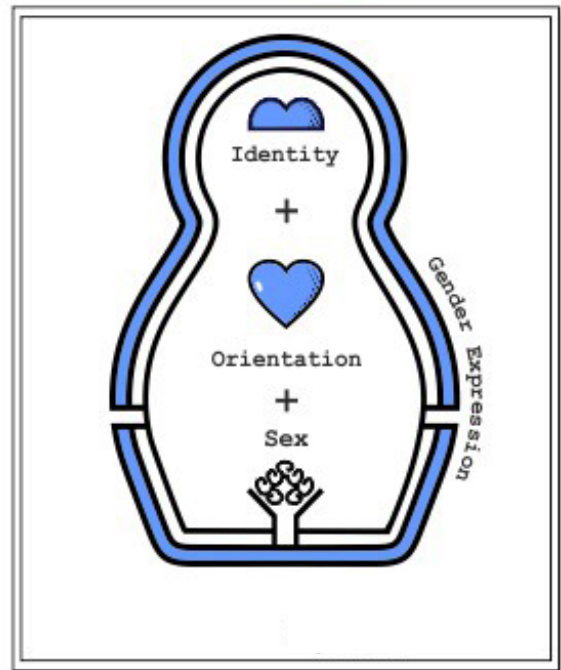
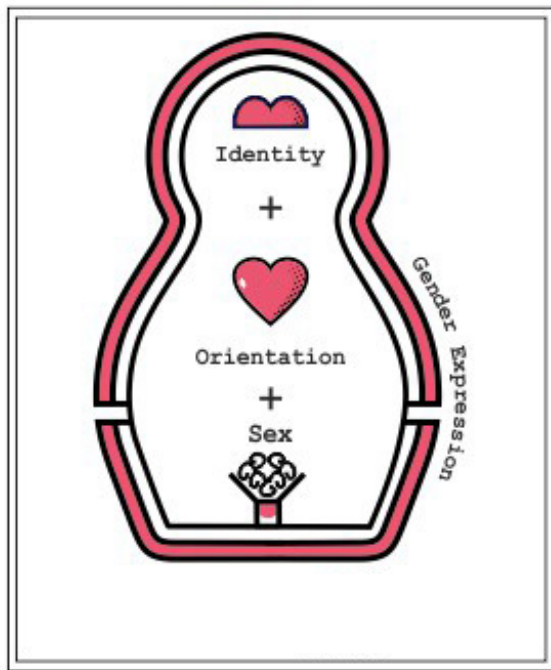


Here Comes Everyone Boy/Girl Issue



The Birds & the Bees: Gender Amongst Apoidea

Julia Wallis

Special Feature: Transgender Pornography

Matt Barton

Plus fiction, essays, prose and poetry from:

Jodie Carpenter, Rachel Stevenson, Mark Goodwin, Nicole Marie,
Thomas McColl, Di Booth, Stephenson Muret, Ruth Hernandez
& many others



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Special thanks to Naomi and Shaun for speaking with HCE, and Rob Young and Stuart Elliston, for their continuing example.

It's hard being a girl. Not only do we have all the regular worries and problems that everyone else has to cope with, (as well as the added joys of periods and childbirth) but our bodies aren't even our own: they are always under scrutiny, always being dissected. The double standards for women are everywhere, with us being condemned whatever we do: if we show too much flesh we are 'asking' for sexual objectification and violence, if we don't show enough we are prudes. We can't wear lots of make-up, but we are quizzed if we don't: "You look ill today. Is everything alright?" We are unattractive if we are overweight and unattractive if we are underweight. We are criticised for ageing and condemned for trying to conceal it. We can't do our hair, our boobs, our nails without being told we are obsessed with how we look...but is it really surprising if we are with the constant scrutiny we are under, the endless pressure to present our bodies in a certain way?

For instance, why do women wear high heels and tight clothes that restrict movement? Heels in particular are absurd when you think about it, rendering the wearer vulnerable and practically immobile. Sure, many woman may argue that they make them look and feel good, but look good for whom? For ourselves, or for the millions of eyes gazing upon us?

But it doesn't end there. Even our minds are under the ownership of everyone we encounter. If we try to be assertive we are considered aggressive, if we show upset, we are chastised for being typical emotional women.

Whatever we do and however we look, we are being watched and judged. We aren't allowed to do things to please ourselves. So as Virginia Woolf once wrote for *A Room of One's Own*, I would like to see women have a body of their own, that looks and feels however they damn well please. JC



Editorial

By Jodie Carpenter (previous page) and
Ben Hayes, HCE Sub-editors



Have you ever read one of those shitty e-mail joke books? The little pocket-sized ones people keep by their toilet in lieu of anything else?

I distinctly recall reading one when I was a boy; including the 'Jokes for Men' and 'Jokes for Women' sections. They exposed me to the broadest of stereotypes; men drink beer and watch football, women eat chocolate and buy shoes, and so on.

The thing is, I thought these were archetypes: prototypical examples designed to be the butt of jokes. The idea that they were stereotypes, that people actually generalised from them to inform their views of gendered behaviour never even crossed my mind!

After all, my dad didn't drink beer or watch football. My mum didn't buy many shoes (she did eat chocolate, but duh, chocolate is awesome!) There was no "women's work"; both my parents cooked, and cleaned, and did the laundry, and read to me in the evenings. If the handiwork around the house was always done by my father, well, he worked as a carpenter – that was a function of his job, not his gender.

It wasn't until I was in my twenties that I discovered there were actual, functioning adult men who would sit around rating women on a scale of one to ten. Oh, I'd heard boys doing it at school, but I always assumed it was just a childish habit, a juvenile attempt to appear 'manly'. I was shocked to discover that these stereotypes had informed people's expectations and behaviour to such an extent. Worse still was when I heard people justifying the poor behaviour of the opposite gender; "Oh, of course he's surly and lazy, he's a man!" "Well, naturally she's being snotty with you, women always get like that!"

I wanted to scream; "No, he's just an indolent prat! She's just a miserable pillock! They're simply unpleasant people; it has nothing to do with their gender!"

The absolute nadir is when people use these stereotypes to excuse their own behaviour; "I can't help sleeping around, I'm a man!" "I have to bankrupt myself buying clothes, I'm a woman!" These attitudes bespeak a delusion so enormous – so pervasive – that it terrifies me. The bizarre and frightful idea that who we are is a mere, tangential by-product of what we are. And this idea infects more than just gender: everyone who imagines all gay people are promiscuous or all black people are lazy is succumbing to another strain of the same awful memetic sickness.

Is there a cure, then? Perhaps only the rather trite truism that who we are is who we are, our choices, and not our nature. If this holds true for ourselves, then that is something we should generalise and apply to others. BH



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Sex & Gender: Class and Labour for Bees

By Julia Wallis



Leaning over the open hive, the bees I've disturbed have dropped their pollen loads: tiny grey uneven balls of pollen grains, stuck together with bee spit. A beneficial bundle of proteins and enzymes, high in anti-oxidants and low in cholesterol, recommended for sprinkling onto breakfast cereal. Grey pollen, in June, so the girls have been pollinating broad beans on the allotments around them.

I say 'the girls' with confidence because all the workers are females. At arm's length, an insignificant boring brown, but close up, each with subtly different stripes to its thorax. These girls can sting, but only the once on us – our skin is so tough, they willingly eviscerate themselves, pulling the barb out. The smallest bees in the hive, these girls are fighters, gladiators in body armour, guarding the hive from marauding wasps, woodpeckers, badgers. Guarding the winter food-stores without which the colony will perish. Important job, then, for the girls. That, and building the comb, and gathering nectar, and pollen, and water, and propolis. Jobs for grown-ups.

The youngsters pull their weight too: as soon as they have pupated, they crawl around the cell they have just emerged from, cleaning it, ready for a new egg. As they grow up, their housekeeping duties expand: they dispose of dead bees, feed pupae, concentrate nectar down into honey, care for the queen. Fifty thousand bees in a hive, and all but a couple of hundred are workers, working themselves to death in the summer, in only four weeks.





Meanwhile, what are the big-eyed, big bel-
lied male drones doing? Well, on nice afternoons,
they'll fly out to a mating site and hover around,
having a bit craic with their mates and keeping
their eyes open for a virgin queen. If they're lucky
– or unlucky, depending on your point of view -
they'll be one of the handful of drones who mate
with the new queen on her only trip out of the hive.
Ever. Then they'll die, minus their penis.

Drones who survive until the end of summer
have a nasty shock: no longer needed, they are an
overhead the colony cannot support, so they are
chivvied out of the hive to die of cold and starva-
tion, and if they make a nuisance of themselves,
they'll have their legs and wings bitten off to stop
them coming back. When the queen starts laying
again in spring, she'll lay some drones, but noth-
ing like the number of workers.

Now, this queen business: not all it's
cracked up to be: By the sixteenth century, bee-
keepers had progressed beyond believing there
was no sex in bee colonies. Some even got beyond
the theory that a King Bee controlled the hive,
although even today there's a few misguided (mi-
sogynistic?) enough to hang onto the idea. No. it's
a queen, not a king, and although she's crucial to
the survival of the colony, she doesn't live all that
royally, and it's the workers who make all the deci-
sions. So, more like a democracy really.

Yes, she's fed and cleaned, but if you
were laying a couple of thousand eggs a day, you
wouldn't have time to look after yourself. Then,
decision- making: she doesn't get to do a lot of
that, either. Well, she can decide whether to lay a
fertilised worker egg, or an unfertilised drone, but
really, the decision's already made – her retinue
chivvy her along, showing her where to lay and she
uses her back legs to gauge how big the cell is. Lit-
tle cell, worker, big cell, drone. So no choice at all,
really.

It's also the workers who decide when to
swarm and make a new colony. They make the
new queen cells and stop feeding the old queen,
so she's light enough to fly off with them. Workers
decide when the old queen isn't up to the job any
longer and initiate supersedure. Supersedure –
lovely word, and quite a civilised procedure really.

Old queen and new queen, mother and daughter
together in the hive, at least until the new queen
has proven herself, laying good eggs, produc-
ing good offspring. Quite different from the new
queens which hatch after swarming. Like our royal
family, the colony produces an heir and spares.
Which means that the first new queen to hatch has
to find her competitors in the hive and kill them.

So, girls doing all the work, girls making
all the decisions, girls doing the fighting. It seems
to work – bees have been around for hundreds
of millions of years. Yet man is jeopardising their
place on the earth, in just a few tens of years.
Hmm.





Pay Here

By Thomas McColl



The iconic and magnificent Oxford Circus branch of Topshop stands before me – and, as ever, my heart is in my mouth.

Taking a deep breath, I enter the store.

As soon as I do, a security guard, inside the door, starts talking into his walkie-talkie.

Already, they're on to me but, refusing to be intimidated, I keep on going, taking the escalators down to the huge, cavernous, brightly-lit

basement (filled, as ever, with the coolest, quirkiest, most beautiful and colourful women's clothes) and, there, struggle for a moment to get my bearings.

Dammit! They've only gone and changed everything round.

It's daunting enough when I know where everything is. I've stalled and, already, a couple of female shop assistants, who look like secret police in their plain jet-black uniforms, are viewing me suspiciously from behind a clothes rack.

I try my best not to look their way but, even with my back to them, I'm able to feel their eyes bore into me.

But this is how it always is for me these days. I must keep cool – and at least I know exactly what I want: a pink skirt I spotted last time I was here a week ago, and should have got then but didn't because I was already buying a dress and a top.

Well, skirts are now at the farthest end of the store but, luckily, the skirt I want is displayed



still as prominently as it was when it first caught my eye.

So, going straight to the rack, then rummaging through, I pick out one – in the dead-giveaway biggest size – and now that it's in my hand, that's it: there's no going back.

PAY HERE says the red neon sign, ordering me towards it as if I'm being directed not to a till point in my favourite shop but into the "red channel" at Customs.

Well, that's what it feels like: that here I am, about to pay the necessary duty on this skirt but, because I'm wearing contraband (a pair of red La Perla knickers and an almost matching Gossard bra beneath a pair of khaki chinos and a black Ben Sherman shirt), I'm still primarily a smuggler...

...and one who's betraying the fact with his tense and awkward demeanour.

It doesn't help that the girl behind the till – with her sock bun hairstyle and sharp angular features (and dressed in that same black shirt and trousers uniform as her colleagues still watching me) – has the unforgiving look of a border official.

"Nothing to declare": That's always been my answer as far as my personal preference for clothes is concerned. But I'm giving myself away by blushing profusely as I place my intended purchase on the counter.

The unsmiling girl looks up at my face then down at the skirt as if it's a passport for inspection. There's no need to show any more ID – not even my bags from La Senza and Monsoon (which I'm doing my best to hide) – my nervousness is making it all too obvious.

