The photos are organized so one can travel across a spectrum between the personal and the communal, starting with songs filling gaps in the personal self and ending with songs that focus on the outside world."

"Crane" is based off of Timmy’s original song “The Paper Crane.” This song a statement against queerphobia, and a song dedicated to trans empowerment. It is a missing element inside of Timmy’s personal self because they wrote this song without premeditation about what it actually meant after coming out as trans. Years later, they found this song perfectly fit their trans narrative and helped them understand their identity and the gender discussion.

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"Your Children" is based off Sia's song "The Greatest." The song was dedicated to the victims of the June 2016 Orlando Pulse nightclub shooting. The song was released in September 2016. This song is a missing element between the empathetic voices and the LGBTQ community. Sia filled that gap through the making of this song.

"Virus?" is based off Anohni's 2016 album "Hopelessness," and the lyrics written on Timmy's face are in reference to the title track. The album was released in May 2016. The album is a missing element between political realities and American ignorance. Anohni filled that gap with this album. Anohni calls out many harsh realities on this album about the American government: many people neglect drone warfare, execution, government surveillance, and the global warming crisis.
I used to sit in silence.
Patiently waiting for the day where life would be
Handed to me on a silver platter.
That my melanin rich skin wouldn’t build barriers.

In this nappy headed haze, the world was grey,
And I had value.

No, not the value slaves had being bought and sold,
Like people can be owned,
But worth.

That the oxygen flowing through my wideset nose,
Was something that I deserved,
And is something that cannot be taken away from me
in less than a single palpitation of the heart.

The cool air that passes through my big lips
As words are cultivated by my programmed brain,
Who’s been told that Eurocentric beauty is the standard
And my big bust and wide hips will never be “in style”.

I used to internalize all this hatred.
And to say I don’t ponder my existence from time to time
Would be a downright lie.

But to say that I don’t love
My skin that’s rich with culture and history,
My nose that has evolved to allow me to breathe freely,
And the lips I have naturally that people desire so badly that they go
to the extent
Of being poked and prodded with a needle,

Would be a lie.
I can still taste the leather on my lips
You push my face down
Sweat and shame drips
Close my eyes, remember falling in love on the playground

Late nights stealing kisses on swingsets
Early mornings telling me I’m useless
Reeling backwards, you might say I have regrets
Come to realize this is abusive

Left love between the cracks
Got lost in the midst
Next to coin collections, hair bands, & lost snacks
Now you you persist
Insist your innocence

And maybe I was wrong
love is supposed to taste that way

I guess I’ll play along

Untitled
Jae Bates

Snake
Rory Wong Jacobs
Rejecting "Virginity"

Indigo DaCosta

Problems with Narrative

It’s not true. For starters, let’s take a case where two partners, one with a penis or a strap-on, and one with a vagina, have vaginal intercourse, and neither have done so before. As the traditional story goes, the partner with the vagina has a membrane covering their vagina that the penis then breaks when it enters, causing pain, blood, and virginity loss.

In reality, the vaginal corona (often called the hymen) should never fully cover the vagina.1 If it were a membrane that covered the entire vagina before one had sex, how could one’s body allow menstrual fluid out? Instead, it starts out as a bit of skin with a hole in it, and it wears down as the person grows up. Activity, showering, exercise, and hormones all wear down the vaginal corona over time. While it is true that vaginal intercourse can be a contributing factor to wearing down the vaginal corona over time, it is not the only factor; it should not break or rupture anything, and it should not hurt or bleed.

Pain can be a result of vaginal intercourse, whether or not the person whose vagina it is has had intercourse before.

However, it’s not a result of first sexual intercourse. Pain during sex is, as pain always is, a sign that something is wrong. The most common causes of pain during intercourse are not being aroused enough and anxiety. When someone with a vagina is aroused, muscles around the vagina relax, widening it (and also debunking the myth that your vagina becomes “looser” when you have frequent intercourse—it’s a set of muscles, which can go back in place when not aroused). As a result, if someone with a penis causes someone with a vagina pain during vaginal intercourse, the former person is likely not paying attention to or understanding the latter person’s needs. Not knowing how to communicate with someone in sexual situation can be a result of inexperience, so if it’s both partners’ first sexual experience, then that may contribute to the myth that first intercourse is painful. Additionally, if the person with the vagina in that situation has heard that their first experience of vaginal intercourse is supposed to hurt, then they might not realize that anything is wrong, and may try to “grin and bear it.”

