Wetlands Magazine, Issue 12

Gender and Queer Studies Program

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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 24/7 resources, should they become relevant or necessary:

National Suicide Prevention: 1 (800) 273-8255
Trevor Project: 1 (886) 488-7386
Rape Crisis: 1 (800) 656-HOPE (4673)
Eating Disorders: 1 (800) 931-2237
Trans Lifeline: 1 (887) 565-8860

Additionally, some on campus resources include:
Peer Allies: peerallies@pugetsound.edu
CHWS: chws@pugetsound.edu
pugetsound.edu/report
Artist Statement (artwork and “for the love of moonlight”): My work is centered around my identity as a queer woman. Both the portraits and the short story are meant to be unsettling but beautiful, which I feel represents my quest for self-discovery, as well as the impossibility of perfection. My short story is a thinly veiled allegory for a queer woman driven mad by her lost love.

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Dana Levy
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Dear Reader,

This semester has been tumultuous, to say the least. We have seen a plethora of disasters, both natural and social. From the fires in Northern California, to the hurricanes that ravaged the globe, to the toxic rhetoric equipped by Trump, this semester has been overwhelming. Often, I’ve been left feeling emotionally numb. Wetlands Magazine and the wonderful staff of this semester have given me hope in these trying times. The staff and students who have submitted to the publication have taken feelings of hurt, confusion, anger, and pacification and turned them into something beautiful. In this issue, we have received submissions from writers and artists whose voices we have not heard in the past. Each submission individually, and the issue as a whole, allows for conversations around identity; conversations too often avoided both in print and in person. I am proud to work on a publication that embraces these conversations, and with a mostly new staff so dedicated to making Wetlands an inclusive literary and artistic space. As this magazine continues to evolve, it is my hope that its dialogue will become more and more dynamic, with more voices around campus joining in. In these times, Wetlands and the themes it tackles are more relevant than ever. I am grateful to those featured, to my staff, and to readers like you for committing to our vision. I feel that we have put together a compelling issue this semester, and I am excited to see what Wetlands has in store during the rest of my time as Editor-in-Chief.

Sincerely,

Madyson Frank
Editor-in-Chief
untitled
Kyle Julian Parkhurst
I’m tired of saying this is love or depression
I’m tired of all these words
it’s just hard for me to understand how I could go from swallowing sobs in a hotel lobby
to back in warm sheets with you.
And I could feel your heartbeat all over,
in your feet, in your knees, in your eyelids.
And I didn’t sleep until the bus ride home.
Maybe I don’t respond to texts because my mom never responded to my calls.
Maybe I write instead of talk because all she did was get a tattoo of my name and move away.
Maybe I need to stop blaming this all on her.
All I know is that I miss every face I’ve ever seen and my bones ache when I go to sleep and my eyes burn when I wake up and all I am is a story people tell to their friends when they run out of nice things to say.

hold me
Kyle Julian Parkhurst

PLEASE HOLD ME
UNTIL I FORGET
ALL THE AWFUL THINGS I HAVE DONE.

K.P.
“Hold Me” artist’s statement: I grew up gay and mentally ill in a small town. A lot of the time I felt so broken that I needed someone to sneak into my house and hold me until everything felt okay again. This piece reflects the social and romantic isolation I felt growing up in a small, heteronormative town, and the burning desire I felt to simply be held by another man.

“It Hurts” artist’s statement: My emotions constantly have me at a loss for words. I am surrounded by therapists, doctors, friends, and family who ask “How are you?” and “How do you feel?” After many years of this dreaded feeling, I have come to understand that there are no words in the English language to describe the ache inside of me. This piece is a visual representation of my desperate attempt at communication when all I can muster is “it hurts.”
stains
Marissa Stafford

Our hands vibrant
With bright residue
Of early morning
Berries

We don’t wash our hands
With sterile soap
We savor the
Succulent
Ripe scent

Palms stained with blackberries
Plucked with relief
As our hands missed the thorns
Fingers grasping tightly around
Our prize

When I stare at bare
Raw hands
I see vivid purple
Stains
I see you

juicy
Kiri Bolles
me too
Anonymous

Why is it that survivors have to say “me too”
To raise awareness about sexual assault
But perpetrators never have to say “I did”?
We don’t owe you our stories
Why are we still raising awareness for sexual assault?
People ought to be aware by now.
Legitimacy is always out of reach, always unattainable
What even is “legitimate” assault?