"How would you like to pay?" she asks, looking at me coolly. As she continues to stare, I blush a little more, and the cash I hand over is now a bribe – the only way she'll turn a blind eye and let me through.

"The receipt's in the bag".

She hands me my purchase. Well, that was quick, at least. I mutter "thank you", but still, I can't relax just yet. The shop-floor secret police

are approaching the till – as if coming straight for me – and one of them even looks me in the eye. Alarmed by this, and bumping into a bracelet stand, I blush again profusely. It must be now so obvious to them both I'm as guilty as hell.

They walk on past, however: Without proof, there's nothing they can do.

Not that there won't be a trial in my absence: It'll start as soon as I'm gone...

...So what do you think he is: boyfriend or pervert?...

...and, knowing already the jury's verdict, I make sure I don't look back – not even to glance – as the escalators take me up.

Back on the ground floor, as I quickly walk towards the exit, I'm being watched by the same security guard who, once again, starts whispering into his walkie-talkie.

I can't hear what he's saying but can guess what it is:

"The suspect's leaving the shop..."





Boys, Barbers and the Perfect Handbag

By Jane Ayres

Lately, I've been wondering if I'm turning into a boy.

Yesterday, after an exhaustive search of every fashion store and bag shop, I finally found my perfect handbag in Zara. But not where you'd expect. I confess I love man bags – far more practical and stylish than hideous overpriced faux designer handbags - but I actually struck gold in the children's section. For boys aged 2-14 years to be precise. Yup. I bought the Zara Boys Casual Messenger Bag for the princely sum of £15.99. Cheaper than a handbag. More practical, too.

And if further evidence is needed, I've boycotted hairdressing salons in favour of the local barber. Why pay £40 plus for the faff of a wash, cut and blow dry when I can be in and out within 20 minutes with a great hairdo that costs less than a tenner? When a mate asked if I felt conspicuous walking into this traditionally male domain, I realised I actually feel more self-conscious and anxious going to a hairdresser. Yet girls are supposed to love being pampered and preened. Is this part of our genetic make-up? Or the result of media conditioning?

And while I opt out of girl-world, ironically, men continue to be "feminised" because there is money in beauty products – big bucks – with product endorsement by popular celebrities such as David Beckham, and reality TV shows such as TOWIE bringing men's beauty routines into the spotlight.

With younger men (18-34 year olds) spending more per month than their older counterparts, apparently "the UK men's grooming, fragrance and toiletries market is worth approximately



£920 million. According to the leading market research company, Key Note, sales are expected to go rocketing through the £1 billion barrier by the end of 2015."

Disturbingly, it continues: "As well as spending more on grooming products, British men are also taking much longer in the bathroom. A recent survey commissioned by the male cancer charity Orchid and The Bluebeards Revenge found that 1 in 3 UK men spend between 21 and 40 minutes in the bathroom every day."

Seriously? So WTF is going on? Am I going through some strange unaccountable metamorphosis or simply rebelling against our image obsessed society, which is currently dominated by portrayals of women as living Barbie dolls who care more about fake tan and hair extensions than social issues? And now it seems there is a mission to turn men into Ken. Is this about social engineering? Cultural trends? Or simply the commercially driven marketing tactics of an industry worth millions? Ker-ching.

Maybe in ten years men will be spending (and paying) as much as women traditionally have on fashion and beauty products. In which case, bye-bye cheap haircuts! Darn it!

Oh, and did I mention that I have fewer shoes, less wardrobe space and a shorter bathroom shelf than my partner? I rest my case. Or should it be boy bag?



A Normal Girl

By Carolina Herza



Through the years I've learned how to smile and nod every time someone says that I'm pretty or that I am wearing a nice skirt. But I don't say thank you. Because they can't see all the thoughts that are crowding my mind and that move at the speed of light creating worlds and paragraphs. And that every time anyone says that I look nice, I want to tell them "but I am a poet" and that sometimes, my words are prettier than my shoes.

Several years ago I was hanging out with this boy and he asked me which car was my favorite, so I answered. He then said he would have to save a lot of money to buy it for me, but I didn't say "thank you" either. I just thought to myself that a compliment would have been "I know you'll get it someday". But he didn't say that.

I am not in a battle for understanding who I want to be, I know that well. I also know who I am not. I am not a short dress or a nice haircut, or a very strict diet. And yet when people see that I'm not pleased to be called cute, or pretty or hot, they think I must be confused.

A lot of people think that a girl should be a good kisser and a slow thinker. A pretty face that

can only dream of a decent husband and a nice house. That sure, you can have a job, but you can't be the boss. And if you want to be a boss, you must've wanted to be a man too.

I live in an era where women want to be heard, but they also want to fit in. And both don't go hand in hand apparently. Because men will only like you as much as you are willing to agree with them in who you must be.

I must not be a normal girl, because the best compliment I have ever recieved didn't have to do with the way I look.

Because I'd rather know that I can afford my own things instead of having a man buying them for me. Because I have my own opinions and I don't want you to call me "bitter" every time I don't laugh at your sexists jokes. Because I believe I'm more than my body. Because I want to be in a relationship with a man that I also desire, not with the first guy that asks me out. But you know, I MUST be a heartless idiot for saying "no".

Because I know I expect too much out of people, and yet, the only thing I want is to be respected.





What She Was

By Jodie Carpenter, HCE sub-editor

When it came to choosing between showing off her legs or boobs in an outfit, Alex had always been a boobs girl. Proud of what she had had, she had flaunted their shape and teasingly revealed the fleshy curves, relishing the way their eyes would uncontrollably be drawn down to them, especially Carl's. For her, the cancer killed them and what she was.

Because of it, she was now alone in her small apartment, awaiting Richard who didn't even know who she really was, and eyeing up her unsatisfactory reflection in the bathroom mirror. Unfortunately, the pills didn't undo the years, so the fine lines that Time had etched around her eyes and the soft pouches of fat remained, highlighted by the harsh ceiling light. They were even more pronounced today as she fretted around the apartment, straightening already straight cushions and polishing the shelves that had once housed her photos and knickknacks, not allowing a single mote of dust to alight anywhere. She still hadn't made up her mind what to do, so, procrastinating, had attacked the housework with a ferocity she hadn't shown since a few weeks after Carl had left, when she had gone around the rooms, pushing any traces of the past into a black rubbish sack. She had even thrown out all the chewed up pens that had accumulated since she had given up smoking – although most days, she asked herself why she had even bothered to quit.

She looked down at the pill sitting in her open palm, innocuous as a sweet; one half blue, the other pink, but which one was the lie? she thought. She wondered how the night would play out if she didn't take it, if in-

stead, she put it back with the others in their hiding place – the box labelled 'relief from period pain' which she kept in a shoebox at the bottom of her wardrobe with all the other things she hid when Richard came around – and changed into the black lace dress, the only one she had kept because it had been Carl's favourite, the one with the tight fit that used to accentuate her body in all the right places. Rose petal lipstick and lily-of-the-valley perfume. Glitter around her eyes to detract from the cobweb-thin lines. And she would answer the door to him like this, and he would be confused at first, his brow puckering in the centre, but then he would smile and stretch out his arms and pull her towards him and she would breathe in the clean, menthol scent of him, and then....

Her daydream skidded to a halt. It was Carl who had always carried the scent of his obsessive oral hygiene around with him all day. Richard had a different smell. But she couldn't recall what it was.

The acrid smell of charred meat attacked her nostrils and she carelessly dropped the pill down on the side of the sink, only realising as she dashed into the kitchen that it could slide down the ceramic and disappear down the drain like a slither of soap. She couldn't afford to waste any. She opened the oven door and looked mournfully at the leg of lamb she had managed to massacre whilst she had been dithering in the bathroom. She still hadn't mastered the art of cooking meat. Another thing she had hidden from Richard without him realising: her vegetarianism. On their first date as they sat reading the menu of overpriced dishes and exotic sounding cocktails, he'd said, 'You're not one of them bloody veggies, are you?' Her cheeks flushing, she had shaken her head and flipped the page, scanning through meat dishes she couldn't remember ever having liked.

Hoping he might get drunk enough to not realise how awful her cooking was, she retrieved a bottle of wine from the cupboard. She would make her usual excuse about having a headache to stop him from pressing her to have a glass too. However, she had used this one so much it was only a matter of time before he began to suspect her of having a brain tumour. She poured out a large glass anyway, swilling the rich, crimson liquid



around meditatively. She loved him, she told herself. She couldn't lose him or she would be alone again. She thought back to the nights of trying to begin again, of tequila-fuelled embraces and tangles of tongues against walls and strangers' cars, of hunched over shoulders concealing what wasn't there, head cast down wishing her hair was long enough to shield her face, looking on at the writhing, nubile female bodies and feeling like a frumpy mum at the school disco, of the repulsed upturning of lips at her vertical chest which flinched away from any curious fingers, of the tear-drenched nights curled up alone again in bed, with only Nicholas Sparks and Danielle Steel for company. No, she couldn't put herself through that again. But neither did she want to continue to lie. She looked at the wine. She could drink it, and risk losing him. Or take the pills and continue the charade that was her life.

He had never suspected anything, despite the fact she wouldn't remove her shirt when they were together and would rarely look down at herself, neglecting the member – she still couldn't think of it as hers – that dangled uselessly for show,

to hide behind, trying not to let her hands brush against it as she gingerly slid the boxers down and the shock as he grabbed it, trying to coax it to life. But why would he? The pills were illegal over there, smuggled from Japan, her supply of them obtained from a questionable connection she had made one night as the pounding music reverberated in her chest and the smell of sweat and sex hung thickly in the air. She didn't know what was in them or how they worked, just that they had been designed to make gender reassignment surgery obsolete, cost almost the entirety of her wages and hadn't made her boobs grow back. She only needed to take one every time she saw Richard and within the hour, she would be who he wanted her to be. The transformation wasn't permanent however, which was why they were still in the trial period. And so she had started a new life, a double life. It was unnatural yes, but so were the scars on her chest. It was whilst masquerading that she had met Richard.

Richard who would be arriving shortly and if she didn't take the pill now, would find her only half changed. But still she lingered. Carl had accepted her as a woman. Loved her before and during the cancer treatment. But even he couldn't hide the look of longing when he saw her post-op for the first time. The longing for what her body once was and would never be again.

Through a thin sheen of tears, she tipped up the wine glass, and watched the remnants of her self swirl around the plughole and disappear forever.

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I had sex with a flower man

[below]

&

Manwoman [facing page]

By Jasmine Surreal







The Kids in the Club

By Rachel Stevenson

The music was too loud and the woman at the bar couldn't hear me. 'Gin and tonic,' I shouted. 'No ice. Lemon slice!'

'Alright,' she said, 'I'm not deaf.' She had razored blonde hair and one earring in the shape of a female symbol. She looked very '80s. Gay culture would like to stay in the '80s, or so I thought.

She plonked the drink in front of me. '£5.50, darling.'

I gave her a fiver and fished around for the change, counting out the fifty pence in shrapnel.

'Thanks,' she said, fake-smiling at me, emptying the change into the till without counting it. Sloppy, I thought. Till's gotta balance.

I sipped the drink. It tasted flat, but it would have to last until someone offered to buy me a drink. My tastes had changed since I started on the testosterone, a strange side effect. Bitter things tasted better than they used to, sweet things too sugary. Was it true that women had a sweeter tooth, or just more tastebuds on their tongues?

I looked around. The place was about eighty percent women, the rest their male hags, or maybe blokes out for a night without the hassle of feeling like you need to pull. Who needs to go out anymore, paying £5.50 for a tiny drink, to cop off when you can just go on the web and find someone half a mile away?

Katy Perry screeched away. The lights flashed into my eyes, making me blink. On the dancefloor, two girls were attempting to scissor standing up, they fell over and their boy pals screeched with laughter.

'Are you a drag king?' said a woman next to me. My gaydar and transdar is often specu-

larly and sometimes dangerously wrong, but this was a straight cisgirl. She was dressed in the way ciswomen think they ought to do to be attractive: overdone make-up, highlights, a slinky dress and perfume nominally designed by a Heat-style celebrity.

'No,' I said.

'You look like a girl dressed as a boy.'

Straight girls go to gay clubs to dance without being harassed but also in case a gay guy is feeling a bit bisexual that night. They don't usually go to lesbian clubs. Of course, I only went to lesbian clubs to feel safe without being harassed and in case one of the guys out with his lesbo friends fancied a hook up. I was horny as hell. It was great to no longer have that up down, up down terrorist of a menstrual cycle but with the testosterone, you never knew when you were going to be desperate for it.

'Are you a tourist?' I asked.

'No, I live in London. Muswell Hill.'

'A culture tourist, I mean. Hanging out in someone else's scene.'

'I'm,' she leaned in, whispering so her hair tendrils tickled my cheek, 'bi-curious.'

'You should be chatting up a girl, then,' I said.

'I thought you looked cute.'