Bleeding tends not to happen even when the vaginal corona is worn down, and it won’t happen without pain. If someone is too rough on a vagina when it isn’t lubricated enough (often due to anxiety), it can cause micro-tears in the vagina that lead to pain and perhaps bleeding.

1 In rare cases, it might, but in those cases, the person requires a surgery—not sexual intercourse—to resolve the problem.
"The idea that you “lose your virginity” the first time you have sex is one of the most destructive ideas we have about sex—and it’s incredibly pervasive."

However, it’s important to note that that is not a result of a “lost virginity” and that it should not happen. As always, pain means that something is wrong. Pain and/or bleeding can also be a result of sexual assault, which should never be equated with sex. Claiming that pain and bleeding should be a result of one’s first sexual experience implies that it’s okay if one’s first sexual experience is akin to sexual assault—and that’s not okay.

It could cause you to ignore other causes of pain. Besides anxiety and not being aroused or ready enough, some people experience other types of pain. For me, it almost always hurts when I try to touch the outside of my vagina, even if I’m fairly aroused. I have also had this experience with tampons. I believe I may have vestibulodynia, which is provoked pain of the vestibule, the entrance to the vagina. Another problem that some people with vaginas experience is called vaginismus, which is an involuntary clamping of the vaginal muscles when you try to put something in it. These and other conditions are valid, real sources of pain that persist whether or not it’s your first sexual experience. They deserve attention, but the myth that your first sexual intercourse will hurt may lead people to ignore that. For example, I first tried to put in a tampon when I was 15, and when it really hurt, I wondered if it was just because I hadn’t “popped my cherry,” and resigned myself to never using tampons since I wasn’t having sexual intercourse. That assumption caused me to ignore a problem that I probably could have solved a long time ago by validating my own pain.

It’s sexist. In many spaces, when a woman isn’t “a virgin,” it’s a statement. The terms “losing” your virginity, “deflowering,” and “popping your cherry” all provide insight into the connotation associated with a sexually active woman. When a woman has had sex, she has “lost” a part of her, perhaps even “given” it to someone. She has lost her “flower” or her “cherry.” To say these things implies that virginity is valued—as flowers and cherries are—and “losing” them through sex is shameful. As such, the concept of “losing your virginity” places value on feminine chastity while holding men to no such standard (and often shaming men who don’t have sex), hence making it okay for them to “sleep around,” but shaming the women they “deflower” in the process.

This structure of thinking gives power to the masculine figure, and weakens the position of the feminine figure. While I have mentioned that I have a vagina and used to be scared of sex due to virginity myths, I’m also a man, so part of my fear of sex stemmed from my relationship with my gender. As a trans man, it can be difficult to separate frustration about not being perceived as my gender with frustration about the sexism applied to me when I was perceived as a woman. While it is validating to be read as a man, I know that part of that is extra validation men and masculinity receive, that women don’t get. In any case, before I was out, I was extra frustrated with the idea of sex because I figured having sex and “popping my cherry” would expose me as a woman, solidify me as a woman, and thus place me at a power disadvantage. While I now realize that my anatomy does not define my gender in that I am a man even though I have a vagina, I recognize that that power disadvantage I wanted to avoid is one that primarily disadvantages (all) women, both sexually and in general. We need to stop discussing “virginity,” as it creates a power dynamic that perpetuates sexism.