Rays of sun dance across the field, warming me from within
Grass tickles my legs
But then you’re touching me and I am eight years old
I know it’s uncomfortable but I don’t know why

“You need to report this so he doesn’t rape someone else”
Victims shoulder the responsibility,
because boys will be boys
I am a bad survivor so I reach for excuses

I hear a click as the lock twists into place
The sound rings in my ears
Inescapably
And then you’re running your poisonous fingers down my chest
And I taste indifference on your breath

Betrayed by my own body
Because I didn’t say no
But I didn’t say yes?
But I didn’t struggle
But I didn’t say yes

I didn’t struggle,
Maybe I really did want it
It isn’t “serious enough” to warrant a report,
But I’m probably just being dramatic

How can other people believe me when I’m not sure I believe myself?
I cannot decipher the true from the false, the legitimate from the illegitimate
So many me too’s, and not a goddamn single I did.
The midsummer night air was tongue-wet and heavy, crushing her with invisible languor, and she lay still as the moonless nights were long, and so, so very long they were since the moon rolled out of the sky long ago, and all that remained was this leaden atmosphere lying in thick, white tendrils in her nostrils, and in her eyes, and in her ears, and she was too tired to sleep and too alert to stay awake, and was rather counting each breath by the steam that escaped her mouth, in and out, in and she was swelteringly frozen stiff by her own state of purgatory, in and out and in and in her body could have been carved from wax, each sinuous slippery soft curve gleaming with sweat, a thousand beading droplets all seeming to congregate in every pore, in and out, in every cell of her being, until she could suffer no longer and she flung herself up, up, stirring vaporous waves around her as she treded through the molasses and out of the house with the close, thick air and into the pitch of night, so dark now, so dark without her moon hung like a precious blue pearl popped from the purest oyster to hang around the smooth charcoal neck of her sky, and again she cursed the day, the moment when the earth turned its head and the moon was taken away, and now the earth was so hot it stood still (or so it seemed) as she turned for the earth, round and round, in and out, in her dying garden filled with dried lavender, the scent, heavy and sweetly roting, climbing ever so slowly through the air and into the gnarled old sycamore trees where the swallows used to sing, and as her feet churned the steaming earth and each hot slap of air hit the marrow of her bare brittle bones as she turned, round and round, in and out, and she felt the moon deep within the earth and knew she had to get it out no matter the cost, because the moon went away and ever since that fateful day the lavender stopped growing and the nights were long and lonely, the days coldly bright, and she thought I have nothing left, nothing left, nothing left without my moon shining her silver wedding light on my yard full of lavender, and only the heat and the dirt remained, and in that dirt she knew,-- she knew, she KNEW with more certainty than she ever had known before, that she could find her moon once again, so with great shining diamonds hanging like teardrops from her ruby skin she dug into the soil swirling beneath her feet as she turned the earth and felt the very clay of the universe in her fingertips, the planets rolling around her mouth, across her tongue like great round glass marbles that only allowed her mouth to form the syllable O, the stars falling like so many grains of sand through her fingertips, and she saw galaxies forming in her hands, shifting and swirling, in and out, in this hot dripping dirt where the lavender grew, but the more she struggled to squeeze the steaming dirt into the only form she knew, the only thing she cared about—her moon, her great cool ball of burnished silver in the icy sky—the warmer it became, slipping silty slithering from her grasp into the molten desert that was the ground, and she cried aloud in agony, a wail so pure and so strong that the great black buzzards with red slit throats scraping circles in the cloudless pitch echoed her, a cacophony for nobody to hear, and she bent down in desperation and scraped together another handful of clay, because she had to get her moon out of the earth, and she knew, with the assurance of the eternal stars themselves, that her moon was there, she had to be there, if only she could sculpt out of this sweltering sludge her dimpled curves and cratered skin, capture once again the lovely pale silver glow of her cheeks, the cool arc of star-stuff dusting her brow, but try as she might she couldn’t trap the moon, in, out, in her sculpture—she flung handful after handful of seeping earth from her, each one hitting the ground with the wet, crunching slap of a fish hitting stone, and now the heat was unbearable, it was creeping out of her, into her, out, in, in and out, clawing its way into every fiber of her, every taut and aching thread of her shivering with sweat, poised to flee but trapped in her oppressive kiln of a body, and her eyes gleamed red with it, her flesh like a skinned salmon left in the sun, yet she wouldn’t cease her desperate creation, wrestling the earth into submission, brown orbs taking shape, with craters traced by her blood diamond fingertip—but nothing happened—so she would start again, until the dried-up lavender was crushed by the weight of eight hundred and eighty seven earthen figures, the old, gnarled sycamore trees entangled with the efforts of her creation brown,
molten earth raining from their twisted branches and onto her bare skin, where it sizzled and slipped from her, leaving little brown craters, the heat was so great, so that she herself began to resemble the stolen moon she loved so dearly and the sweat of her brow mingled with the sweat of the earth until the ground itself cried out in agony for the feverish woman so entranced in her work until she felt her own body melting away with the earth that she molded so obsessively and the skin of her hands was rubbed raw kneading the clay in her fervor, sphere after sphere taking shape and being tossed aside, each more perfect than the last, yes, eight hundred and eighty eight, eight hundred and eighty nine, but none of them were hers, none of them were her moon, her wonderful, beautiful, earth-shatteringly cool moon, none of them were that flawless drop of river water dripped from heaven itself just to freeze over her yard where the lavender used to grow and the old gnarled trees hung low and the earth stood still as she turned it round, and round, and round, and in and out, so she didn't stop scraping the dirt from the earth's bones, didn't stop until she sucked the marrow clean and left them hollow, until her hands were running hot with blood, until her skin was more wax than figure and the damp scrape of nails on clay was all she felt, all she—and the world grew narrow and thin and she shivered violently in the heat and she gazed out with her garnet teardrop eyes over the landscape she had created, her own molten sea of earthly planets, eight hundred and ninety, and just as an unholy tremor began to wrack her shattered body and the earth around her tilted like a slack-jawed grin she felt a shift in the thickened air, nearly imperceptible but clearly there, and there, shimmering before her, more ghost than goddess, more waif than woman, was her moon, suffused with a pale silver glow, cooler and more lovely than a breath of green ocean wind, and she stretched out her throbbing sunset fingertips in desperation, stretching and striving to brush the moon's cool skin, if only to relieve the aching fever from her hollowed out bones, but the heart in her chest had grown weary of toil, and her hands would reach no more.
This is for the girls who like girls
The girls made out to be nothing more than a concept
Something beyond the here and now
Ghosts in conversations with history teachers,