'I'm a guy,' I said.

'Oh, OK. If you say so.' I looked over at one of the scissoring lesbian's friends. He was tall, not too muscular, standard outfit of white t-shirt and skinny jeans. I looked at his shoes. Trainers. Well, no-one's perfect. I willed him to come over to me. He must have had a well developed sense of knowing when he's being looked at because he glanced at me, winked, then turned away.

'Excuse me,' I said to Miss Bi-Curious, 'I need the toilet. Look, she seems up for it,' I pointed to a dungarees dyke who was watching our interaction.

I left them to it and went to the Gents. The queue for the Ladies trailed almost onto the dancefloor, but new friends were being made. Snog-while-u-wait, it passes the time. I pushed the door to the men's toilets, where there was also a queue: from the noise from one of the cubicles, it seemed that one of them was being used for non-urinary



purposes.

The guy behind me nudged me. 'Urinal's free,' he said, pointing and nudging again.

'S'OK, I'll wait for the cubicle.'

'Oh, you're one of those,' he said.

'One of what?' I looked up at him. His pupils were huge and he was dancing from foot to foot, agitated.

'I thought you were a twink, but you're a tranny. No dick yet, huh.'

'The preferred term is transman,' I said.

'You're a chick without a dick. A guy with a pie.' He laughed, putting his face too close to mine.

'Thanks. You may remember that there's a T in LGBT,' I said.

'What you gonna do, report me to Tatchell?'

The man queuing behind him, said: 'Leave him alone, you prick.' I looked around and saw a handsome, dirty-blond man, black t-shirt, pink writing: 'We're here, we're queer, get used to it.'

'Yeah,' said my aggressor. 'Wanna be starting something?'

The cubicle door opened and I escaped into it, putting the toilet seat down and sitting on it. When I was out and about, I usually waited until I got home before having a piss. I did not feel safe in men's loos. If there was a disabled toilet without a lock I used that, or sometimes there would be unisex, but all in all, I preferred my public toilets to be less public. On the FtM forums, other pre-op guys said they sometimes still used the Ladies because they felt safer, but I didn't feel comfortable in there. Mens' toilets stank but I had been practicing weeing standing up – I could pretty much aim now. I could probably use a urinal if I took my trousers off, but you know...

I unlocked the door and peered around it, hoping Mr Transphobe had pissed and gone. He and my protector were locked in an aggressive embrace, whilst some of the toilet queue looked on. No doubt they were next to use the cubicle of love. I sighed. I had hoped my knight-protector might have waited for me.

I checked myself briefly in the mirror, combed my hair neatly to the side. The look I was going for was Alex Kapranos, but although I had

dad's straight nose and dark eyes, I had mum's round face: no angular cheekbones, unless I sucked them in with a new romantic pout. Mum. I had forgotten about her for a couple of brief hours. I looked at myself again. I looked like a mixture of both of them.

I went back on the dancefloor. White t-shirt guy had hooked up with an A-Gay, a preening queen. Out of my league. Straight experimenter was nowhere to be seen. Maybe she'd pulled. She was pretty, in an ultra-femme kind of way. I went to fetch my drink from where I'd left it, but it was gone, it had either been mine-swept or cleared away by the bar-staff. There was about £3 of drink left in there. I didn't have enough for another. I turned to go and almost walked into dungarees dyke.

'Hello, handsome,' she said.

'Hi.' I looked down at her.

'Not going already?'

'I have to be up early tomorrow.'

'Pity,' she said, smirking. 'You're the kind of butch I like.'

'I'm not a lesbian,' I said.

'Labels, who needs them, we're everything to anyone, right?'

'Right,' I said.

She came in close and whispered in my ear. 'I'd like to lick your pussy.'

I jumped. 'You're very forward.'

'Babes, I'm 42, I can't waste much time.'

She laughed.

'I'm OK, thanks,' I said, taking a step backwards.

'Look, I know your type, hate your boobs, hate your fanny, want to be a man. That's OK.'





Come on. The disabled toilet has lots of room.' She took my hand and dragged me. A group of women stood next to it, raising their eyebrows.

'She's a bit young, Belle.'

'If there's turf on the pitch!' They chuckled.

She locked the door behind us. The fluorescent light stung my eyes.

She traced my upper lip. 'You're starting to get a little 'tache,' she said, 'it suits you.' She licked it. 'Your voice isn't deep though.'

'I went through puberty at twenty-one, my true puberty, that is. So my voice isn't as deep as it would be. But it will be.'

'Nice,' she said.

'Look, I'm flattered, erm, Belle,' I said. 'But this isn't my idea of fun. You're attractive and all, but –'

She put her hand between my legs and started rubbing. 'You don't have to touch me,' she said, murmuring into my hair.

She undid my belt, pushing me onto the toilet lid.

'How long has it been since you had it?'

'A while. Never from a woman.'

She pulled down my Y-fronts and started licking. I put my hand on her head to indicate she should do it harder.

She stuck her finger in and put her hand up my top, squeezing my nipple.

'You've had 'em off?'

'Yes,' I said. 'Don't talk.' I pushed her head back and she made me come.

I wiped myself with a piece of toilet paper and stood up, re-buckling my belt

'Thanks,' I said, making for the door, but she got there before me. She stood between me

and it, smiling, head tilting. Her eyelid skin creased around her eyes.

'Come on, darling, do it for Belle.'

'I thought I didn't have to touch you.'

'An eye for an eye, darling.'

'Oh, alright.' I said. 'I'm not going down on you though.' I put my finger down her pants. She was wet. It felt horrible. She rubbed against me, trying to kiss me, but I moved my face away.

'Put your finger up my bum.'

'No,' I said.

'Come on.' As a compromise I groped her fat arse through her trousers. She rubbed against my finger and then grunted three times into my ear.

'Come home with me, darling.'

'No thanks.'

'I've got a double ended dildo. We could go another round or two.' She cackled.

'I've got to go home.'

'Why, darling?'

'You remind me of my mother,' I said.

*

There was an overpowering smell of petrol and pollen as I walked to the bus-stop. I wandered, lonely in a crowd of Thursday night revellers, drunk and disorganised. People were more attached to their mobile phones than to their friends; they clung to them like dummies. The countdown said nine minutes, but the bus, with its friendly white destination, turned up early and I went upstairs to my favourite seat, on the left, opposite the stair-well. It was the beginning of the route, so the bus was empty, filling up quickly with tired cleaners, people with way-past-their-bedtime children who smelled of biscuits and bubblegum, bar workers, nightclubbers and those with nowhere else to be. As we crossed the river, I looked out at my city: Big Ben's face like the creamy harvest moon, the chaos of Leicester Square, the neon fantasy of the Trocadero, the drugless ecstasy in the warm, loud air. Through Bloomsbury, Finsbury, Islington, the street-lamps areolaed in the bus-mist windows. The announcements made it hard to fall asleep and wake up in Tottenham; I had trained myself, Pavlov's dog-style, to open my eyes at the stop before mine. I pressed the bell and jogged down the stairs.

Our road was empty and quiet and dark after the night bus. The chimney pots were spiking

the moon above the houses. I crossed to our side of the road and unlocked the front door quietly. Dad had left the hall light on for me, so I turned it off and went into the living room to take off my shoes and jumped. She was sitting there, drinking a glass of something and staring into the dark.

'What are you doing?' I said.

'Where have you been? I was worried about you,' she said. She stood up and turned the light on. 'Does your father know you stay out 'til all hours?'

I looked at the DVD player. 'It's 1.30. Hardly late. And it's not your business.'

'Don't you have to get up to go to work?'

'I start at midday tomorrow.'

'Where do you work?'

'At a coffee shop.'

'Such a waste of your intelligence. And your education.' She paused. 'Did you have an education?'

'I didn't go to Uni if that's what you mean.'

'Why not?'

'It's kind of traumatic when, at the age of fourteen, your mother leaves and you don't see, or barely hear from her, for nine years. It kind of fucks you up. I had to go to school counseling when I should have been in class, learning stuff.'

'Oh, Jo.'

'John,' I said. She seemed drunk, her eyes were glassy. She took a swig from her glass.

'Why do you dress like a boy and call yourself John? Is it some kind of late onset teenage rebellion?'

'I don't dress like a boy, I am a boy. A man. A transman. My legal name is John. That's who I am now.'

'What on earth does your father have to say about all this?'

'He just said: "I thought you were going to tell me you were a lesbian."'

'He always did do nothing.'

'He's just let me be by myself.'

'Wouldn't it be easier just to be gay?'

I sighed. 'I am gay. I don't fancy women. I fancy men. It's not a choice, it's how I am. Gay people don't choose to be gay. Transpeople don't choose to be trans. We're born in the wrong bodies.'

'So you've become homosexual? I don't understand any of this.'

'No-one's asking you to. No-one's asking you for anything.'

'Are you, I mean have you – '

'No.'

'You don't know what I'm going to ask!'

'It's the same thing everyone asks.' I didn't think she had the right to ask me that – I didn't think anyone had the right to ask me that – but I knew she'd keep niggling and prying and pushing until she found out. 'I've had my top done but not my bottom.'

'What does that even mean?'

'I've had a mastectomy but I've still got my uterus. I'm pre-op. But I don't have periods anymore.'

'Neither do I,' she said.

Then: 'Are you ashamed of what you are, is that why you mutilated yourself?'

I stuck my fingernails into my hand to stop myself from slapping her. 'I'm proud of who I am.'

'But you did choose, didn't you? You chose to change sex.'

'I deal with people staring, questioning, commenting, every day. I don't need it at home as well, from some stranger who won't say anything about why she left, where she's been or what she's even doing here.'

'It's a long story, Jo. John. It's for another day. I want to hear your story. Tell me. I remember when you were eight, I bought you a cute little bikini and you refused to wear it. Did it start then? Tell me? I want to understand.'

I sat down and opened my mouth.



We Walk Across the Gallery

By Saleha Begum

We walk across the gallery, holding hands skilfully,
like the first time, hesitant to hold too tight,
afraid of distance lingering between fingertips.
These moments now lost in this lofty hallway.

I stop and pull away...

I see our love, like your abstract art, deformed, distorted,
impossible to dig out the hidden scriptures.
Lost in the sea of dialogues, the few conversations
can hardly create a bridge to travel the distance between us,
shapes that neither correlate nor reflect,
a paradoxical mess you exhibit for the world.
An explosion of colours,
altering the mind but dancing with pride,
heads held high, arms straight and steps light.

You lured me in –
I turn towards you,
your hands clasped around my wrist.
I look around.

I'm painted in silhouettes, just on the side,
a frail figure, hiding,
slowly disappearing, cast off by a thousand rainbows,
bold, screaming, shouting to please.
You steal the eyes and hearts of those without a soul.
They enjoy the game, your game, the illusion of 'I'
that gets greater with every tireless brushstroke,
colours at war, bright, dominant and shapeless forms
that dazzle the eyes.

Always so avant-garde and yes- abstract...

I once loved realism until you swirled me in,
for every artist needs a prop to dance the dances
you command and form the colours you gaze upon.

Dysphoria

By Anon



establish the nexus

a lone

a lone

a lone what?

alone

examine on paper
the things that hound you
compassion and confusion
baying to your brain

aspiring to be Mulder or Chandler
anyone with a purpose

[a penis]

to flash vulnerability like a badge
plead with the stars
then whip out a gun
grab bad guys by the throat

so that when you wince
people know it really hurt

or have inveterate reasons
for running from commitment
sarcasm a mere smoke-screen
for failure and longing

so that when you cry
it means something serious

every act of restraint
respected instead of expected
dismissed as a symptom

of soppy chromosome kisses
XX

camaraderie is a joke
because masturbation
is still taboo
and doesn't mean shit
in this form

except that you're
a lone
a lone
a lone what?
alone

in the real sense
that we all are

and none of this makes sense
like we all don't

so impregnate the nexus
and watch it engender

its own
insignificance

"I am a transgender FTM who is 'stealth' at university/work etc. (i.e. I live as a regular man without telling people I am trans) and doesn't want to take the risk of being 'outed'; several people on my course also read your magazine, and as these poems explore trans issues/sexism from a dual perspective it could lead to unwanted curiosity. However, I was unable to resist contributing since I - predictably - have a strong interest in this issue's subject matter."





Not to be Told

By Mark Goodwin

It is against Our Law to hug our husks, to show our husks concern beyond the practical. This is Understood.

We must drag our husks behind us, ignoring them. If our husk should get caught on a doorpost or snagged in a bush, then we are allowed to touch our husk in a practical way, so that we may go on our way to carry out our business. But to show one's husk any other concern is forbidden. It is Understood.

We must not hug our husks. It is Understood.