It encourages people not to speak up when they don’t like something, which contributes to rape culture. As I mentioned earlier, if you enter your first intercourse experience with the expectation that it will hurt, then you are likely not be reluctant to voice your pain.
This reluctance, in combination with the myth that sex is primarily something women “give” to men for male pleasure, translates to reluctance to voice any concerns people have in a sexual experience. If you’ve ever felt like it’s hard to say “no” when you want to, the myth of necessary pain upon vaginal intercourse contributes to that difficulty. Our perpetuation of not voicing our concerns even when we’re in pain stymies consent culture, and thus perpetuates rape culture. I don’t mean to say that every instance we experience pain means that it is rape—a partner may have done something by accident, and then in a normal situation, we would say what’s wrong, and then the first partner would stop what they’re doing, check in, solve the problem, and take care of us. However, if we believe that we should be in pain, then we may stop saying it, and “grin and bear” things while we let our partner do things “to” us for their pleasure. Further, if a partner begins to believe our pain isn’t valid and doesn’t listen to us when we say “no”—perhaps because it’s the first time and is “supposed” to hurt—then we cross the line into assault.

It’s cis-heteronormative. You may have noticed that I have been using the phrase “first sexual intercourse.” The reason for that terminology is that “losing your virginity” refers to one’s first time in a specific sexual act: penis-in-vagina sexual intercourse. It also assumes that the person with the penis is a man, and the person with the vagina is a woman. The importance we place on one’s virginity or lack of it also establishes this kind of sex as the only “real” sex. This definition of sex undermines both queer relationships and transgender bodies. It undermines queer relationships by excluding non-penis-in-vagina sex from discussions about sex, and it erases trans people in its connections of manhood/masculinity to penises and penetration and of womanhood/femininity to vaginas that can “be deflowered.”

Beyond Virginity-Based Ideals

One more problem with the virginity narrative: It leads to bad sex, whether you’re queer or not. Honestly, my sex life became so much better after I came out as queer. Before that, I was in a “straight” relationship whose sexual interactions felt tied to penis-in-vagina sex. While that partner and I never decided we were ready to have intercourse while we were together, it was still something that loomed over my head when we did have sex. At the time, I considered all our sexual interactions “not real” because we did not “go all the way” and I was still “a virgin.” The reality was that I learned a lot about sex through that relationship, but I discounted most of it. Whenever we did interact sexually, the fear that I would someday inevitably have to “pop my cherry” if I wanted to have “real sex” loomed over me and prevented me from exploring my own sexuality in a meaningful way. Our sexual interactions became boring and repetitive, and I figured all sex was like this.

While part of the improvement in my sex life after I came out was a result of just being more comfortable existing within my world in general, not feeling limited to cis-heterosexual definitions of sex has also been an essential contributing factor. In my current relationship, I have often felt that living outside of cis-heteronormative standards of relationships—both sexual and otherwise—have opened up a lot of possibilities. In my “straight” relationship, even when I did something outside of these norms—for example when I would be “on top”—it felt exceptional because it violated a norm. A queer relationship feels much more fluid; it does not seem to matter whether or not I stick to or violate a norm, it does not seem to matter whose body looks like what, and it does not seem to matter whose body prefers to do what in what way.

Even though I have a vagina and my partner is a cis man, I generally don’t like penetration (intercourse). That doesn’t mean I don’t like sex, and it doesn’t mean we don’t have sex. It means I define sex differently than intercourse. If we were focused on intercourse the way I fixated on it before I reconsidered my understanding of virginity and sex, I wouldn’t enjoy it. Intercourse is difficult for me because of vaginal pain, and even when pain isn’t causing me a problem, I don’t find it very pleasurable. I just don’t care for it much, and it has taken me a long time to accept that that’s okay.
"We can have sexual intercourse if and when we want to, but the presence or lack of it does not in any way define our genders, our experience levels, or who we are."

In a cis-straight relationship, I imagine that accepting that sort of thing might be even more difficult, but I believe that it’s possible. The virginity myth implies that penis-in-vagina intercourse is the standard for sex. I consider living up to that standard is a performance, per se. However, I believe that sex does not need to be performance-based. Sex should be pleasure-based for all parties involved rather than limited to standards. I think we can all give ourselves the freedom to examine and explore our own bodies all over—and recognize that anything that gives us pleasure, be it touching your neck, your back, etc in certain ways—can be a part of sex. We can have sexual intercourse if and when we want to, but the presence or lack of it does not in any way define our genders, our sexualities, our sexual experience levels, or who we are.
Unshaven prickles
Tickle up between my knees
Legs spread, open wide