“Back in my day, there was only one gay kid in my entire school, and now
You may even know...
A homosexual.”

The bullet sinks in
Because when we are acknowledged, we are still ignored
Our voice boxes ripped out
Our existence reduced to subtext
Why are we forced to live in subtext?
We become metaphors
Notes passed, whispered, silent

The way we learn to avoid pronouns is a science
We slip through the cracks
And fold ourselves over
My paper hands hold hers under the table
And when I dare to lock my fingers into her’s on the corner of the street
We become a spectacle
Stripped of flesh and blood

I have the luxury to forget sometimes that I am not welcome here

So this is for the girls who don’t feel welcome here
This is for the girls who have to kiss boys with their fingers crossed behind their backs
Heart shaped lockets tucked under shirts
Her picture inside
This is for the girls that like to kiss boys too
Who feel stuck on a fence that shouldn’t be there
This is for the somewhere-in-betweens
The question marks
The exclamation marks
I see you
Blanket pulled over your head
Watching “Dear Straight People” by Denice Frohman ten times in a row just to feel—
Real
I see you

You will be knocked down
Planted in the ground
So become a sequoia
And command attention
Be loud and
Exist

Asha Berkes
untitled
Hannah Houser
Go figure is a series of mixed media pieces exploring how we portray the human form. Starting with sketches from different figure modeling sessions, my first layer begins with incomplete drawings that I do not like from figure modeling sessions I have attended. I then transform them by adding layers of colored pencil, watercolor, screenprinting, and pen and ink drawing. Within this process I found that reworking these drawings into something that I was happy with resonates with journey through body positivity and gender identity. There are so many different ways to describe the human form just as there are so many different ways to express one’s identity. And in the end, artist expression and self love are one in the same for me.
test(osterone): hybrid body

Indigo DaCosta

I can’t comprehend
The “man in a woman’s body”
Narrative
Anymore

[your] hormones
change you
but they don’t create you

even when
they’re the ones you want(ed)

I can tell myself
“no, I’m a man in my body”
all day long

until I take my clothes off

then I am

C-cup breasts and thick leg hair
And acne and estrogen baby-fat
And wide hips and teenage-boy-stubble

Gender shouldn’t be polarizing
Yet my body is torn between two,
Lost in liminality I didn’t ask for:
A hybrid

Artist Statement: I have been on low-dose testosterone for about a year now. While it has helped me “pass” and generally feel aligned with my identity, the changes to my body have subverted the “man in a woman’s body” archetype of transmasculinity that I had internalized. My own conceptualization of the gender binary and how bodies “should” conform to those has led me to feel like I am neither a man or a woman, and that I instead exist in a liminal space that isn’t the same as being non-binary. It’s an uncomfortable feeling, and this poem is my reflection on it. While I am trying to change the narrative of the gender binary in my own mind, it had been particularly difficult abroad, where the binary is often the norm, passing has been convenient, and I have tried to hide my transness for my safety.
wednesday
adams
Walker Hewitt

history
Daniel Lloyd

We met on the schoolyard at three.
You were small and held your fists up high
I didn’t ask if you were ready.