Behind all our people (attached to a gland near their anuses), dragged along by a tether, by a dead umbilical, there is a crisp lightweight dry thing. Each husk is similar, but more dissimilar, to the person to whom it belongs. This is Understood. The husk is a contorted bag of dried organs & brittle bones. Its eyes are always shut. If one is caught trying to prise open the eyelids of one's husk, it is punishable by death. This is Our Law & Understood.

So, you see, what happened with Mia's & Jo's husks must be kept secret. Our Law says Husks are Understood but not Supposed. Listen, but don't repeat this story.

Mia & Jo had just met. It was the smell of themselves, the shapes of each other, and the mystery of each other's thoughts – it was physical love. There are rules about physical love, this is Understood, but as long as one's husk is left at the prescribed distance, keeping the tether taught, then physical love is allowed, as Our Law. But when one falls through the new smell of someone, into what they might be feeling ... it is so easy to forget. Mia & Jo

forgot so much, so strongly. They perhaps forgot more than anyone else had ever done before.

Some say it was Mia's wetness that touched Jo's husk, some say it was the other way round. Who knows? It is forbidden to tell this story, so you see it is easy to say 'Who knows?', but one must never ask: 'Who knows?'.

Anyway, Mia & Jo were too wrapped around & within each other to notice the sounds outside themselves. Perhaps juice from Mia somehow got into the crisp umbilical attached near her anus, perhaps it was Jo's semen. As they moaned and sweated, Jo sliding himself in & out of Mia, Mia sliding herself up & down Jo, their husks creaked. But the creaking slowly moved towards moist and then slippery sounds. The husks began to move, they pulled themselves through the dust towards each other. Then the husks met. And the most forbidden thing happened – the husks made sounds, with air in their throats, and saliva in their mouths, with tongues red as if holding blood, the husks spoke. And they spoke like a woman & man moving somewhere but more concerned with the moving, with the gestures, than with the somewhere they were moving towards.

Mia's & Jo's husks hugged. They grasped each other and pulled each other into each other. The newly moist but brittle bones snapped. Organs burst, and liquids spilled into the dust. A crisp as if burnt vulva began to unfold like a pink bloom, and a limp desiccated string slowly inflated to stiffness. The two limp husks somehow, with feeble muscles, and almost oxygenless blood, somehow they managed to fit each other completely, the growing rod pushed into the new bloom. They crushed themselves together, then travelled through each other. One husk passed from one side of its other husk to the other side of its other husk. And the other husk also passed from one side of its other husk to the other side of its other husk. All the time this was happening the husks screamed, but the screams were also words.

There was then a pile of combined broken bones & gobbets of flesh, like a pile of steaming wet red velvet & glistening white stones. When Mia & Jo noticed this they lost control of their bowels & bladders, they shook like tattered ribbons in a gale. And yet their faces ached with raging smiles.



A Past and Future Self

By Di Booth



[Continued from page 20]

There came into them a hunger unlike any emotion they had ever known.

As Mia & Jo began to eat from the pile of raw meat, with both their mouths red as if they were bleeding, the being-eaten pile of uncooked flesh began to organise itself into a shape. There were slip-slop noises & squelches as bits of muscle and tendon and organs clumped together. There was a strong & fascinating smell hissing out of the pile, a perfume that cancelled the stink of their excrement & urine. Suddenly the pile was a kind of person, but twice the height of Mia or Jo.

It is said that this Kind-of-Person picked up Mia & Jo, then slowly crushed them together whilst moving & reciting in a way unconcerned with any destination but fascinated with every smooth beautiful gesture & glorious moist vowel.

Be very careful, for this is not Understood.



"Do you see her?" I say.

Quietly, Melissa says, "I see her."

We're standing on the landing looking through the open door into the spare bedroom where a little girl is sitting on the bed. Melissa says, "I always thought this kind of thing would be scary. But she's cute."

Scientists say that if you were to meet your double you wouldn't recognise them. But there's no mistaking me as a child, no matter how much I've changed. Her long straight hair with a fringe. Her eyes. She's no ghost. She looks up and sees us and smiles, she waves and then she disappears. We stand in silence for a moment and then Melissa says, "Christ." She says, "John, what just happened?"

I say, "I don't know."

I look up 'seeing yourself as a child' in one of those dream dictionaries because I don't think there's a precedent for it in real life. It says the child represents a desire to find your true self, a desire for reassurance, a new attitude to life or new set of values. That your true self is beautiful and worthy of love and you must love yourself before you can really be yourself. New beginnings. It makes me laugh. In my head, I keep seeing her wave and disappear. Maybe she's supposed to.





Gender, Sex & Sexuality

By Matt Barton, HCE features writer

Trans-porn, a relatively new and unique foray into an industry as old as society itself, is growing in popularity and awareness, but what does this mean for the transgendered community en masse?

If nothing else, pornography is a unifier. From the loneliest, horniest 'misunderstood' teenager to the most affluent 'my wife doesn't find me sexy' businessman, it is something known to everyone; we have seen it change public opinion and laws, and bestow on every son or daughter a week or two where they can't look their parents in the eye.

One can only imagine the power and influence that the porn industry could muster to promote or demonise whatever cultures, genders and lifestyles it sees fit. Fortunately, the effects of the industry on most viewers are little more than a tendency to pigeon-holing and, occasionally, a disdain for anyone not an eighteen-and-a-day year old size zero white girl who spends her spare time eating carrots without chewing. However the culture and community surrounding transsexual and transgender individuals tends to receive a rather unique portrayal.

As we all know, heterosexual pornography is the biggest and most viewed type on the market, with an average of 30-40 subcategories such as: black, asian, caucasian, young, old, big beautiful bomen [BBW], home-made, anal, oral, public, fetish and many more. This category sits far ahead of the second biggest category, known as 'solo', which is a single person, alone, performing various degrees of delightful debauchery for a camera. The

third, fourth and fifth biggest categories are 'gay/lesbian', 'shemale' and 'other'. 'Other' is the category where things like transgender pornography are usually found, often self-made videos of FTMs enjoying their new penis or MTFs not wanting to join the mainstream self-labelled 'freak show' that is the 'shemale' category. With all this knowledge, we can start to work out wages in relation to viewership, why men are paid less than women and why transwomen (MTF) are paid less than transmen (FTM), which seems like a strange turnaround.

It's all about numbers. There's a niche of males quite happy to pay for sex, so being paid to have sex is probably a dream come true for a lot of men. Compare this with the averages regarding which sex is better at self-restraint, and out pops an imbalance in the ratio of men to women. Women are often paid more (about £500-£3000 per scene) in order to lure more females into the industry. Another factor is that the women are often the star of the show, with men often becoming repeat viewers to watch the same actress.

Anyway, to bring it back on topic, the transgender culture is a fairly obscure one. Many people may know of the media label 'lady-boys' thanks to a particularly audacious group of Taiwanese men and the ongoing derogatory, defamatory aftermath, but the general public are surprised, confused and intrigued when informed of its existence. There are four groups in the transgendered culture that I'd like to focus on: FTM (female to male), MTF (male to female), 'gender queer' (those who wish to be either and don't feel constrained to one gender), and 'androgynous' (those who wish to be neither).

MTF, or 'she-males'/'chicks with dicks', as the porn industry commonly calls them, are the transgendered culture most frequently found in pornography, with most mainstream manufacturers providing at the very least some limited content and at most some dedicated websites, DVD collections and magazines. FTM porn however, and



especially content around gender queer and androgynous sub-cultures, is much more uncommon and usually found on privately-owned sites, sparse enough that they often partner with each other to share a viewership.

It may seem then that this is slow but steady rise to mainstream acceptance, and one would assume that it can mean nothing but good things; that public awareness will encourage charities and healthcare systems to see Gender Dysphoria as much more serious and much more important. One might hope it will prompt quicker and easier access to the 10 gender-specific clinics in the entire UK and a reduction in the suicide rates among sufferers of Gender Dysphoria which could make even bigots a little bit happy. These websites might be providing the spark needed to kick-start these changes, but they could just as easily be tearing everything down.

Now here is the stuff we really want to look at. When our earlier number crunching is applied to transgendered individuals, the theme is still very similar, with MTFs being paid less because they are generally considered both more common, and more willing to do some of the weirder acts with little or no financial incentive. If there's anything which can be established from most of the evidence we see, it's that the porn industry will pay more – sometimes a lot more – for the stuff in short supply. It will often spend thousands on hiring amputees, intersex people, sufferers of dwarfism, FTMs and well-known female porn stars.

One of the biggest issues these websites could be responsible for is a derogatory portrayal of this community, a two-dimensional representation of sex, she-males and the fetishizing of buff, burly men with working vaginas. These websites may reinforce in the public mind the ridiculous idea that Gender Reassignment is a choice motivated by sex: something perverts do to get themselves off which should be shunned and looked down on, in the same way our society shuns everything else remotely different to the two children heterosexual household. This is likely unintentional, as many of these sites not only feature transgendered actors, but are often funded and run by people who are members of this culture and community as well, with a focus on acceptance of anyone and

everyone with any form of Gender Dysphoria. The problem only arises when these sites are the first and only experience the public has with transsexuals/transgender individuals, potentially forming a schema of these people as nothing more than freaks undergoing surgery to appear in weird porn. This is obviously nothing close to the truth.

In order to corroborate and further discuss the benefits and potential problems of transgendered pornography, I talk to close friend and female-to-male transman Shaun Morris, as well as a male-to-female transwoman who would prefer to remain anonymous and will be called 'Naomi'. Note that these interviews were conducted separately, with identical questions.

Matt Barton: Do you feel that pornography helps to bring the transgender culture to the masses in a way they understand? If there was no transgender porn, would that be detrimental to public awareness of the transgender culture?

Shaun: From what I have seen, which isn't much, a lot of it tends to play on stereotypes, but a market is gradually developing where it is more acceptable and better known. It is of course a good idea to look into how many people who are non-transgendered, and not part of the niche audience it appeals to, watch the content. People who aren't aware of the culture won't know the terms and won't be actively searching for it, so in most cases it's an accidental discovery. If transgender porn did not exist, I believe that people could assume that



transgendered/transsexual individuals are sexless, unable to have sex in what they perceive as any 'normal' fashion. So you could say porn is a welcome way of dismissing this rumour for those of us struggling to find a partner.

Naomi: It's always difficult to discuss these things, as I think a public awareness would be the same as an individual like myself coming out. There's risk of hatred, of bigotry, but there are positives too, like support, instead of fighting and worrying alone. In terms of pornography, I think it reaches out to more people than our awareness or help programs, and you never know, it could be like a weight being lifted for some to know that they are not alone, and sex doesn't have to be written off because nobody will ever understand.

MB: Do you feel that the portrayal of transgender individuals in pornography is derogatory?

Shaun: In a few cases with FTM porn sites, it is regularly shown that some FTM/transmen don't feel the need to undertake Phalloplasty or Metoidioplasty to live as men, which can cause people to regard these surgeries as wasteful and unnecessary, unaware that something as personal as this is completely unique to each person. I can't say with certainty, but I believe this is the case for MTFs too, with this kind of porn regularly showing that they don't need surgery to be what they want, which is simply not the case for many transwomen.

Naomi: In all porn there is anti-GSD (Gender and Sexual Diversity) dis-

crimination, racism, sexism, classism, and every other 'ism'... It's surprisingly equal in its abuse and mistrust of anyone who gets in front of the camera, probably one of the few industries and public bodies to be able to boast that level of fairness. With that in mind, I don't think this type of porn demeans and undermines our community any more than it does men, women, white, black, gay, straight and anyone else in between.

MB: Do you feel pornography of this type fetishizes the idea of being, or having a relationship with, a transgender individual?

Shaun: Definitely. The fact that there are strictly transgender-only porn sites out there when most of us just want to exist as our chosen/psychological gender is an example of this in the extreme. I understand that quite a few people in the community enjoy the label and embrace it, or at the very least don't mind or don't care, but I feel that the use of the labels 'FTM, MTF, transman, transwoman, androgynous and gender queer' etc. should be for use in forums, healthcare systems and help centres to aid individuals undergoing dysphoria or a gender crisis, and I would not consider them a part of my identity in any way. The idea that some people embrace the labels is something I personally don't relate to, but as I said before, this subject is so personal that everyone seems to have different opinions and ideas, and everyone is entitled to make whatever decisions they want about their own body, mind and identity.

Naomi: Porn's demographics consist of two majorities, teenagers and horny middle-aged men. When it comes to the middle-aged men, they probably fetishize everything slightly unusual to counter their boring middle management jobs and unfulfilling lives. So it's no big deal. Teenagers on the other hand, that's something I worry about. I worry that in the most desperate, weak and confusing period of your life, porn like this can influence your thoughts on your identity, and enhance some perfectly normal, common gender identity issues during puberty. In terms of being with a transgendered person, I think that there is a lot of people



out there who just want to have something unique – people like fat women, anorexic men, Glaswegian over-50 black transsexuals with a career in clay pigeon-shooting etc. There is nothing someone won't fetishize, so there's no point trying to make porn that tries to avoid it. Does that mean that this kind of porn should just be taken down to rid people of the chance? That, I don't know.