Valentines
Sophia Munic
obsession:
with people
with a person
with a boy that moaned my name
but never told me i was pretty

compulsion:
hurting myself
until i am mad
about how much it hurts

obsession:
with love
(with sex)
with love
with love

compulsion:
staring at the stars
until i find myself
within a sparkle
until everything is bright
and i am floating
up

obsession:
with the gap in your teeth
how it feels on my tongue
what it looks like when
you’re laughing
what it looks like when
you’re screaming

compulsion:
writing the same poem
over and over again

"i was diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder when i was 4 years old."
Dear Hate,
Why me? What bothers you so about my rolling tongues, playing with another?
Is it my body? My hair, or lack of? Is it the spells? Can you smell the magic
dripping from my lip(s)
I will steep you like a tea, brew a little longer, boil over-
Until you evaporate
Your bulging eyes are no longer convincing
And her hands are still so sweet
Your crushing tongues, spitting in undulated spew
How did you grow this way?
Who forgot to water you?
I see your sad, wilted hairs and your melting embodiments
You always look so uncomfortable in yourself
And for that I have pity and compassion
I see the way your heart slopes
blindly seeking a thrill
How sad the world must seem to you & how empty, I wish I could untie the knots
of your complicity
With the revolutions emanating from the oscillations of my finger tips
You forgot how powerful we are, didn’t you?
See, as you grew darkly into yourself, glooming and sulking in damp alleyways,
waiting like a greedy rat for prey
As you slowly faded from your humanity
We were weaving your oppressive breath into silken stories
With each trauma you bestow us, we transmute, dissolving your cruelty into
tapestries of devoted love

~It seems as though we have been here before, haven’t we? I have been cracked
open by arts emotion and as my squishy guts decorate the floors, rolling over
carpets and mud, I take a breath to remember the unbelievability of this world~
You forgot that we are magic

Divine creators
-You forgot we gave you life-

As you think you expand, spewing hate like sprinklers
We bathe and photosynthesize in your bigotry

With each beating
We hydrate in your water-less rains
As you steal our bodies
For your petty power ‘pleasures’

We burn each of your eyelashes with one look of truth
You forgot how powerful we are, didn’t you?

You didn’t realize that, as you hunt and raped and killed us
we’ve been watching you
And we’ve learned alllll your secrets
Through your ironed ties and burnt cigarettes

You forgot that we know your every fear & weakness, o how weak you truly are
Empty Vessels
And still

We refuse to bend down to play these games on your dirty tabletops
And still

We choose to grow, to absolve your insignificance, to revel in what we’ve always
Known

Once a woman came to me, in a day-lit dream
She had deep-set eyes of panic
Made of earth and wind, she had traveled far, to deliver her gift
Chased by men she grew exhausted and could continue no longer,
She kneeled and handed me a bundle,
Wrapped with the hands of generations of women
A package of divine wisdom
She brought me back to myself
As I pulled apart the twine
And dissolved into

Light
"Straight from the kiln, cracks and all. This piece is inspired by the ways in which two of the most beautifully powerful women in my life have influenced my inner growth over the past year, supporting me in practicing self-love as I discover and embrace my queer identity."
The Night Of…
(Hang on Darling, Gentle Now)

Evan Welsh

I wish I had something more to tell you than
I’m sorry.

I can see the whites of your eyes turn red
as you shift your face away so that I cannot see the tears.

I wish, at this moment, that I could do more,
but entropy takes course regardless of our attempts to halt it.

From below our window we hear the calls of panic and unknowing.

My eyelids close,
and from empty classrooms, across fields, I can recall confident phrases.

They are few, but they are sure.

“Just as surely the universe had a beginning,
it will have an end.”

And despite what the sky looks like today,
distant and disfigured,
today is not that day.

Tonight, hold your brothers and sisters tight,
and let them know how beautiful they are.

Kiss their foreheads and sing them lullabies
until they fill with sleep.

Tomorrow, we wake to sit with worry and
continue our fall forward,
and we will wake every morning after
to do the same.

Day to day
will come in like deafening alarms,
but we will find virtue in our vigor,
and from love comes wonders.