Your first blow hit me on the chin,
Then I got mad and split your lip.
You stumbled back and looked in my eyes.

I knew I had to finish you quick;
My friends were there and I
Was scared that you would win.

I ran at you and knocked you
To the ground. On top of you
I swung with trembling fists.

I picked up your glasses and never
Gave them back. I would smash them
If anyone were around to see.

Artist Statement: I am gay and non-binary. I was inspired to do these pieces with Inktober, encouraging artists to do one ink drawing a day for the month of October. I decided I would draw pictures of myself everyday to improve my skill at drawing people. Through this process I used the prompts as a starting point and find a picture that could work and that I liked. This process really made me consider my gender and presentation. I was drawn to certain images of myself and knew to stay away from others. It was an interesting journey that helped me critically look at how I see myself.
natural hair series

Tomicia Blunt

My concept is to create hair sculptures that are inspired by natural black hair-styles. I focus on recreating the intricate details of bantu knots, an afro, dreads, and cornrows. Through recreation, I explored the idea of beauty and perception. I aim to highlight black hairstyles, as they are an underrepresented art form, and challenge the cultural perception of black hair.

Black hair is an art form because skill is required to be able to recreate black hairstyles. The complex braiding, twisting, or coiling requires technique and training. In addition, being able to maintain the coarse hair in its natural state, as kinks, curls, coils, or an afro is a learned practice. The beauty of this art form goes beyond the finished product. Its cultural importance is a huge part of its beauty. Black hair, and the versatile styles that come from it, have historically been ridiculed, and ironically, are commonly appropriated. Due to the fact black hair is the opposite of the European norm that dominates society's perception of beauty, it's seen as ugly or less deserving of appreciation.

By presenting black hair to an audience outside of the culture it originates from, it changes the way the viewer sees forms and its interpretation of the hair itself. The hairstyle stands alone, without any representation of a person whose head it should be attached to. In doing so, the viewer is presented with a foreign object, and is forced to rely on previous knowledge to understand the piece. Due to the fact black hair is not the norm of society, nor is it widely represented in non-black spaces, the viewer must draw from a limited source of knowledge to analyze the piece. The viewer relies on academic analysis rather than cultural knowledge to understand the hairstyles. Through the creation of these pieces, visibility is increased and opens the viewer up to a new perception of form. Five of twelve sculptures are pictured above.
chipped nail polish & a barbed-wire dress

Alice Hudson

Author’s Note: “This is how trans girls die,” I laugh while recounting how he kept trying to get me to come back to his house, kept telling me how much he wanted to fuck my ass, despite me saying no. How I promised him a post-Christmas “encore” to placate him, knowing full well I’d have left the state before then. “This is how trans girls die,” I laugh while recounting how the next day I went to block him on Tinder but he had already blocked or unmatched me. “This is how trans girls die,” It’s funnier to say I sucked a guy’s dick in his car at 2 a.m. Christmas morning. Makes for a better story than “the consent was murky and I could have been murdered.” Makes for a better story than analyzing where my consent ended and his coercion began (or how much was the societal coercion in the feeling that I owed him sex for driving over). Or if I’m self-victimizing. Better to laugh and say, “I could’ve been murdered by a man whose seat-covers were tie-dye with weed symbols, that would’ve been the real fucking tragedy.” Yet regardless of the questionable consent, that is how trans girls die. Cis men’s shame that craving girl dick make them a faggot. And cis women, before you smirk and say “welcome to the club,” consider the involvement of two cis women in the incredibly horrific mutilation and murder of Ally Steinfield, a 17 year old trans girl in Missouri this September. Cis men may do the stabbing but you’ll help them burn and bury the bodies.

As to what this has to do with the following scene? Call it stopping to smell the tree for the forest. Call it tangential. Call it trans theatre of revenge. Call it self-indulgence or vulnerability or whatever the fuck. Call it as it is, reaching you.

A small apartment, belonging to The Rebel Without A Cunt. In the apartment, there is a small sofa centerstage, and a potted flower already bloomed resting on the floor downstage right. The Rebel Without A Cunt wears a leather jacket and a short black dress, black lipstick and barefoot. The leather jacket has a pink triangle sewn into the back, alongside Sylvia Rivera’s famous words: “Ya’ll better quiet down.” The room is dark except for a neon pink light. She paces anxiously between upstage left and downstage right, rubbing her hands against her mouth, not realizing she’s smudging her lipstick all over her hand. She paces like this for a beat or two, letting the audience get wrapped up in her anxiety. Suddenly, she turns to the potted flower on the ground and speaks to it.