MB: As many transgendered individuals simply wish to live as their chosen gender to friends and colleagues, do you think a wider awareness of the transgendered community would be a bad thing? Would it make it more difficult for them to 'blend in' when the public is aware of common signs?

Shaun: I can't say for all, but I think if people have been living 'stealth' (not disclosing their transgender status to others) for a long time without any issues, the worst thing that could happen would be a documentary or porn DVD showing that their seemingly innocuous scars are typical of gender reassignment surgeries. There are also a lot of things that men and women simply can't change about themselves, even through surgeries; things that often go unnoticed. There's a distinct chance that if these very discreet but gender-specific features were to become widely known, 'going stealth' would become near impossible.

Naomi: As an MTF, I would say yes, it would make it more difficult. There are scars on my breasts, around my genitals and my butt, and I used to have some fairly noticeable scars around my face. I won't explain exactly where and why, to protect any MTFs in the day-to-day lives of your readership, but they were typical of male-to-female surgeries. My current boyfriend, who knows about me and my transition, is very smart; it wouldn't have taken him long to put the pieces together if he had seen similar scars on someone else, someone in the public eye as a MTF, like on a porn site or on TV. I don't think I could have dealt with telling him earlier than I was ready to, and I probably wouldn't be with him today. I also do know about an FTM whose life was ruined by a documentary

on female to male surgeries, he hadn't told his then girlfriend, and they split up badly when she saw his exact scars and traits on some other FTM in the documentary. It's something that cannot be repeated. I want to live as a woman and only that, but I live in fear of stuff like this outing me, so I tell people, and that limits who I interact with to only those I trust. It's a vicious circle.

I talked to both Shaun and Naomi some more after this. Overall they feel that the problems surrounding the public awareness of the transgender community are worse than most of the benefits, and that the porn surrounding this culture isn't exactly beneficial. They feel that if someone truly wished to help, they would reach out to the community individually, anonymously, and try to be as understanding and sensitive as possible.

In all things, even porn, it's imperative to simply respect and accept that every person has different opinions, desires and needs, and others will have opposing ones. No matter what you say or how you say it, someone, somewhere, will disagree and want to violently introduce something blunt and heavy to your squishy places. The trick is to just be yourself while not preventing those around you doing the same.



Camila and the Freckled Boy

By Ruth Hernandez

Camila laughed as she watched the reaction of the unsuspecting tourists to the fanatical screams of her friends.

They had gathered at the hallway pass of the Estação Cosme e Damião, the Holy Twins train station, where the World Cup visitors wearing proudly their country colors, would go through a turnstile to get to the train that would take them back to their fancy hotels in Recife. Some of her friends shouted "Lenço! Lenço!" (Scarf! Scarf!) Camila could hear her twin sister Vitoria at the other end screaming "Bandeira!" (Flag!) and could see her long, thin brown arms stretching out to the foreigners in hopes of a gift.

Germany had just beaten the United States in the first round at Arena Pernambuco, but according to her boyfriend Matheus, the Americans had managed to move on to the second round only thanks to the Portuguese. He was just repeating comments he had heard at his father's bar but she thought he was the smartest boy in their school, Escola Santa Monica, and believed everything he said was right. They hadn't told anyone they were boyfriend and girlfriend yet. They would when she turned eleven in a few days.

Matheus was at the train station too, screaming, reaching, laughing. Camila watched him with pride. He was the best looking boy she knew and had the smile of a movie star. He'd already managed to get six bandanas: four American and two German. He would later wash them and sell them for four reais each. Most of the mothers stayed in the back rows, making sure no adult would try anything funny with one of their kids but some adult women el-

bowed their way to the front row, pushing against the gates in hopes of catching the eye of someone who could possibly get them out of Caramagibe. Much to Camila's shame, her mother Sabine was against the gate, waving shamelessly at the good-looking men who donned their country's colors. She'd been a beautiful woman once, but her drinking and smoking had aged her. She whistled at a group of young Americans who could have been college students. One gave her his American flag bandana and placed it around her neck. Sabine reached out to kiss him but his friends pulled him away, their train was arriving.

Camila looked up to the sky. It was a menacing grey. If this rain persisted, fairly soon her part of town would be flooded again. They'd have to move in with their Aunt Thais in Fortaleza and miss school until the water subsided. Last year they were away for two months: she almost had to repeat the third grade. She did not want to be left behind this year. There were many cute girls in their class and Matheus was a big flirt. He said she was the only girl for him but she knew how boys were.

She watched her friends reaching towards the tourists but wondered, for what? What good is a bandana or a flag when the water reaches your waist? When all your clothes are ruined? When your father's motorcycle is flooded? When the town becomes a ghost town and the dogs die of starvation? Her mother would never let her feed any of the town dogs but she would sneak out now and then and give them a little bit of her dinner. In the last flood she was very sad to find so many of their bloated bodies half buried in the mud. Matheus did not live in the low part of town. He never had these problems and told her again and again that it did not matter to him where she lived. But she often wondered about that. Adults minded very much. Perhaps when he grew up he would also mind. She would have to wait and see.

In three minutes the next batch of train riders would come around the turnstiles, with more bandanas and flags and scarves. Most would smile at the Brazilian welcoming party. Camila heard one man say, "I feel like a Beatle!" She knew he was referring to the British musical group that Matheus liked so much. Someday she and Matheus would leave this town and go to London



where they would attend the university, get married, work together in an office wearing nice clothes, buy a car, an apartment, have children... well, maybe only one, since it was so expensive to raise children. Or so her mother complained every day. A family of Americans approached the turnstile, a father, a mother, a boy and a girl. They all wore the same clothes, the U.S. futbol team's red, white and blue jersey, khaki shorts and muddy white sneakers. The girl looked to be about Camila's age. Her hair was the color of wheat, rod straight, shiny and beautiful. The boy had crazy carrot red hair and was covered in freckles just like his mom. The dad had a huge beer belly that protruded underneath his jersey. Camila giggled at their matching outfits; she would rather die than be seen with her own family like that, not that they would ever attend an event together. Her father could not stand her mother for more than the ten minutes he sat at the dinner table, after which he would go to Matheus' father's bar and not return home until the early hours of the morning. Camila let her mind wander as flashes of color and chants passed by when she realized that the freckled boy, the one with the crazy red hair stood in front of her. He held out something.

"Jamie, maybe she doesn't want it!" said his mother. And although Camila didn't understand what she said, the words brought her back into the now. It was his Nintendo DS. Some of the richer kids in school had them. She knew they were worth a lot of money. Everyone around Camila began to shout "Dar-me! Dar-me!" (Give it to me!) and reached out to grab it but the boy pulled back far

enough that no one could.

His sister rolled her eyes and sighed with impatience. "Jamie. Let's go!" she said as she pulled on his arm but he stood in front of Camila, motionless. Matheus pushed his way to Camila's side and reached out for the game too, even though he already had one at home. But the freckled boy pulled back again waiting for Camila's response. Now, all eyes were on her. She felt her cheeks flush. She heard her own mother shout "Levá-lo, estúpida!" (Take it, stupid!) but her arms would not move, her body would not respond. Every cell in her body wanted her to run, to run as far as her long thin legs would take her, to Recife, to Rio, to London, to the moon. But she was stuck, frozen, glued to the wet and slippery sidewalk surrounded by her friends. The rain felt good on her warm skin. The freckled boy and his family ran onto their platform to seek shelter.

"Why didn't you take it?" asked Matheus while he opened his umbrella.

"I don't know," Camila answered, wondering the same thing.



Three Poems

By Glen Armstrong

A Brief History of Androgyny

Do not mistake this for sterility. Though the endgame might not be a baby clearly swaddled in either pink or blue, other births step forth in platform shoes. Luxurious swatches of hair and equally luxurious swatches of baldness taunt neo-Victorian couples. Something alive with crisscrossing male and female lights a cigarillo, walks down the sidewalk in a green, metallic jumpsuit. Loud music replaces silence. A guitar made out of lipstick loves itself and spills into the street.

A Brief History of Girls

You are the future, never returning, a transfiguration of the pomegranate into fresh paradise. Your bare foot never partitions contentment nor divides an unearned pleasure. Every time you see a boot. Something primal in you laughs at your brothers' folly. Not all of your silences hurt or fertilize soil. Deep in the night, when the wind picks up in just the right direction, some silences slip from their robes. Without your transgressions, brick walls would never know windows, windows never the sway of fabric that bursts into blossoms.

A Brief History of Boys

You are the past, a proclamation. Doorways and arches were made for you, but not for your brooding, your melancholy. It's a wonder that your long walks down cobblestone streets at midnight don't keep the police in a state of constant code red. Your blues, should you survive them, become complex: a condensed history of song and broken sailboats. I never said "beautiful," and I never said that the price was too high to pay. Even in your uniform, even loved and respected, you don't belong here.

Porphyria's Lover

By Atar Hadari



Looking down today I saw the rope in my lap
curl in clumps, curled around my pants,
once the razor had criss-crossed my scalp
and uncovered my tattooed brow.

I gathered the hair up in my sleeve
while he was looking for the horse-hair brush
to brush my little pink neck clean
and fussed around waiting for his cash
so I would leave.

I kept the sleeve closed on my wrist
and felt the hair move round like a small
head
nestling inside me- up against the veins
that come and go toward my fingertips

I took it home and in the mirror
on the landing saw my name
stubbled up in ink over my furrows
and blew myself a kiss.

The doll wasn't hard to make
-the leather lay around
since we made masks together
and the circus was in town.

I made it red. She likes red.
I like red too.
It reminds me of her hair,
some sun always dying in it,
even in the lamplight I'd stare.
She's in a black phase now-
was when I last saw her-
still wears the leather letters on her coat;
white leather stitched on black lace hose-
a hose with little holes in it, just like the holes
I drill in this-
sew the slit together, get the legs tight.

I put it in the post for her before midnight.
Today- it is still technically today
if I haven't been with anyone
and don't have anyone to say:
"Look, lights up on the steamed up window,
streaks of bleach red in the sky,
it's another day you've got here Bobby,
go to bed again, give it a try."

Post should be with her about now;
milk spills on the plastic table cloth;
she puts her sleeve in it, tearing up the wrap-
ping,
always wants to see what's inside;
she puts her finger on the skin
wondering if it could be real -
I open my sewn shut eyes, I feel her skin, I
breathe.





Dive House Bitch

By Stephenson Muret

His tits: huge, of course. Nipples as big as pacifiers, staring at you. And the bustier pushes their cleavage forward, upward. He reeks of watery beer and rotgut liquor and a peep show booth, reminding you of your first fingerings of vagina and the surprise spasms of adolescent semen which accompanied. The primal, he's rattled; that instinctual something coiling about your core: your hidden trigger.

He rests his left hand on the bar, tickling the inside of your right forearm, as you idly fondle a dripping wet glass. He crowds close and you don't know his name. You know his game though. And you know he doesn't know you know. Important. That whisky glass you just bought him was filled by the cantinera with weak tea, you guess. You don't care. You let them believe you're green. It feels fine having a broad pretend to desire you, feeling her lean over your pulsing manhood, near enough even to seem flesh of your flesh. Real women have done this before. You remember the reality. This differs from reality. But you're drinking. Ni modos.

The cantinera polishes tumblers at the end of the bar. Indifference she affects for this con, ignorance even of its unfolding. But you sense her peripheral vision buzzing you, and warily. She gets a cut of the twenty dollars you just shelled out. How much? Half? A quarter? And what percentage will the proprietor charge for allowing this Dolly to troll his Tijuana bar. Or does the boss demand a nightly rent instead? How much does this guy finally pocket?