“ On the night of the election, I sat
stunned and confused, just as many others
did, and called my mother. In the moment,
she was distraught, worried about what
the future might hold for her children. Later
that night, after a lot of thought given to the
day and to the conversation I had with my
mother, I sat down with a piece of paper I
had torn from my notebook and wrote down
the guilt I felt for the sadness in my mother’s
voice. As I wrote, I played a song, Silver
Mt. Zion’s “There Is A Light”, whose lyrics
influenced the title of this piece and brought
strength and hopefulness to my thoughts;
an ideal of perseverance to combat whatever
might come tomorrow. I believe fear highly
influenced the outcome of that night, and
this is written in an attempt to move beyond
that. This poem dedicated to my mother,
Holly, and to my sister, Adah. I love you. "

Wetlands Magazine
Solo las lágrimas de nuestros abuelos caerán del cielo

Juan-Carlos Ortega Esquinca

"Chicanx Park has been a hangout for anarcho-queer youth, cholx goths, gender nebulous skaters, lowrider club viejitos, maricón collectives and old school rucas."

"These pieces are meant to engage with queer and indígena identities that exist within the borderlands of Aztlán."
Jewels for the next generation

Sam

My grandmother gives me precious gems, wisdom hardened by a lifetime of struggle, composed into a gift for those who carry on in her name.

The glittering crown jewel of her collection is given to me, a gift and a command. “Now Is Not The Time For Complacency”
Her words are heavy and their edges are so sharp I bleed when I take them.

The crimson droplets are a reminder that cannot place this gem with the others, it is not something to be taken out only when it is of use to me.
This jewel demands to be carried with me
a constant reminder that we are entering a battle, and one that cannot be won with gentle words or hope for a better tomorrow.

“Now Is Not The Time For Complacency”
Now is the time to fight.
You admitted to the rape.
Said “fuck it [rape].”
Apologized for what you did.
Said you lacked the education to know what it had been.
Claimed to have grown, to now understand consent and what it meant.

Then you did it again.
And again.

You wouldn’t call that rape;
you never owned up to the assault of a friend, and that friend’s friend.
Showed off your phone with the list –
the names of every girl you’d fucked.

Fucked and then fucked up. Left them wilting, rotting, reeling, rubbed dry for your pleasure.

“I’m sorry, I was a rapist” you said.

But you never admitted that the past tense form – was – was the wrong verb tense, because to be is still being if you are the thing you claimed you’d never be again.
i’ve never written a poem about you

Shanna Williams

you always told me
it’s impolite to cry in
public places
it makes you
feel uncomfortable

i wanted the whole world
to know you were hurting me
i wanted you to hit me
on the street
in front of a woman with a stroller
i wanted her to call 911
i wanted to sit on the sidewalk
crying
i wanted to make everyone
uncomfortable

it would be easier if you hit me
it would make the break up
painless
if i had bruises
scars on my stomach
but i just have
every moment you broke me
fucked in my head
no one else can see it
it’s a kind of
invisible torture
and you love me
and i love you
but i get it now
when everyone says
love isn’t enough

sometimes i cry in
public places
waiting
to drown
The earth rises, and dips. It rises up and bows down to the mountain in ridges and hills, hugging the rivers and deep valleys. Look out; you can see over dozens of hills as they pay obeisance to the Mountain that gave them life. Rows of orderly tea bushes crown them and march across an unobstructed landscape. Trees with naked trunks and tufts of branches for hair protrude from the bushes, peering out across the landscape and giving orders to the bitter tea leaves: do not climb up beyond the foot hills. The chirps of insects call from the bushes, rolling one after another in a prolonged song – separated friends calling out to one another. The songbirds, picking at sweet papaya and sour star fruits, call back from the depth of the forest beyond the foothills.

In the early morning, cold mist seeps out from the leaves; a sea of thick white closes your eyes, and whispers in your ear. What does it whisper? Everything. Ancient stories of wise mouse-deer that outsmart tigers, living by their cunning guile. Of a land shaped by liquid fire spewing from the mountain, running down the ridges of the great crocodile, bending all in its way to its will but leaving the land pregnant. Of Kings, betrothed to foreign wives but throwing it away for the love of a rock miner – a man whose quiet, determined beauty captures the eyes of the young King and enthralls him.