THE REBEL WITHOUT A CUNT: Well why don’t you fuckin’ do it then?

A knock comes on the door. It snaps her out of her anxiety. She realizes the black lipstick stains all over her hand, and wipes it out as best as she can. Once she feels satisfied the stains aren’t visible, she walks over to centerstage left and opens the door, striking a flirtatious pose in the doorway. She steps back, and a Feel Good enters her apartment. The Feel Good, in riot cop gear with a yellow and black smiley face painted on the visor of his helmet, looks her up and down hungrily (even tho we cannot see his human face, we know he’s hungry).

THE REBEL WITHOUT A CUNT: You hungry, baby?

FEEL GOOD: I’m fucking starving.
She reaches up her dress and pulls down her panties, letting them dangle around her feet. The Feel Good watches this intently, aroused.

FEEL GOOD: Oh god. Oh thank god. It’s been so long.

The Rebel Without A Cunt sheds her jacket. She looks into the eyes of the smiley face, and smiles suggestively. She pushes him to his knees in front of her.

THE REBEL WITHOUT A CUNT: Take me in your mouth. All of me. And feast.

FEEL GOOD: Oh god yes.

He lifts up her dress and kisses her thighs hungrily. We see her penis, bathed in the neon pink light and shadows. He pushes up her dress, sex-crazed, and she obliges, removing it and tossing it to the floor. We won’t see it clearly until later in the scene, but she has the words “This Machine Kills Fascists” tattooed between her bellybutton and genitals. She lowers herself onto the stage-right side of the couch, and puts her legs over his shoulders. He goes down on her like a desperate, ravenous animal. She stretches out her arms to the sides, her right gripping the armrest and her left gripping the left sofa cushion. She gives a fake but convincing moan of pleasure. While the Feel Good is going down on her, and she fakes having a good time, she quietly and subtly slides her left hand underneath the left sofa cushion. From underneath the cushion she pulls a handgun, swiftly and suddenly pressing the barrel up to the Feel Good’s throat. She pulls the trigger. He flies back, clutching his throat, bleeding out. He gasps for air, tries to speak, gurgles on his own blood and shock. The Rebel Without A Cunt stands up, walks leisurely over to where her leather jacket lies on the floor, and puts it on. After doing so, she tosses her handgun onto the couch, and grabs a shotgun from behind the couch. She turns to look at the Feel Good, satisfaction spread across her face. She walks over to him, and presses the heel of her foot into his mouth, silencing him.

THE REBEL WITHOUT A CUNT: Y’aa’ll better quiet down.

She raises her shotgun, aiming it at his head. She holds it there, taunting him. She pushes her heel harder into his mouth, snarling at him.

FEEL GOOD: pweezzz

The Rebel Without A Cunt swiftly pulls her foot back and fires the shotgun into the Feel Good’s face, killing him. She stands over him for a beat, staring at the ruin of his face. All the audience can see is the upside-down smiley-face painted on his visor. She takes a step from him, turns back, spits on his face. She stands over him for a moment, thinking.


She then drags the bloody body offstage into the shadows of stage right. Reentering the neon pink light, The Rebel Without A Cunt sets down her shotgun and sits down on the couch. She pulls a pack of smokes and a lighter from her pocket, lights a cigarette. Inhales, exhales. The smoke dances upward, twisting and weaving its way thru the pink light. Beat. And then the neon pink light fades to black.
chronic pain pt. 4
Kiri Bolles
i take sertraline with coffee
Anonymous

I take sertraline with coffee. Usually I put it between my lips and hold it until I can find water, that seems better for some reason. Last night I cried. Of course I cried, cause I'm a fucking crybaby. I haven't cried that hard in so long. I haven't cried that hard since I was in my room at home, in the dark, in the tiny space that was all my own, and all I could remember was how much it hurt when the room wasn't all to my own. When the room was in a different house, with different people, with toxic air. Here I could breathe, at least when I wasn't between sobs. Here I was suppose to be able to breathe, it was better here. But I still can't. That ugly darkness that haunts my thoughts and knows my true worth crept in and stayed the night. So I cried.

I'd rather cry that hard than anything else. I'd rather get it all out, in one self-loathing whoosh of agony. The alternative is holding it. Like holding my breath. Like holding back a scream at the back of my throat when I'm about to be murdered. Pushing it all down until I explode and lay in my room without being able to move for fear my first action will be a slice to my wrist. Or punching myself in the face, again. Or digging my nails into my thighs until I bleed. Or kicking the wall until I'm bruised. Or anything that makes me lose control.