To test your assumptions, just for giggles, you insist on spotting the Dolly an Austrian pilsner, the most expensive beer in the cooler. You play off the

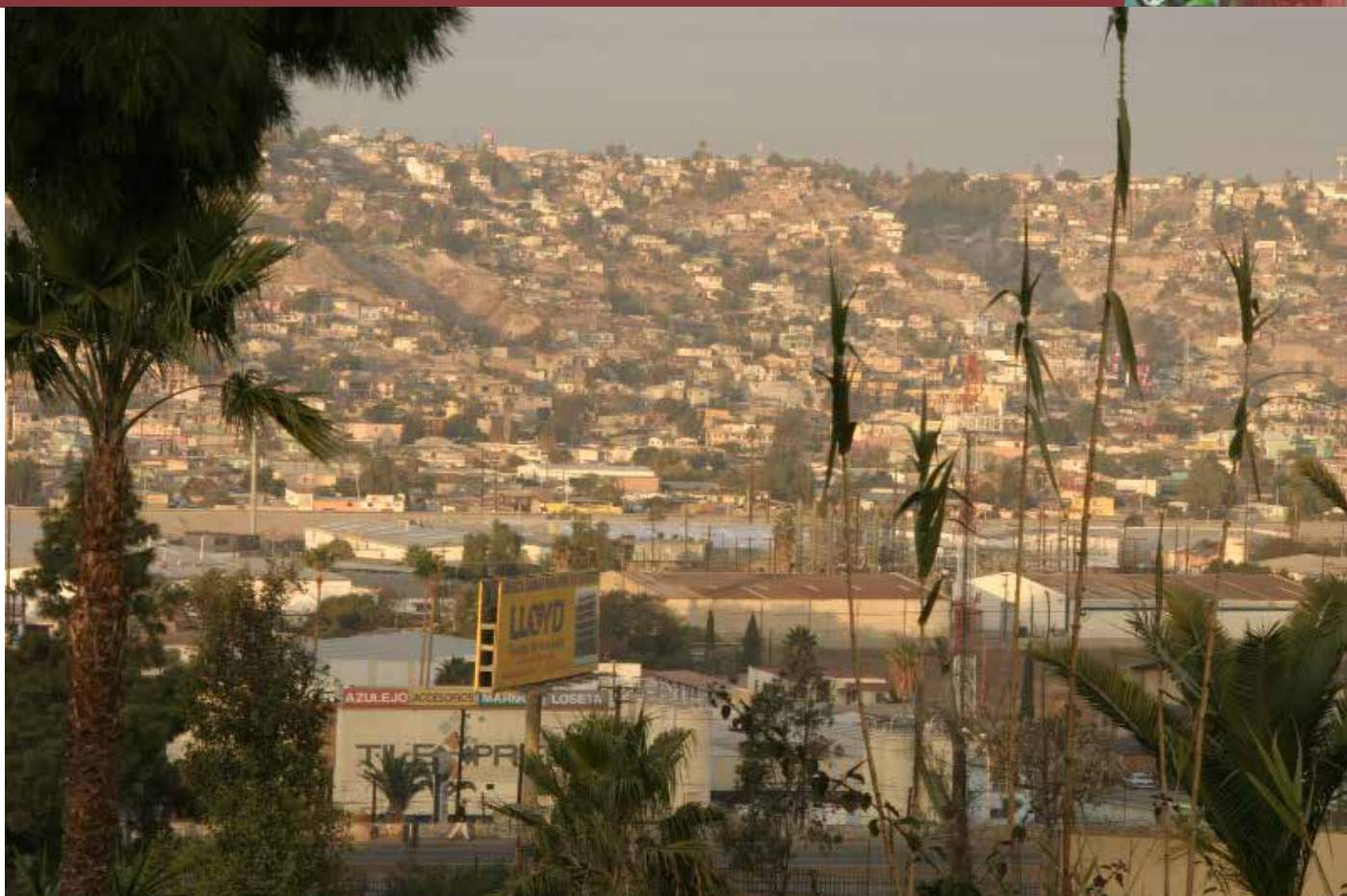
extravagance as a grand gesture, as a heart-felt demonstration of friendship or *cariño*, cultivating his and the cantinera's belief in your naiveté and soused reason. But that brew is only served in unopened bottles, as you know. So the cantinera can't angle that one. She can't wink and slide him an apple soda instead.

He refuses, of course. He doesn't like beer, he excuses. Beers are cowardly, he coos. The Dolly prefers to drink with his man like a man.

Not a bad line to toss a gringo slugging Cuervo, you reflect. But suddenly he's pretending to slur his words. If you had any doubt before, now you don't. For a moment you consider killing the farce, consider revealing the fake naiveté you're using to counter his fake attraction. You itch to tell them you don't care that he's only there to excite you into feeling large and spending easy. You want to say you're wise to this, that you know as soon as you leave he'll turn his next chump into a conquistador too. But, since you've been swilling the real McCoy, you indulge the illusion.

You like how he makes you feel. Like a man. Like an honorable man if you want to feel honorable. Or like a man who could fuck him if you want to feel like that.

His barstool squeaks then. You see his long smooth legs uncross, part. The Dolly flexes and reflexes inside his cherry red skirt until he has positioned himself audaciously nearer, almost atop you. Your eyes admire the hollow of his calf, follow it to the patent leather of the...of the...spike heels, they call those? But you return your gander to the slit of his skirt then, because Dolly has begun rubbing his thigh against yours; because Dolly has hooked his heel over your shin. You feel his breath now across your shoulder. You notice for the first time his intimidating height, Amazonian, and the strength of his animal perfume. You glance to confirm his chin rests on your shoulder. Yes, by diós, he rests his chin on your shoulder. And for a few fluttery moments you believe, you truly believe that Dolly means it, that this entire charade was not a setup to wangle your dough, but a pickup because he's dizzy for you, because you've got qualities a broad wants, because he thinks maybe one day he might love you, he might love you. Though dulled by booze, still your heart balloons to your throat.



Something lonely in you has choked. His lipstick brushes against your ear now, his breath distorting the nortec music. Dolly rasps these words to you through a husky muscular voice, he says: "Zero down. Zero down with no monthly payments for the first ninety days. Tax, title and inspection included. We take care of all the extras. Zero down payment. After that only 300 dollars a month. You can afford that surely. We virtually give you the condo. Believe in us. We just want you to be happy. We truly want you to be happy. Sign on this dotted line. Sign here. These are the best annual percentage rates in a decade. We won't foreclose if you don't pay. I promise. I just need your signature here to secure this once-in-a-lifetime deal forever."

Yes, you think, blinking. I believed. For a few darling moments you got me to believe. But a vamp is a vamp is a vamp. Isn't he? Isn't she? You convince me I'm buying bourbon when actually I'm buying tea. You convince me you care for me when actually you secretly scorn me, make me your sap. Smarting, you place the unopened pilsner before him on the bar.

"Drink this beer out of this bottle," you articulate soberly.

He defies you. "I'm a loan agent," the Dolly insists. "I'm not a B-girl."

You look at his pacifier nipples. You twist slowly and grab his tits and squeeze them hard. But the cantinera is reaching suddenly for something dangerous. So you let the bitch go. You do not sign the mortgage papers. You stumble back out onto Avenida Revolución. You do not even tip.

"Putá," you mutter through tears.



Falling into Line

By Nina Lewis

Pink, blush,
hot flush
coral, fuchsia, rose,
pink is for girls.

Blue, indigo,
navy, royal,
deep, dark,
blue is for boys.

Over fifty years ago
the reverse was true.
Pink was a strong colour,
strength meant it was
suitable for a boy.

Blue was fainter,
labelled delicate and dainty.
Commonly worn by girls.

When I was ten,
my parents decorated my room.
I wanted it blue,
they told me it was too cold.
I was given pink curtains.

Perhaps they were concerned
about the reversal,
had I had my own way.



National Slut Day

By Nicole Marie



On stage is a hefty fifty-something,
sporting an unfortunate dye job and cheap
jeans.

She is eating up the theater,
throwing condoms into the crowd
telling us she left Harvard
to fulfill her dream of being a call-girl.
Her fleshy arms are akimbo, when she belts
I've always been a slut, a sacred whore.

I'm in love with her, this frumpy sex deity.
I want to knock over every cheap plastic
seat between us, climb on stage, bury
my head in her sagging formidable breasts
and fuck her right here, in front
of these Echo Park hipsters.

Later, when we spoon backstage
I'd tell her that if she's said slut
like that, like it is a sacred badge,
to wear proudly over every woman's scarlet
letter, to the fifteen year old girl,
who ended up on camera then online,
naked and bullied from school to school,
she might have saved her from suicide.

Perhaps if she said slut loud enough she'd
purify
three thousand years of hussy-shaming-
stoned-
to-death-burning-sexy-matriarchs-
at-the-stake history,
and we could all just move on.
We'd found National Slut Day.
Kick it off with a naked human female parade.
All of us primal smelly animals
jiggling down the street, menstrual blood
oozing from our shaven, waxed,
or squishy-bushy-mama twats,
singing slut, slut slutty, slut, slut.

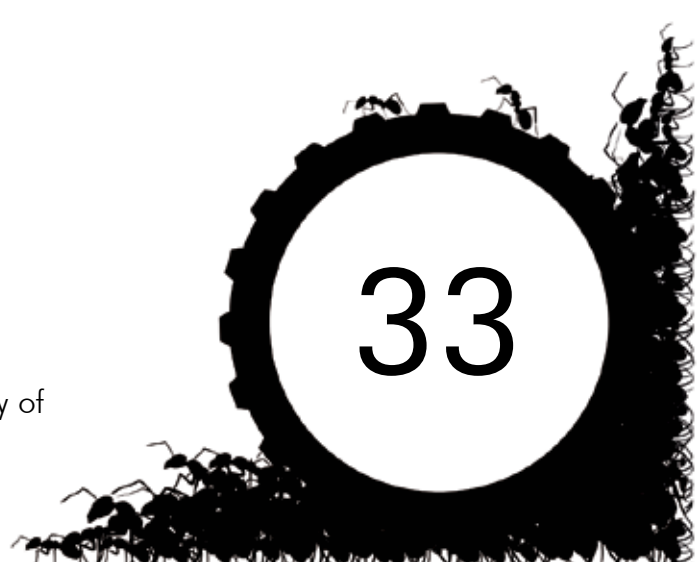
We'd youtube it, a hit gone viral, infecting
humanity with an STD re-writing
us back to Adam, who's hanging with Eve,

when the sight of that wiggly little snake
gets her in the mood.
Adam, drop your fig leaf;
and meet me under the apple tree.

With a wink and growing erection,
he strokes her cheek and pays
her the highest compliment,
a sacred expression of lust filled love: **slut.**



Image courtesy of
Nicole Marie





It's a Date

By Matt Harris

It's a date, I suppose, though neither one of us has admitted it. For weeks at work we've flirted, and I asked her out tonight. Fancy a drink, I said, or something similarly bland, leaving unsaid the important things. We're in a pub, the Slater Brook. She's at the bar, and I'm sitting at a table tucked into the corner, my elbows resting on the table and one of them, I realise, in a small pool of spilt drink.

It's going okay so far. Conversation is flowing. No awkward silences. For some reason it's vital that there are no silences, even if it means talking nonsense a lot of the time. Mystery to me why it should be that way, but it is.

It's summer, six o'clock, and it's light outside. In the windows behind her empty chair I can see trees and leaves, wafting gently. If I stand up, the brook itself appears, slipping past. Proud perhaps at having named a pub, or indifferent. I suppose eventually it must reach the river and become a part of it. I try to wipe my elbow dry.

There are two men sitting at the nearest table, right in front of the window. One with his back to me, the other in full view. The one I can see is thin, with a bony chin and shoulders, a friendly, guileless face, a bowl-head haircut and pitted skin, urging forward in his chair and softening back as he talks. He wears a gruesome jumper, brown chevrons sweeping over verdant green to gobble yellow diamonds – if it wasn't for his accent I would have taken him for some oddball alcoholic regular, probably with mental health problems, but with that accent and that jumper, he's probably a university lecturer. He's telling a story while his friend listens.

It's terrible, he says, He's been at the chiropractor's almost every other day for six weeks now, he says it's still really bad.

His friend says Uh-huh a couple of times while he talks. The man with the bowl-head haircut is local, but his friend sounds foreign.

And apparently, says the local, Well I don't know, but he says it's bled into the muscle now, whatever that means. I think that's what he said, it's bled into the muscle and that's caused all sorts of new problems.

Uh-huh yeah, says his friend. He's American, I think. He asks a question but I don't hear it. He is softly spoken, speaking soft.

Well, says the Englishman, He was in one of these big ones, I think it's a Waterstones, the one at West Green anyway...and he was in the reference section looking for this new Kersley book, it's quite a thorough new ancient Greek grammar, apparently.

Oh really? says his American friend with interest.

Yes.

Is it good? I hear a lot about Kersley.

Well I don't know, Gerry never actually got hold of a copy, because of the accident.

He wrote a, ah..., the American hesitates and pinches at his right ear with his left hand while he searches his memory. Ah, what was it...an essay on new definitions of information studies. Very good, but that's all I've read of his.

Oh, was that the one..? says the Englishman, but I don't hear the rest because the woman who works behind the bar comes over to take away an empty glass, first saying Is that finished with love?

Yeah yeah, I say and make a move to pass it to her, but already she's whisked it from the table surface.

Thanks! she says.

She smiles at me as she picks the glass up. She's in front of the leafy window. The greenery circles her head, soft summer light fizzles and bulbs. For a moment it looks like she's turning into a flower. She turns to leave, the moment passes.

Well, it was improperly placed for a start, says the Englishman.

Well, says the American, Even in a good

bookshop, if the average librarian looked at their indexing he'd have a heart-attack, I mean it's just not to the same standard at all.

No, not at all.