Who can control the wind, beloved? Who stops it from uprooting fields and wrecking havoc?

The Mountain stands in its way, my love. And whomovesthemountain;whospews fire, holds back oceans, and stops the wind?

The Mountain is immovable, nothing is more constant.

But you are, beloved. You chip away at the mighty mountain in small quarries to build sturdy homes where love dwells, to build temples to Gods. Who can move my beloved?

Evidently, spice traders and missionaries can.

What does the mist whisper? Nothing. The kind of silence that overpowers you with its size and breadth but that brings with it relief – an airy silence. Impenetrable silence. The kind of silence you die in, and no one hears it. But the kind of silence where that’s sort of okay. The silence that makes you forget.
Stop crying, little boy. You don’t know what’s coming if you don’t stop. But I do know. Small bamboo groves and smooth, compact dirt. Cold buckets of water. Leave my house.

Hot terror between my legs. God himself descends to castigate me; I have run afoul of his messenger. He killed the spirits of the trees, and the gibbons. He is your father, your holy father. He will kill you too.

Unless you run away.

These hills are forgiving. Fists full of leaves and simmering water bring blessed reconciliation; drink the tea quick before the mist takes a sip too. The earth made the King and took him back; it loved him, enveloped him. His tears flow from his hot cheeks as the land was torn apart, the souls defiled by holiness. His tears pool in creeks, and carve new ridges in the earth. This earth made you and will take you back, without exception. Your love is perfect for the earth; lovers disappear into one another. So will you.

Foreign lands vomit you out. There is no love for you here, only white-hot hatred. It masks itself as love, it masks itself as thirsty desire. It calls to you and craves you. It casts you aside: forgotten son, defiled lover. His fingers burn when he touches your skin.

Here, the land loves. The cool, thick mud seeps through your toes and tugs at your feet. It calls to you through the birds and through the ferns. Come back to me. For you, my earth is yours alone. The fog runs its fingers through your hair, gently pulling at each one with familiarity just as it rustles the branches of the weeping fig tree as if they were one. Seek this inheritance; to live in the ridges of the King. Seek loving contradiction of everything-ness and nothing-ness of the mist.

Anonymous
How to be Beautiful; A Poem in Four Parts

1
Light that little black dress on fire,
Hang it from a flagpole, a letter to those who lie in wait,
a refusal to be swallowed by their desire,
Cold metal cuffs for those callous hands of fate.

Tear those golden tresses from your head,
the ones with which the gentleman like to play,
Let them grow back black and wild instead,
Like the gnarled brambles near where you used to pray.

And those juicy lips that tasted just as sweet?
Line them with the crimson blood of freshly butchered meet.

And those legs so long they went on for days?
Let them grow a coat as thick as those fervent strays.

3
Next pick up the pieces of your shattered frame,
every last chip and shard.
See how they gleam in the soft light of the early morning?
You could mistake them for diamonds…

String them together into a lovely wind chime
and hang them from your window pane.
On the nights when memory tugs you away from sleep,
listen to how sweetly it sings,
whenever a lonely breeze blows by.
Now that your ears are open,
Listen to the nightingale’s god awful melody.
It wakes you up at 4:00 am for the four millionth time.

Wish with what’s left of your body
That you could hate it
the way you used to.

But smile anyway,
because they sing
in perfect harmony.

Sing your sorrows to the starless night
Howling, howling, howling
so primal and so pure, oozing rich delight
fill the empty sky so full of songs of sadness
that mother moon must weep
endless rivers of light.

Repeat. Even if the noise, so shrill, cracks you open
down to the red marrow of your brittle bones.
But don’t you stop, not even for an instant.