I used to think hurting myself was gaining control. My body, my choice. But that mantra of pro-choice advocacy garbage was never meant for self-harm. I don't get to choose when I leave. That's control. I'm in recovery and I'm under control. So, I take my sertraline with my coffee. I pick at the zits on my arm because it hurts and I deserve it. I pluck my leg hairs out one by one because it stings and I love it. I don't love it though, I hate it. It makes me feel ugly. But I love the hate. The hate I can pluck out of my mind as I pluck out those dark badasses that stand out in the sea of tiny lines across my skin. I'm not in control, but I am. I am in recovery and every day isn't perfect. I can be “better” Tuesday morning, but Tuesday night I cry until I'm calm enough to sleep. I'm “busy.” My thoughts are occupied and my body aches and I don't sleep. I say I do, but I don't. I haunt myself with “could be” until I drown and recover at 5 a.m. and sleep soundly until 7 a.m. and then I lay in bed immobile until I'm late for work.

But I am so much happier now. I take my sertraline with my coffee. I get over my guilt the same day, not three months from the day. I listen to voices that soothe me and make me sad. Sad in the way that's happy and deep, not the kind that hurts me. I feel weepy. I feel content. And some days none of that is true. But I hope sometime that those days go away. But for now, I take my sertraline with coffee, or water, or whatever. It doesn't matter that much. It's not perfect. It doesn't have to be, what a fucking relief.
fuck queer culture

Jae-woo Kim (Jae Bates)

Fuck Queers
Sorry that sounded homophobic
What I mean was
Fuck White Queer Culture
What I mean is
Fuck Nice White Liberals
Driving Subarus
Eating Vegan
What I meant was
Fuck White Women with
Asymmetric haircuts
At the farmers market
Get mad they in traffic
Because Black Folks shut it down
Mad about meat, mad cow disease
Never heard of fucking migrant families
Breaking their backs, risking shit for salads
barely 15 K a year
That’s not enough green to fucking
Feed a family
Pay the rent for a roof
Or to buy some humanity
And tell me veggies never hurt nobody

Fuckin’ Queers
Fuckin’ queers
On Facebook
Defending Cops at pride
Pride cops
Die cops
Gay cops
Cops killing us
Cuz nothing says God Gay America
Like a man kissing his husband at home
After shooting a kid back of the head
Fuck Qops.
Capital Q for queer cops

Fucking Queers
With that
Vanilla & Spice, No Chocolate or Rice
It’s just a preference
Fuck Queers with a preference
Fuck sexual liberation
If the only bodies liberated enough to fuck are
Fucking White queers fucking other white queers
Cuz I guess fucking someone brown is a kink now
Rather get called a fag all day
Than Ching Chong, Long Duk Dong
Ling Ling or anything in between

These days
I feel the most beautiful
when I forget I’m Queer
No homophobe did this to me
You did.

Artist Statement: Fuck Queer Culture is a critique of the White Mainstream in American Queer Culture and Queer Communities. As a queer/trans person of color, I find myself less and less interested in, or connected to, Queer spaces because they are almost always white centric. I’m sick of neoliberal queer politics and culture.
small odds
Isaac Sims-Foster

When someone says “deadliest year on record,”
They should mean shark attacks, lightning strikes, or gunshot wounds.
But lately they mean Jimmys-born-Jessicas and Rachels-born-Richards
And its beginning to feel like we’re natural disasters.

Our anchor, existing,
Is broken and ceaseless like the bitter waves of feeling something deemed wrong.
It’s heavy and we thrash to escape,
Knowing damn well we’ll drown if we punch
This problem on the nose.
Jaws of perturbation bite at us
Until a serrated identity remains.
Fearful hands push what’s left down deeper.
Shock makes us static,
Every insult bolts us down harder in the word cloud that should be cumulative,
cumulus,
Positive.
But that positive is turned negative,
Then run into the ground.
What’s poured into use that we
Act unafraid of the smiteful sky?
Yes, maybe there’s an I in PRIDE
But there’s also an R-I-P and a D-I-E
And that’s all we see lately.
Our bodies are not full-metal jackets
So we change them,
Because we don’t always stay how we started
And in the case, scalpels and scars are the entry wounds
Dead names are the empty shells.
Only we don’t Rest in Peace or Power,
We Rest in Perpetual Otherness,
In shallow craters left by status quo’s hand grenades.
Refusing “M”s and “F”s shouldn’t rupture hearts and arteries.
Dropping the bombshell of who we love should not result in familial fallout.