I wonder at their bizarre exchange. Their words reveal an alien world, unfathomable to me. I look at the Englishman as he talks. The window behind is filled with leaves and plants, circling his bobbing head, making an awkward flower of him, swaying in the sunlight.

As I said to Mary, he continues, If the book had been in the right place, in Historical Linguistics rather than in History of Language, then it would have been almost on the bottom shelf and the whole thing wouldn't have happened!

If I lean back in my chair a little I can see the girl I'm out with, standing at the bar, waiting her turn. She looks good; she wears good clothes. Through those clothes I can make out something of her figure. Scattering glances up and down each other all night, teasing flirty facetious jokes. She's wearing a blue-purple top tonight - I wonder if it might be some private tribute to her strange name. Her shoulders are bare. A climbing tattooed vine sprouts blue flowers on her right shoulder. Any opportunity to touch me she takes. I make a joke and she laughs and hits me, letting her hand slide slowly from my arm.

Exactly, which is why it was all the way at the top!

The American again says something too faint to hear.

The Englishman shrugs in reply, his flower head bobbing above his grassy green jumper. Well yes, he probably should have asked, but you know what he's like, so headstrong. I can't count the number of times it's got him into trouble.

She's been a long time at the bar. I wonder what she'll get us this time. She keeps buying us weird shots, outlandish cocktails, spending a lot of money. Sex is expensive these days. Her tiny dowry.

Well he put one foot on a lower shelf to get a leg up. I think he said it was the Historical Linguistics shelf he put his foot on actually.

Which is where the damn book should have been in the first place!

Well exactly, that's what he said to me. The whole thing has made him so angry about the state

of the indexing in the reference sections of these big bookshops, last time I saw him he was still raging on about it. He says he's writing a letter!

The American says Ha ha! Gerry and his letters!

The Englishman laughs, leans forward and plants his hands on the wooden tabletop as he says: He's done half a dozen drafts already!

The American chuckles. The wooden tables once were trees. Are we closer to her house or mine? Is mine in a suitable state? Not really, but she's not the type to care. She's unusual. Funny too, and beguiling. Something quite strange about her, something...different. Full of plans. Says she's off to Europe next month to travel, flying to Germany first. Wonder how far it can go. Hard to know if I can keep her interested even, I think she has a lot of dates. Will try my best. Seems a shame somehow. All these rituals, lies. Looking over at her, a sadness fills me.

If those flowers on her shoulder could only grow and root, and I too. Beyond the window, the leaves move slowly. A mindless peace.

The Englishman reaches the climax of his story. He says: So he had to stretch as far as he could, and as his fingers touched the book...

and as he leans forward to deliver the payoff, long shoots snake out of his fingertips and into the table, his hair grows long and green, skinward spreads his grassy jumper, leaves thrush out from his neck and eyes, his legs harden into sturdy, supple trunks, and an endless perfect peace fills the room.





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reading, writing,
listening
and drinking





Akimbo: Gender in Music

By Kai Atkinson

Are music videos obsessed with women? As a contemporary art form, music videos help to promote the music which reflects popular culture. When you first think of art objectifying men and women, you instantly think of fancy oil paintings of naked people or statues uselessly emphasising genitalia, but it's not necessarily like that anymore. Art objectifies men and women in many ways-not just through old fashioned paintings- and if it's not in magazines or on the internet, then it's in music videos.

Are women judged more for how they present themselves in music videos? They seem to use sexuality as a way of receiving attention and getting fans, but do they receive credibility in this package?

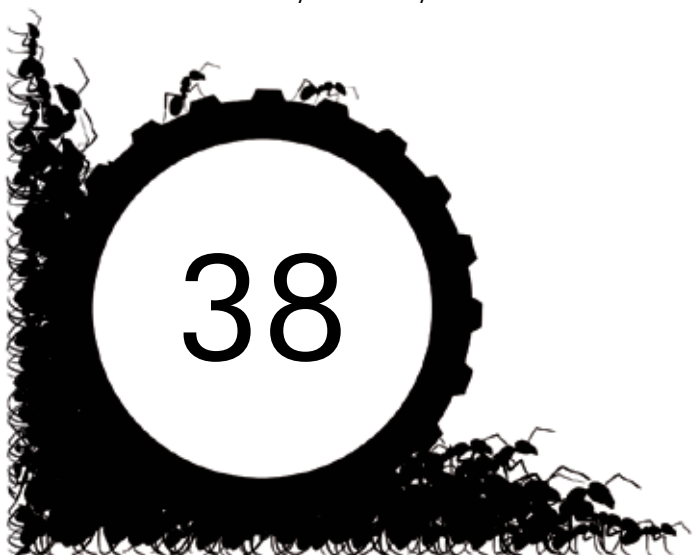
A prime example of an artist who has recently flaunted her assets is singer, Shakira, alongside chart-topping artist, Rihanna. In the video of Shakira's latest single, 'Can't Remember To Forget You', featuring Rihanna, the two trending ladies are unsurprisingly bearing lots of skin and dance provocatively against walls. Not only that, but they're shown laying on a bed, touching each other. There are no men in this music video, suggesting that sexualising their image is sufficient to gain interest. The listening public know that really this shouldn't be necessary and that you're listening to a song for the music- on the radio you can't see them wiggling their bums in revealing outfits- but society is drawn in by the sexualisation. If the artists didn't present themselves like this in their videos, then it's unlikely that they would be as memorable.

These artists run the risk of being objectified, and perpetuate a need for scantily clad women to populate videos. After acknowledging the critique that her video received for appearing "overly sexual", Shakira fired back with a statement saying, "I feel that any woman who is in control, who is in touch with her femininity and sensuality, is a woman that is empowered, I don't think that I put myself in any situation in which I am objectified." I am objectified."

However, aside from the artists themselves, there are other women providing 'interest' in music videos. Male artists hardly ever star alone in a video. Take Tinchy Stryder's song 'Take Me Back', for example- five seconds in, there are a woman's legs spread apart. Are the legs shown empowering the woman they support? Or are they accessorising the artist- being reduced to objects once again?

What seems important is to consider the genre of music. What about male fronted bands that simply perform the song in a video, or use women as part of a narrative story where men are equally featured? In certain genres, gender appearances are more equal; when comparing metal and rock music with pop music, the focus and attention on women is very different. An example of a song that includes a woman in its music video who isn't sexualised, would be band, Linkin Park's song 'Numb'. The music video shows a young woman fully clothed and distressed- not in a skimpy bikini laughing about absolutely nothing- and illustrates a story behind her being there. Rather than serving as a simple accessory, she adds meaning to the song, as well as the band featuring in the video playing their instruments.

Of course, to every rule there's an exception. Some metal and rock bands do sexualise women in their videos, but it wouldn't necessarily be fair to say that they are objectified at the same time. Where they are portrayed sexually in videos, they are equalised with a man being sexualised too; still there as part of a story. In the video for 'Tears don't fall ' by the huge metal band Bullet for My Valentine, aside from the standard scenes of the band playing their instruments, the story of a relationship is being played out. Whilst this story



does show intimate scenes of women in underwear, the focus is neither entirely on them, nor overly sexualised, as it is presented in the context of a relationship where you see the man as well.

Again, looking into pop culture, it shows us a different picture. Taio Cruz is an example of an artist who feels he needs young and sexy women to sell his videos. In the first fifteen seconds of the video for his song 'Dynamite', we see women in revealing outfits using heavy duty equipment on battered cars whilst sparks literally fly, until he rides in on a motorbike. From that moment on, all the video does is show him sauntering around singing with women pouting and strutting behind him. If there were men using the heavy duty equipment would the video be as popular? Or if it was just Taio Cruz singing by himself? It's as if popular culture needs and yearns for desirable women as a selling point for their songs.

So while Tinchy Stryder and Shakira top the charts, so do 'slut drops' and suggestive behaviours. Overall, pop music is the most popular genre of music, and therefore outsells all other genres in the music industry. However, if provocative women weren't featured in the music videos of these popular artists, it is unlikely that they'd maintain interest. But should pop music not take responsibility for its depiction of gender? It may be fair to say that pop culture stereotypes women as merely attractive objects for their videos, with little thought for the consequences. Will the objectification of women ever lessen, or will art continue to take more interest in women than they do men?





Caesar Can't Sling the Batter

By Lance Manion

For some people, the world around them and the world they live are distinctly different places. Such was the case for Caesar. Born Brad, he changed his name to sound more exotic. He would be the first to admit that he liked the name Caesar because it sounded like "seize her".

Unfortunately, there was a distinct lack of "seizing" going on in his life so he was forced to "seize" himself from time to time.

Which drove his wife crazy.

She hated the idea of him pleasuring himself to other women on the internet and felt that it was a direct violation of the wedding vows. Numerous times she would feel that he had been in the other room tossing one off and they would end up in a brawl as he denied everything. She would feel hurt and he would pretend to be insulted at the very idea that he would resort to masturbating to images of women he would never meet.

If you remember the opening line of this story you'll understand that Caesar wasn't being quite honest. There was a part of him that felt closer to these women than he did to most of his friends. How could he ever feel intimacy with people that still called him Brad?

One night his wife had had enough. She lay in bed waiting for him deep into the night. She heard familiar rustlings in his den and suspected that he was up to his old tricks so she decided a bold move was required. When he walked in she sat up in bed pretending to be feeling amorous and offered him a blowjob.

Caesar had a problem.

He had indeed been up to no good in his den and he was suddenly in a gunfight with no bul-

lets. Obviously, he couldn't pretend that he wasn't in the mood. Every man is always in the mood for a blowjob. He was going to have to call her bluff. He walked forward with a large grin on his face. He expressed his enthusiasm for her little scheme. This startled her. It was not the reaction she expected. Had she been wrong about the rustlings?

Had he been playing her all along with the ol' fake masturbation ruse?

It was too late to back down now. She hopped out of bed and assumed the position in front of him.

Caesar, suddenly feeling very Brad, got the feeling you get when you pull into your favorite restaurant only to find it closed. It will make you feel two things at once. No amount of desire for pancakes will turn on the lights in the establishment nor get the chef back behind the grill.

He pressed his face against the glass and wondered how long it would be until it was open. His wife was wondering something very similar as his member hung limply before her.

She looked up at him.

He looked down at her.

Awkward.

Then a smile slowly started to creep across his wife's face.

"Something wrong?" she inquired.

Truth be told, if you've just had a meal of pancakes the last thing you want is more pancakes. He looked back at the empty parking lot and up at the huge sign that usually was brightly lit and offering up the daily specials. Sometimes it helped to undo the top button of your pants when you're faced with a second meal but in this case the pants were not only unbuttoned but resting comfortably around his ankles.

"Admit it. Admit that you were just whacking it" his wife said as her smile began to evaporate. His response required some delicacy as his soft member was now being clutched in the formidable hand of his mad-and-getting-madder spouse. The distance between where they were and where he was was getting further. Any time the word was appears twice in a row you know it's a bad sign. He looked through the door into the darkened restaurant and hoped that a key would suddenly appear to slide into the lock and allow the phan-



tom personnel to take their rightful place behind the griddle and start slinging the necessary batter. But none appeared. Pancakes just don't work like that.

His wife, growing tired of waiting for an apology, explanation or alibi, eventually stormed out of the room. He banged on the window of the closed establishment then threw up his hands to the stars and cursed fate. The only other sound being the buzzing of the obligatory flickering streetlight a few hundred yards away or maybe it was a mile. It's always hard to tell in these metaphors.

Brad, his pants still down, shuffled off to find his wife.





Chopping and Changing

By Dru Marland

No, it didn't hurt me when they chopped it off,
It's funny you should ask, but there you go;
They gave me anaesthetic, cos I'm soft.
It hurt like hell beforehand, though,
That time my gall bladder went on the blink.
Like when they whipped out my appendix-
Me doubled up with pain, not knowing what to think,
Rushed off to hospital, when I was six.

There's been some other stuff not fit for task;
I've swapped a greater for a lesser imperfection.
Some folk think I live behind a mask,
Assume my whole life's up for their inspection;
Like me inhabiting the body of a bloke for years,
Now, let me tell you, that feels seriously weird.