Even when the neighbors threaten to call the cops.
i am emerging from the nymph skin
moulting my exoskeleton against hemlock
and rue
pressing myself against the expanding
universe
the great growing womb of being

and you, asleep in my bed
skin soft and beaded with sweat
i want you fierce and whole as you dream
about the soft soil we left behind
the hard shells, the aerated burrows
come back from the earth
you are mine, cicada girl,
mine, mine, mine, mine.
Trauma is one hell of a drug

Anonymous

One night my freshman year, my hands left me
I looked down at where they should’ve been and instead there were two
Things that I guessed were hands but cold and creaking
I became enveloped in a awful static cocoon, it rang in my ears and yet I
could barely hear it
In front of me was an essay, due tomorrow, (my worst enemy), and my hands
had up and left me (what assholes)
"I" stood up and left my room (was it really me that stood?)
"I" went outside and found my favorite tree to climb
Those brittle "hands" attached to me grabbed the tree, hoisted me up into its
branches (I guess they’re good for something)
"I" sat for possibly a century, staring into the lichen
A leg slipped, so I left. Returned to my building with mud and lichen coating
Those hands (whose hands?)
At some point, I rinsed the mud off. I don’t know why, they weren’t mine to
take care of, but I did anyways. I avoided the mirror because I was afraid it’d
show the truth
Eye contact is strictly forbidden
I returned and my hands returned with me
Soaking wet, I put the pieces back together again
Start over.
I think str8 sex is an abomination. You ever had sex with a str8? She doesn’t know what to do with your clit and he can’t even find it. They’ll tip-tap the taint and ask if x marks the spot or grip your clit to hold on to their str8ness.
You ever had sex with a str8?
They pray at the altar of Missionary
and treat fucking
like the hare treats the race;
a quickie to make you sticky,
but a vibrator doesn’t feel half the shame.

Hiss hiss the cis
are even worse,
bottomless cispools
of outdated gender roles
like ill-fitting roleplay.
A tranny trap twink,
your experiment or your toy,
blink and you’ll kiss me.
Afterward you’ll make me moan
from the penetration
of a knife in my belly,
a womb pregnant with death.

Sorry honey, I’m not interested
in knavish knifeplay
with cis boy shame
or the predatory predilection
of twerf scum
and their asymmetrical bang.
The hissy-fit cis have a lot in common
with the str8s and the twerfs:
they’re fucking awful.
//flesh

Cat Huber

1.

our bodies were soft as though we weren't hardened by the world

// Do you remember or forget?

u remember u have a body and ur finger tips feel like electricity. ur body means something even at the most stressful times even when u fee.

invisible.

" this is my love
poem/hate letter to
duchamp, twine, and
transhumanism. "

we were sinking, wrapping into one another with the cold marble of our flesh coded into being by all of ur forefathers and muses.

// Do you cling or reject?

u cling to that meaning which u know is there. even if it is absent or misplaced even in the marble u feel beneath ur skin, icy to the touch. even when u wish it wasn't there. because it is all u have. because without the body and its politics, what are u?

our softness is radical but only insofar as the softness can be grabbed.

// Do you listen or speak?

u listen to all of the words of nothingness ur flesh is nothing but still u speak.

u speak the truth, drawing a circle of chalk beneath u and breathing that ur body means too much to handle. as u cling to old statues of nothingness. and still it means too much. u know that ur flesh crushes u and everybody else around u under the weight of its value and its lack. u wonder abt all it is used for, all political and personal gratification. u breathe and gasp and u are sick of both. ur mind is soft and that is dangerous.
"In the 1970’s, NASA launched Pioneer 10 and 11 into deep space. Upon these probes were golden plaques, detailing the origins of the probe, and those who created them. The woman on the plaque is shown here, albeit with a penis. She is myself idealized. Those plaques of gold are meant for extra terrestrials to know where we are/were and what we were. Would those same extra terrestrials know that I was here, and others like me and this woman? " 
tumblr said
don’t erase her

tumblr said
don’t forget her

Tumblr doesn’t
say much of her
anymore.

She would be 19 now and

I keep thinking
I shouldn’t care as much
About death by suicide
As I do about transphobic murders,
Hate crimes.

But isn’t telling someone
“You won’t be trans,
If you just love yourself”
A hate crime too?

I hate that I even have to play
These death olympics
And decide who I can feel
More sad about.

The truth is she was like me
And Tumblr may have
Forgotten her

But I can’t.