We’re devolving
Into numbers.
Reports.
So when the autopsy comes in, remember we died
Of baptism, of electroshock therapy, of buckshot disappointment from all sides.
But hey, at least they had the courtesy
To put us on record.
god is a dog named chaz
Chelsea Bruen

Four paws and a wonky right leg.
Ears lightly bounce as he slowly walks up,
Placing his paws gently on my knee as if to say:
Hello.
I am your lord and savior.

What’s his name?
Chaz.
Of course.

His eyes say it all.
They say everything you need to hear.
Without you actually hearing them,
Because they are in fact eyes,
And even the eyes of God cannot speak in a literal way.

I pick him up,
He is the most calm.
Maybe he’s tired.
He created the universe after all,
Or maybe just Earth?
Unclear.

Chaz cannot confirm.

I am the most calm too.
Because he is,
And because for once I am not being knocked over by other dogs.
Magic.

He puts his head under mine,
He nestles in a way that is just so.
It is important to hold him just right,
He has strict rules, which will be written down at some point.
A telephone game of what is just right,
But that game won’t start today, today we worship.
And I hold Chaz just right,
But there are literally no consequences if I don’t.
Brandi held him upside down and he didn’t seem all that bothered.
He probably just likes attention.
Any will do.
Artist Statement for "God is a Dog Named Chaz": I deal with a lot of things through humor, one of those being spirituality. I am still learning a lot about what it means to be religious, and this poem is just my way of poking fun at the ideas about the Christian God I grew up with—and also about dogs, because why not?
Being brown and queer is not synonymous with visibility.
Yet the path we follow is the direction in which our heart beats.
The love for mi hermana who taught me that brown boys who cry softly need love too.
Ojos negros, piel canela and still standing.

Every morning just like the sun shining the truth of our ancestors, you rise!
You are an empowered chicana who despite carrying the weight of generations of machismo on your back, you rise and break tradition!

You have the blood of la malinche running through your veins.
A distorted history labels you as a traitor, but you continue to hold your head up high and remind us of the power of rebellion!

From the ashes of the once most beautiful city of las Americas, you built a new life for yourself. Como las cenizas después de las llamas, you continue to slowly burn the foundations of the colonized world.
You continue to burn the physical and ideological fences that were put in place to make us feel like strangers in our own home.

When they ask you for documentation you show them your skin and your hair.
Hair so dark it collects los rayos del sol.
You store the sun rays in your hair
in hopes of one day sparking light back into this dark world.

You’re neither invisible or illegal but chingona and unapologetic!
You remind them that all this mess is not your fault.
You tell them that you are tired of being vilified!
You are tired of being the scapegoat.
You are tired of having to prove your humanity
Because like our abuelitos always said, “el quetzal donde quiera es verde.”

You are Tonantzin de Tepeyac.
You are my healer
I will never forget you told me to not be ashamed of who I am
For they hate us because they know they can’t extinguish us.
They know that one day we will spark light back into this dark world.
And with the tears of our ancestors, we will bring peace back to this land.
faggot somnambulist  Benjamin Fallis

It's night, and you want to fall asleep. Because you're new to this town, you draw your fantasies from scratch; you draw the curtains over the basement windows, draw your sheets over your face, and try to think of something to camouflage the horrible drone of the street outside...