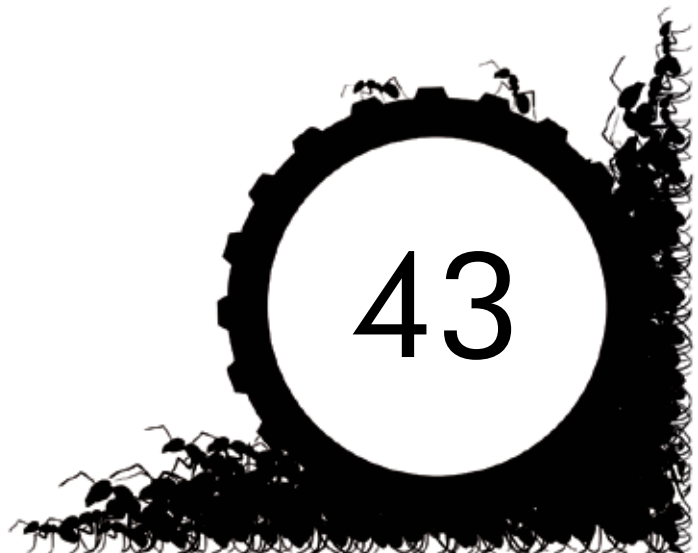


Ladies' Lament

By Katie Allen



Warped women's personal body issues
Unhealthily obsessed, weeping into many tissues
Female bodily form dysmorphic, consistently sick
Adrift, living on a diet of porn fantasies and flesh junkies
Purge devoid of pleasure, restricting meal intake
Fake, a false entity, fallacy
The unattainable male gaze
Anything less than the Media sense of perfect
Societal suction, plastic fantastic
Beyond drastic, surgery equated to perjury
Stuck in pergatory, loss of true content identity.
Distorted enhancement, false perceptive representation
Fix it or fix up, superficial esteemed as sexy
Flexing and disposable, vexed causing detrimental lasting effects
Unless your inner true sense of self becomes externalised
Turning your life around, no longer bound
By patriarchal chains, perpetuating migraines
Everyone's insane to some extent, yes a ladies lament.





Putting Pictures of Food on Facebook is not just a Female Problem

By Adam Langley

Uploading photos of food to social media websites is still seen by many as something that solely affects teenage girls. But new findings by the British Board of Psychology have revealed that this is a problem that is experienced by an increasing number of young men as well. In this exclusive interview with Here Comes Everyone, John Thomas-Head of the Organisation "Blokes Have Cameras as well, You Know"-gives the full and shocking details of his descent into a potentially lethal illness and incredibly boring Twitter feed.

The first time John Thomas uploaded a picture of his dinner to his Instagram account, he had no idea he was about to walk down a very dangerous path.

He was sixteen years old and had just begun his studies at a new Sixth Form college. He had already accepted friend requests from several of his new classmates and was "desperate" to appear interesting to them.

"I felt as though I didn't have anything to say to them" John explains to me. "I wanted to look like someone who was fun to be around, who was always trying new things without a care in the world. Someone cool, a daredevil, you know? So I took a photo of the microwave Lasagne I was having for tea and put it up on the internet. Hashtag #Yum".

When his new friends liked the photo and shared a few of their own, John decided that this was the best way to make friends and keep their interest.

What he didn't realise, however, was the toll it would eventually take on both his mind and body.

Taking pictures of Food and uploading them to social media (Or "Foodstagramming") is recognised by many medical experts as a potentially fatal condition. Not only are sufferers at risk of being beaten to death with table mats by dining companions who would rather just eat without their meal turning into a photo shoot, there is also the risk of sufferers being impaled on sharp kitchen implements as they follow waiting staff into busy restaurant kitchens while attempting to get a good angle with their camera phones.

Some sufferers-including John-progress to the point where they only eat or drink things that have been presented in a photogenic way.

"Before every meal, I had to make sure that what was in front of me had the right amount of light. I also needed enough room to take wide-angle shots of other people's food so that my followers knew I was on a night out" John shudders at the memory.

"It got to the point where I wouldn't even sit down to dinner with my family unless they agreed to let me set up my tripod and wait for sample prints to come back before I decided which ones were the most likely to get five or more likes."

John's parents took him to their local doctor, who diagnosed him as a Foodstagrammer. At that point, John should have been sent to a specialist treatment centre.

However, none of the NHS services in his area offered treatment to young men with his condition.

"It's like they couldn't believe that it was something that affected me" John says "All the literature, all the advice the doctor gave me, all of it was centred around girls and women's issues. Like, I don't know....there was this whole leaflet about how no-one in their right mind would believe that you had eaten so much food and still manage to fit into that bikini, regardless of how many photos you had uploaded, but where did that leave me?" Foodstagramming is seen largely as a female disorder. Experts believe that young women, put



under pressure to look like supermodels while at the same time being told to eat and enjoy all manner of foodstuffs, are at the highest risk of developing an unhealthy attachment to their smartphone cameras. While many health organisations around the world have taken great strides in developing treatments for young women Foodstagrammers, there is still comparatively little research focussing on young men and boys who take photos of their food.

The most prevalent reason for this is the social stigma associated with Foodstagramming. Traditionally, men are taught that what they eat is not that big of a deal—"I had a pasta dinner thingie from Sainsbury's" is considered to be the most socially acceptable male response to questions about what they have eaten that day. Pictures do not even come into it, and so any man who develops Foodstagramming behaviours attempt to hide their condition out of fear that they will be called weird. They fail miserably, as it is pretty hard to keep a secret on social media, but they give it a fair go anyway and more often than not vehemently deny having a problem when confronted.

In the end, John's parents were forced to pay for his treatment in a private facility. As well as being forced to eat meals in a room with the lights off and curtains drawn, John was also denied access to the internet and took part in discussion groups and cognitive therapy sessions in order to get to the root of his illness. He was only one of three male patients.

"Again, it came back to that feeling of being ostracised...like no-one really understood what

we were going through." John pauses. "Personally, I felt a bit embarrassed. Having to share everything you do with the world is one thing, but having to share everything with strangers whose profiles you aren't even connected to? That was quite another."

John has now completely recovered and has founded "Blokes have cameras on their phones as well, You Know" in order to raise awareness.

"You feel very lonely, especially if no-one comments on your breakfast pictures" John tells me. "I want young men with this to know that they don't have to do it alone. That recovery is possible. That they can have one meal without letting the whole world know about it. That hashtags should not be discussed at the dinner table."

It will take time. But hopefully by breaking the silence on this issue will lead to more people being able to shut up and stop letting people know that they have figured out how an oven works."



Nicholas

By Neil Laursen

On occasional nights, Nicholas
Removed the s
And put on a dress.
He enjoyed the respite
That being a transvestite
Provided.

One night, the last night, he went too far
By flirting with a man at the bar
Who said his name was Frank,
Who turned out to be Fran
His wife, dressed as a man,
Who said, 'I can't believe it, Nicholas –
I know we're divided
But this is ridiculous!'



Boys Will be Boys

By Gary Sykes-Blythe, HCE Editor



Sometimes, it's hard being a man. I'm not going to sit here and say "it's harder than being a woman", because obviously I have no idea what that's like, but I am prepared to say it's hard. I shall explain.

I'm walking down a corridor with a door at the end. Quite a way behind me an attractive girl is walking. Apart from the fact that I'm already objectivising her by acknowledging that she's attractive, I'm getting ready for a political correctness nightmare. Here are the options:

1. I can hold the door open, because that's the right thing to do for anyone.
2. I can hold the door open, because that's the correct thing for a man to do for a woman.
3. I can hold the door open, because the girl's attractive and I want her to think I'm a good person.
4. I can not hold the door open, to avoid the above problem, but then I'm likely to look like a rude, boorish kind of person.

You might well say "ah, Gary, you should do number 1, because it's the right thing to do", but here's the thing: anecdotally, I know of people who've been accused me of sexism for holding open the door in the past. 'Is it because I'm a woman?' is a difficult accusation to answer with a door in your hand.

Now, the point here is not that people have awkward hypothetical moral crisis scenarios in corridors; the point is that I'm concerned about this sort of thing. I'm very aware that I don't want to offend anyone by carelessly being sexist, but I'm also keen not to be seen to be condescending and going too far the other way. Reading the website everydaysexism.com, I can't help but feel a concern that through some clumsy turn of phrase, or even unconscious act, I've in some way upset someone.

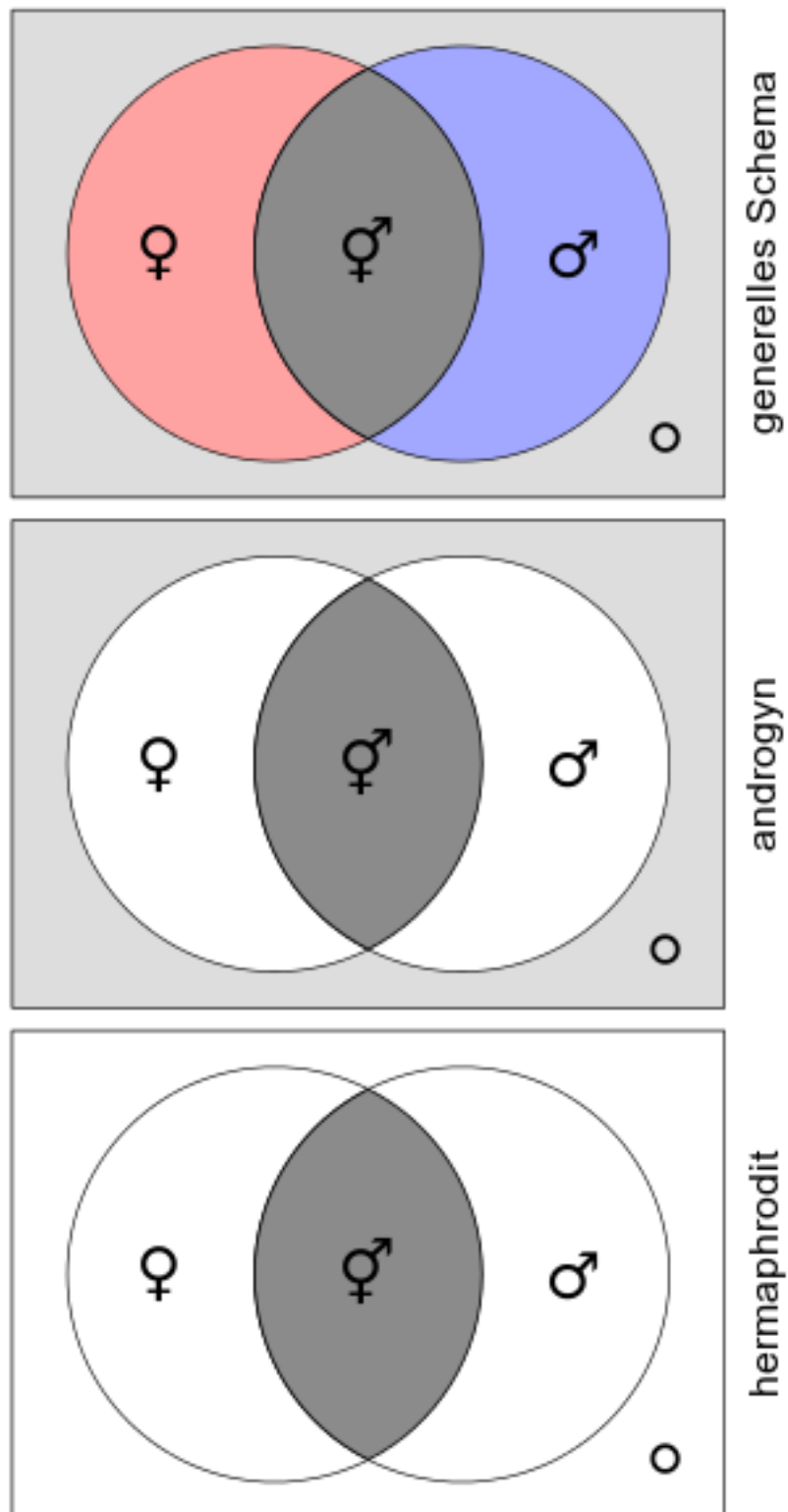
If I expressed that I find someone physically attractive, am I objectivising? In a sense, of course, that's exactly what's happening, but the real point is that it's not necessarily wrong. After all, it's perfectly normal for a heterosexual man to find a woman attractive. I still feel a bit guilty.

I don't read "lad's mags", but I have done in the past. I certainly think there's a certain *je ne sais quoi* to breasts, which I enjoy. I don't look at Renaissance masterpieces and think "phwoar!", but I've definitely had impure thoughts about women. And I've felt a little ashamed by that.

But then, why should I? I didn't decide that women were going to be the default ideal of beauty in society. I also didn't decide to be a man. I didn't decide that it was going to be fundamentally easier to be a man in the majority of work environments. I didn't decide God was a man. I didn't decide to be part of the problem and yet I feel that I am guilty by association, because I probably am.

So, here I am: a heterosexual, white, 20 – 45 year old man. In many ways, that's basically the jackpot from a prejudice point of view, so I consider myself lucky, but nonetheless I'm crippled by the socially awkward fear that I may inadvertently be sexist, condescending or in some other way not entirely appropriate. I don't want to offend, but also I don't wish to patronise. There is, somewhere in the world, a perfect balance between behaving appropriately as an individual man, and behaving appropriately as a member of society. I have no idea where this state lies, but I'm very conscious that I should be trying to find that perfect balance.





Next time in HCE:

Fantasy

Released 15th October

Submissions close 15th September