FANTASY ONE:
Your first fantasy is of a place gentle, mild, where you don't have to worry about the goodwill of neighbors and unknowns—and because you don't have this place predetermined, you fill it in piece by piece. Your eyes are closed, and you hear the slow salt roar of the ocean; the air is warm, but you have the cool sea breeze; sand has worked its way between your heels and your sandals, and you're on a long white shore, and you don't know if you've just now arrived by a ferry out of sight or if you're just as rooted to the place as the cypresses high on rocks sprawled above. You don't know, either, if you had a destination in mind, or if this clear-aired shore was the destination you had in mind, or if you were journeying without a destination in mind, but you think it is more true to say that this place for you, totally unsituated in any context and without as much as a torch for artificial light, with its bright circumambient sailor's map above every night, has an only accidental reference to anything like a journey or a destination, so that your irregular presence is one of neither.
You are happy there, and can watch the days pass fast day after day with so little to do. You see many things that way, but the militant repetition of the sun mesmerizes you in some sense. You tilt with the stars, and having only seen them you see little, and a stellar intellectual sunburn spreads across the surface of your receptive soul; burned out of your trance, you trudge uphill for a spring, to cool off from the hot and heady superlunary world and hopefully to sink into asleep.
You have begun to build a place for your liking, a cool and dark river underground fed by spring, but a clamor drives you elsewhere; the monastery is old and unfortified, so you have no problem slipping into a back door. But what is this place that has been offered up to you in place of the comfortable bed you had tried to arrange outside?
“We're like monks,” Jeremiah explains throwing a net over the side of the boat the next day, “but without the asceticism or the faith.” It would have been hard to explain Jeremiah's healthy body on an ascetic's diet, you think to yourself, and you remember with pleasure the heavy boat's dip when Jeremiah had stepped on board. But what he meant by a lack of asceticism remained open, because with his strong back as testimony it didn't mean a lack of hard work or of discipline... He throws a net at you and smiles, and you imitate his cast into
the sea and are glad for the excuse to have turned away. You watch the merry wave of the horizon and the sea. “It’s like this. If you’ve ever gotten the sense that people like us, people uncomfortable with the clothes our parents forced us in and who had relationships they couldn’t recount to others, were in some sense angels who all still exist before Creation, it’s true, we do. But that does not mean we do not live unproblematically, and our full creaturely development still requires much cultivation to sit upon the surface of a sinful world without slipping in.” You speculate that this is why the palace you’ve imagined is the one at Knossos, the first throne room of Europe and so the proper seat for the dissolution of earthly power. But Jeremiah surprises you, saying this is only one of very many minor Byzantine monasteries, that although outside of history they are nestled within it, and now that you are close you kiss, and when you do his large nose is nestled in the ridge of your cheek. But we all see where this fantasy is headed, and you’re not going to fall asleep this way… You stumble upstairs, unused to the constant traffic outside, you pour yourself a glass of water and check that the doors are locked, and you try to imagine something that will put you to sleep…

FANTASY TWO:

Your second fantasy is much more pared down; the mattress you carry from real life, and with your sheets above your head no new visions are needed, either. You just draw in the constant deadly roar of the sea, irregular rotational motion, and pounding freezing rain. You are trapped in the middle of the ocean; in the most perfect prison you will die. Your only hope is in some random historical force, a merchant ship or bomber, crossing your path, and calorie conservation until then. This is the perfect ruse: sleep to burn less fuel, sleep not to die. But the most delicate thought survives, even in this wilderness where your home extends so little past your nose: how wonderful, how noble, how serene…? You try to block the thought out of your head, you think it unhealthy, but more than any self-destructive impulse is your innate recognition of the exciting; and what would be exciting would be to live out your final moments writhing on the sea, meeting its slant and thriving beats beat for beat, a dramatization unto death with survival left as a perhaps. And just as on your imagined voyage your heart lights up its dim surroundings with costly theatrical responses, writhings and moanings, you too, the literal you, in your bed, have become enraptured with the cost and metaphysics of death, and facing the end of the day, the end of the line enraptures your attention.

FANTASY THREE:

Well, imagine that you’ve died; imagine that there’s nothing left to do, and let your attention wither as you fall asleep. (But I do not have to tell you how this fantasy goes: whether mice or earthworms or the churning dirt itself, eventually the real world will reach back out at you: in the middle of the night, language will break you out of your crypt…)
At dinner Grandma orders fries and pinot grigio with her entrees
She always shares both with me,
I don’t have to ask

In the morning she tells me about her dream, between sips of coffee and orange juice,
of being back in high school again
of being self-conscious again
and over-reliant on male validation and attention

Now I know where it comes from.

I ask her if she still feels those feelings
“Not really, I do want to lose a little weight though.”
I can’t think of a time when she didn’t “want to lose a little weight though.”

I wish she would lose weight.

I wish she would
lose the weight of insecurity
the weight of unworthiness
the weight of valuing herself by her weight

When I say her I mean us.

Grandma
puts on pink lip gloss
she covers the white patches on her hands with bronze foundation
covers her history, the evidence of her existence with bronze foundation
I ask her if getting a facelift hurts
she says “yes, it does.”

When I say her, I mean us.
trumpet player
Kiri Bolles
a seat at the table

Tomicia Blunt

I wake up feeling numb
because as cereal falls into my bowl
another black body falls to the ground
the milk spills out like blood on concrete
another family lost a breadwinner
because police decide who gets to eat
another name, another hashtag
the list of my fallen brothers and sisters is already too long
say ALL of their names
my bowl is overflowing and their blood has seeped into the concrete
they have been consumed by the world that is bent on their elimination
the destruction of my black people
the destruction of our livelihood
of our right to live, they made it clear we have no right
we have broken bones and crushed skulls
14 warning shots in our backs and the bloody sweatshirts to give to our family as a souvenir
“thank you for building america & dying at the hands of it” they say
sidewalk is our morning breakfast
the taste of car window is lunch
maybe we’ll make it to the jail cell for supper
when will we able to eat at the table?
vended
Hannah Houser